

# Language and Learning

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**T**o educate is to do something to someone. It is, of course, also to do something with someone. It is to do something at a particular time, in a particular place. Education is a human situation.

To this much, we would probably all agree. It is uncertain, however, whether any consensus could be achieved around answers to the first questions that can then be raised: What are the acts which we perform in learning situations? Which are central? Which are peripheral? Which are those that can make it most difficult for us to feel that we have been successful? For some, to educate is to awaken a child to his or her potentialities; it is to provide an environment where creativity can bloom. For others, it is to transmit the collective experience of preceding generations so that these can be preserved. For still others, it means to prepare lesson plans, to stand as one adult in front of a crowd of children. For some it means to insure that enough taxes are collected to pay teachers, retire bond issues; it means to see to it that halls are swept, that there is enough ditto paper in the storeroom, and that traffic jams are kept at a minimum in the school parking lot.

To educate in our society is, obviously, to do all these things—and many others besides, from reading a bedtime story to one's children, to displaying dinosaurs in a museum, to providing new skills to unemployed drop-outs. But all the verbs we can use to specify the acts we perform are better at describing the outcomes of learning situations than the situations themselves. To awaken a child's potentialities is really to do something so that we can see the child's potentialities as having been awakened. To transmit information is to do something so that information can be seen as having been transmitted. What, then, is this "something" that we do when we awaken a child, transmit information or values, or even simply administer a school? In the most basic sense, we do two things: we talk, and we move. We talk and move, talk while moving. We communicate.

Three quarters of a century have passed since John Dewey stated that "social life is identical with communication" and "all communication is educative." Ever since, the interest in communication in educational studies has remained pervasive. Some may think that to talk of communication is too obvious to be valuable. It is true that most of the calls for "better communication" have a vacuous quality that makes them worthless. It might seem that it would be more interesting to understand what we communicate about than how we go about it. Yet it is an old insight that there can be no content without form. To capture communication so that it can be studied is not easy. It is tempting to understand it in quasi-mystical terms as a kind of "communion." Most researchers decide that all that can be observed are inputs and outputs, and they do not investigate what happens as inputs are transformed into outputs. Communication, in fact, does not simply happen in a mysterious, extrasensory fashion. It is a set of definite, concrete behaviors which people perform and which they can be observed to perform. These can be analyzed empirically, and the knowledge that is so gained can then be used in policy making.

The concreteness of the communicative process imposed itself with particular force when researchers began to identify specific problems that directly concerned the form that educational encounters could take. Historically, problems concerning the use of language were first identified. Later, it became clear that the issue concerned communication in general. The identification of these problems allowed researchers in education to gain a better grip over otherwise intractable issues, particularly the issue of relative differential success rates across social classes and ethnic groups. The work that has been done now has a history, both in its theoretical constitution and in the institutional policies that it has been used to justify. Certain questions and intuitions have driven that work. Major theoretical arguments have been con-

structed to account for the reported facts, some with greater explanatory power than others. Each of these theories has produced certain kinds of programs.

Educational research has been relying more and more on such fields as linguistics. It has found particularly useful the theoretical work done on such matters as the "ethnography of speaking" (who talks to whom, how, and about what), discourse processing, semiotics, and rhetoric. The logic behind this development is important.

The impetus behind work in the sociology of education is a political concern that is also a difficult issue for sociological analysis: How do children from certain social backgrounds come not to succeed at the same rate as children from other backgrounds? To such a question, one can answer that since school teaching is of universal value in the sense that it is supposedly efficacious with all human beings, independent of their environment, as long as they are of the necessary intelligence, then group differences in success have to be related to group differences in intelligence. Given available research, this position is not tenable. One can thus be led to suspect that teaching styles are not of universal value. This is the dominant answer to the question in the tradition we are reviewing, and it seems to be the most tenable position.

The general question necessarily brings us to focus upon what happens in schools and in classrooms between teachers and students. This cannot easily be described with the usual tools given to educational research by work on pedagogy, administration, or child psychology. Two examples of the kind of observations one can make when one looks at what happens in learning situations are paradigmatic; we will come back to them repeatedly:

- People (teachers, students, parents) differ in the extent to which they either (1) make explicit in their verbal utterances information relevant to the statement to be made, or (2) rely on the speech situation and assume shared knowledge to carry this information (e.g., "John kicked the ball" vs. "He did it").
- To make eye contact with another human being is always a powerful act. When to make eye contact, with whom, and to what effect can vary widely. It has been shown that teachers and students in multiracial classrooms do not make eye contact randomly. It has also been shown that eye contact can be associated symbolically with other behavioral categories. Thus, in certain cultures, a child is expected to look a reprimanding adult in the eye under pain of being considered shift, sassy, or rebellious. In other cultures, the situation is reversed.

Such matters concern language use and bodily positioning. They do not concern I.Q. levels, developmental style, curriculum content, or pedagogical system. They are the matters studied by those disciplines that study communicational processes, particularly linguistics. It is thus not surprising that those researchers who felt that differential patterns of language use might explain school failure would turn to these disciplines for help. It seemed

obvious that problems would surely arise if teachers and students did not share the same communicational structures.

There is much dispute about the theoretical explanations for the sources of the differences. But the general principles are, in one way or another, shared by all the researchers who have produced the works which we will review. Some would not directly recognize themselves in the vocabulary adopted here, but this vocabulary does no injury to their diverse insights. These insights can be summarized in the following manner. It is fundamental that education always be treated as a social activity in which various people in different roles do something together through different media. It is equally fundamental that language be placed at the center of learning situations. All social action proceeds through speech, and speech is always a factor in the exact shaping of action. This concept has been broadened over the years as it became evident that social action proceeds through both language and movement. Thus education is never a mechanical process solely dependent upon the content of what is inculcated. Both the language used and the positioning of the people play a part in shaping what goes on in the learning situation. This becomes historically and culturally specified, and it ceases to be universally efficacious. Finally, to talk of language and movement in a social perspective is to emphasize the conversational aspect of language and the choreographic aspect of movement.

To educate, then, is to converse while dancing. This principle, however, is too general to be an effective guide for questions that typically interest educators, particularly the question of "failure." When concerned educators look for help in the sciences of communication processes, they generally find that these are not concerned with failure and cannot account for it. They are the sciences of the smooth, well-integrated, stable system in which all pieces fit neatly. The dances about which they think are smooth glides across the ballroom floor. They do not know what makes dancers stumble, students not learn. Here, educational researchers are on their own. One of the earliest and most classic pieces of research in the field outlines the controversies that inhere in and motivate this area of study.

### Outline of a Controversy

The British sociologist Basil Bernstein was one of the first to point the finger at differential patterns of language use between social groups to explain differential success in school. He was particularly struck by differential patterns in the use of explicit, lexical specification of information in speech (as indicated earlier in the first of our exemplary cases). He had paid heed to something that British teachers regularly mention when they talk about differences among children: some children, those of the working classes particularly, do not seem to be able to speak to teachers clearly and specifically. They seem silent, unable to speak in general terms unmarked by the

concreteness of the here and now. Conversely, middle-class children seem to find it easy to engage in conversations with the teachers and to produce statements that appear to encode much more of the relevant information. Initially, empirical evidence based on various kinds of tests administered in school, on school-like tasks, confirmed this observation, first in Britain and then in the United States.

This important problem has been dealt with in various ways which constitute three main traditions of inquiry within the field. They can be labeled: (1) the individual (in)competence argument, (2) the cultural difference argument, and (3) the social constraints argument.

In the first tradition, the emphasis is put on the lack of personal competence that is typical of some children whose early enculturation is somehow deficient. While lip service is often paid to the social conditions that produce the competence, it is more typical of this work to concentrate research efforts upon the constitution of the individual.

In the second tradition, the problem is dealt with as one of cultural difference. Linguistic systems are deemed to be simply different, because of essentially historical, contingent reasons. The communicational problems that arise are seen as the product of chance encounters (because of migration, for example) between people who have learned different systems. The systems are not considered to be mutually interdependent.

In the third tradition, the central issue concerns the constraining power of social conditions over speech. In a class society, different classes have different opportunities for specific kinds of social relations within both their communities and their families. Role definitions vary. All this systematically constrains the kind of speech that is used by members of the different classes.

These three arguments are reviewed in this order because it roughly represents the order of their historical development from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. It also corresponds to their relative explanatory power, with the earliest argument being the weakest. Finally, the most recent developments in the field, to be reviewed separately at the end of this article, while incorporating certain aspects of the cultural difference argument, are best presented in the context of discussions of social constraints.

### (In)Competence

Although the individual (in)competence argument is the least powerful of the three, it is a very easy one to make to an American audience steeped in social psychological theories of the development of human behavior. Given the popular understandings of the works of G.H. Mead or Sigmund Freud, it seems legitimate to assume that children learn certain patterns at home, internalize them, carry them to school, and do not change them as the result of their interactions there (given the greater strength of early versus later socialization). Difficulties in using school language are thus seen as a per-

sonality trait to be handled as such. The relative silence of working-class children is a symptom of a mental handicap. This handicap, or "deficit" as it is often called, is produced by the child's home conditions. It is hypothesized that the parents themselves are silent and are the cause of their children's handicap. The handicap can be cured by appropriate treatment which has to involve both the child and the responsible parent.

This argument became very popular very quickly. Given the concurrent beginning of "Great Society" remediation programs, it also became the basis for many of these programs. The reaction soon came, and it was vio-

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## To make eye contact with another human being is considered a powerful act.

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lent in proportion to the political success of the argument. If silence, indeed "dumbness," is a personality trait of lower-class children, then one would expect them to be silent and dumb at all times in their private lives, outside of, as well as within, school. A number of researchers, led by William Labov, started observing working-class children, particularly the black children who had been most radically characterized in what came to be known as the "deficit" literature. These researchers looked at them at home, in the street, in non-threatening environments where children control the organization (as in meetings of peers or friends). They found that children who never speak in school can be massively verbal and that they are capable of the most complex forms of thinking.

Such observations triggered interest in more situational theories of language use. If children can shift so radically from silence to loquaciousness as they shift situations, then their silence in school cannot be considered a good index of their internal communicational competence. What would thus have been demonstrated by the competence argument would be, at most, that these children do not know how to communicate within specific situations with specific people. And this gave rise to the cultural difference argument.

The notion that cultures differ, and that people who have been socialized within different cultural environments have difficulty communicating with each other, has a very long pedigree in American social science. It is not surprising that it should be borrowed to account for relative differential success in school. It is commonsensical to expect that children raised in one cultural environment will find it difficult to participate fully in an institution created by and for another culture. But common sense can fail, and monolingual Spanish-speaking children have been branded "retarded" after intelligence

tests were administered to them in English. This only would have been an impetus for an application of the culture difference argument to the study of failed educational encounters.

Common sense itself, on the other hand, can be misleading. Anthropologists, who have made it their trademark to place themselves in the midst of the extremely foreign, tell harrowing tales of what can happen to a human being, particularly an adult, when he is suddenly obliged to perform in the midst of people who do not recognize what he thought was his competence and threat him like a young child until he has learned the basics. They have given to a popular imagination that was quite ready to accept it the phrase "culture shock," which powerfully evokes the wrenching experience of the foreign. Americans, with their history of massive rapid migration, have been ready to incorporate the idea that mismatch in cultural expectations can be a serious problem. The empirical problem that has not quite been solved, however, concerns the diagnosis of observed communicational failures as indeed cases of cultural difference and mismatch.

Initially, it is relatively easy to identify differences in patterns. The difference in rules for eye contact, mentioned earlier, is but one element of a very long list that has been identified both in language and movement patterns. It has been shown repeatedly that people from different groups may perform the same act differently, and that what looks like "the same" act (e.g., making eye contact while being disciplined) can carry radically different messages for different groups. Some cultures expect human beings to stand very close to each other in interaction, others prescribe a wider space. An intonation pattern that is simply polite in one place can sound obsequious and hostile someplace else. An abundance of proverbs in speech is a sign of great wisdom in one place, a sign of great conventionality and lack of creativity someplace else. When to speak, when to move, when to touch what part of the body, and with whom to do all this—all these things have no necessary meaning of universal, cross-cultural validity. We learn the meaning of our gestures in much the same way as we learn the meaning of our words and what we can do with them. It has been shown repeatedly that a lack of attention to such matters can produce disastrous results.

The cultural difference argument thus says the following: (1) all persons are equally competent—at least at the level that interests us; (2) they are not competent in the terms of the same systems; and (3) the problems we have in our schools lie in the clash of systems. This argument cannot easily handle the issue of social, structurally induced variation, and it is not surprising that most of the work done in this tradition operates in terms of ethnic differences rather than class structures. Without denying the relevance of differences in ethnic cultures, one can justifiably wonder whether, given complex societies with differentiated roles, statuses, and classes, it could be that some of the observed problems are the

product of people performing symmetrical but different positions. How could there not be formal differences in communicational behavior between the management of a large corporation and blue-collar workers whom it employs? If so, could one not expect that teachers, who are trained in the same colleges and universities that train the managers, will differ from the working-class children in their classrooms? Schools are not divorced from the larger society; it would be surprising if they did not reproduce what happens there. Could it be, then, that what look like differences across independently constituted cultural systems are in fact differences within one complex sociocultural system? These questions drove the field of communicational studies in education in a new direction. The first type of answers constitute the social constraints argument.

### Social Constraints

The basic idea of the social constraints argument is that the nature of the social relations in which adults and children find themselves more or less determine or constrain the form of the language (and other communicative systems) which they use. Thus, according to the early work of Bernstein, human beings do not need a great elaboration of verbal forms in settings where they find themselves mostly with people of similar experience. A very reduced language—what Bernstein called a "restricted" code—can be very functional, indeed more functional than a more expanded language—what Bernstein called an "elaborated" code. The issue, then, is not one of functionality within an environment, but rather of the social conditions which require certain linguistic forms rather than others. For Bernstein, members of the working class live constrained lives within closed communities in which roles are sharply drawn and modes of control are positional. By contrast, middle-class people live more loosely constrained lives within open communities in which roles are individuated and modes of control are personal. Furthermore, these differences in social conditions are themselves shaped by the functional requirements of the whole society.

This argument is powerful. It is also complex, multilevel, and difficult to manipulate systematically. The argument is an attempt to relate macro-sociological conditions (the class structure) to micro-sociological structures (the quality of family roles) to speech characteristics (extent of lexical explicitness). There exist a number of general sociological theories that provide the grounds for such an argument. The empirical problems, however, are massive. It can be pointed out, for example, that the modern, middle-class, nuclear family, with its intense relations between close kin and its sharp boundaries, must be considered to be the best example one can find of the kind of community that should produce "restricted codes." Mother and children know each other very well. They do not have to make explicit all the implications of their speech. They all know what they are talking about without having to specify it. It would seem obvious, too,

that small children first speak in very reduced speech and only acquire the special forms typical of school language late in their development—if at all.

In his later writings Bernstein argues, in effect, that broad social structural conditions simply override the micro-situational constraints. He mentions that middle-class mothers are well known, for example, for greatly elaborating on the “reasons” that lead them to discipline a child. Thus, to a child’s question, “Can I watch T.V. tonight?”, working-class parents would typically answer “No!”, while middle-class parents would typically answer something like “No, it would make you stay up late and you’d be sleepy tomorrow.” One can legitimately wonder, however, whether this elaboration can be explained in purely social terms or whether it might not be more economic to say that middle-class parents elaborate simply “because this is how things are done,” for cultural rather than social reasons.

Similarly, if one considers the classroom itself as a small social group that spends a lot of time together over extended periods, one cannot help but think that the teachers and children should also deal with their routine interactions in a “restricted code” of sorts. This is indeed what recent ethnographies of classrooms suggest. The elaborated codes supposedly typical of routine school speech are, in fact, only found at certain appointed times, during tests for example, when it might be said that the school is symbolizing itself. One is thus led to wonder whether this might not be the case with all instances of linguistic elaboration. One can argue that the extensive efforts of the schools to teach children to “speak well” are not dependent upon a functional need: human beings have never needed explicit instruction in this matter to become extremely competent. What the school really means by learning to “speak well” is, rather, the acquisition of a specialized competence that is only used, among adults, by certain people and at certain times. These people (lawyers, doctors of all kinds, bureaucrats, etc.) hold quasi-sacred roles that are symbolically differentiated from other roles precisely by the special language they use in the performance of their role. Similarly, it can be argued that the middle-class individuation, which Bernstein saw as rising out of social conditions, is, in fact the product of a historically developed ideology that hides rather than reveals the actual social relations characterizing our societies.

### **Social Structure and Cultural Ideology**

The earlier proponents of the social constraints argument found themselves in difficulty on another point as well. In order to explain the problems encountered by working-class children in schools, the least complex statements had to rely on G.H. Mead’s theories of internalization. These statements came very close to those made in the (in)competence argument. It happened, for example, that Bernstein’s work was appropriated for a while within this argument. Bernstein himself violently reacted against such an interpretation of his work. For

him, whatever the speech form a child may learn, he has equal capacities to learn more—as long as the school takes his speech form into account. But even this reaction does not deal with the central problem with any simple internalization argument: the need to assume that patterns learned in one situation remain stable across situations. Thus, the kind of criticisms made by Labov had to apply. People do behave differently in different situations.

This could, of course, lead to more extreme forms of the situational constraints argument. This argument only fails when it can be shown that the same constraints can produce different kinds of behavior. The cultural difference argument, on the other hand, fails when it can be shown that what look like differences are in fact produced jointly by all the participants. The problems are symmetrical. In order to understand why situational constraints fail to work mechanistically, one must incorporate theories of cultural variation. In order to understand why situations that should not work because of cultural difference between the participants in fact do work, one must incorporate theories of situational constraints and, indeed, social structure at the broadest levels. There are now various people at work trying to integrate the insights of these arguments while steering clear of the difficulties that have been identified.

The power of the cultural difference argument depends upon the assumption that people from different cultures who interact repeatedly fail in the detail of their interaction. This would explain the final recognition of these many small failures in a child not learning to read, dropping out, or otherwise not achieving. In fact, these small repeated failures cannot be shown to be happening. In a classroom study R.P. McDermott has shown that a teacher and a group of children who were failing to learn to read under her instruction were, in fact, involved in a very smooth, well-structured, systematic dance. Teacher and students were of different classes and ethnic groups. They had, however, spent several months together, and McDermott has shown, through a linguistic and movement analysis of a videotaped scene, that they were, in some way, “together.” They were a well-functioning social group busily working at not teaching/learning how to read.

McDermott’s argument is akin to Bernstein’s, with one major difference: McDermott’s argument is not dependent upon the internalization of a pattern that gains its specific form because of the functional requirements of the total society. The only thing that is necessary, from the point of view of the total society, is that some children fail in such a way that it will appear fair to all those involved—including those who failed. The French anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu, has stressed the “arbitrary” nature of the mechanisms by which Western societies represent symbolically to all their members that the means through which its class structure is reproduced over the generations are appropriate, well-designed, and necessary. For Bourdieu, school knowledge, including

school-like speech, is not structured because of its efficiency for middle-class life. Rather, it provides a symbolic guarantee that those who belong to the middle class do so on proper grounds, because of their educationally sanctioned merit. Recent research suggests that all parts of our societies consider the school to be the sorting institution *par excellence*.

The issue of individuation that was central to Bernstein's argument can also be handled in this manner. For him, individuation, both as a psychological mechanism and as a certain mode of speaking, is directly dependent upon social structural constraints. Individuation, clearly, is central to school organization: individual children are the unit of activity, as is revealed, for example, by the fact that all evaluations of success are evaluations of individual performance. The more important the evaluation, the more care is taken that the student is indeed solitary in his confrontation with a test that has been stripped of as many "cultural" biases as can be identified. But what is such an effort functional for? From the point of view adopted here, it is functional within a symbolic system. It is a powerful statement to all the people involved, in all the classes or ethnic groups that make up the society, that the social world is indeed organized as it should be and that everybody is in his or her appointed place.

Such an argument is dependent upon the assumption that matters of communicational form are not directly determined by social conditions. This is the more plausible alternative, given both the development of social theory and work on Western ideology. This apparent retreat to a culture difference argument preserves the chief strength of the social constraints argument, i.e., its holistic quality. For Bernstein, the middle and working classes are complementary parts of one social structure. For Bourdieu, the symbolic system is just as unified: the working classes—and eventually all ethnic groups that may migrate into our societies—accept the legitimacy of this system and of the fact that it "happens" to place their children predominantly where they themselves are. What we would be confronted with, then, is conceived as a duel system—a social structural one and a cultural (or ideological) one that are linked historically rather than functionally. Both, of course, are dependent upon each other for their functioning. The ideology utilizes aspects of the social structure to demonstrate the verisimilitude of the image of the social world which it presents. The social structure constraints what can actually get done. But, at this state in the development of our knowledge, it seems that neither determines the exact form of the other.

### From Research to Policy

The different frameworks used for the study of language and learning in schools have different implications for educational policy. To the extent that they have different political implications, they have also had very different fates as far as their adoption has been concerned.

The most widely used argument is the individualistic (in)competence model. It was a familiar one in the United States. There was a body of specialists (psychologists, counselors, etc.) ready to accept the task of diagnosing states of ability and of prescribing treatment; there was a body of training schools ready to produce more of these specialists; parents, school boards, and school personnel were ready to accept these specialists as part of what American schools are like. These people, obviously, have been doing good work if only because

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they manifested an awareness of a problem and alleviated some personal suffering. The programs created, from *Sesame Street* to Headstart, have been successful, though not always for the reasons thought or for the population targeted. Research on the effect of *Sesame Street* has shown, for example, that, while the achievement scores of working-class children who watch the programs increase, many middle-class children also watch them, their scores also increase, and thus the relative position of the two groups does not change.

The cultural difference argument also has direct implications for practice. At the very least, it can make educators aware of subtle cultural biases and help them eliminate them so that fundamental school events, such as tests, can be made "more fair." The argument also has more radical implications. It is easy enough, in an American atmosphere, to make a case for the importance of "being aware of cultural differences." As long as this awareness manifests itself only in "ethnic days," "salutes," food tasting and traditional dress parades at appointed times, things are simple. Bilingualism, as is well known, already is a political issue, particularly when the programs are not designed to shift the children to English competence at all deliberate speed. The cultural difference argument, however, makes stronger claims about the policies that would be necessary for children of various nondominant cultures to achieve their potential in the United States. At its extreme, it is more or less explicitly argued that cultural differences cannot really be bridged, indeed that no attempts should be made to bridge them, and that the only proper solutions are educational programs that maintain the separateness of the cultures—including evaluations of competence that are defined by the cultural system of the child himself.

"Bicultural" educational programs, as they are sometimes referred to, have not quite "taken" in American public schools. We can imagine an educational system so organized that it would provide separate, if not unequal, education for people from various ethnic groups who

might want their children to be educated "in their own culture." Mini, "one culture" public schools might be created. Under the voucher system, it might be possible to let these schools establish themselves. Such things may indeed happen. But we can doubt the wisdom of such a development. In addition to the purely political issues that have to do with the desirability of such a centrifugal system, we can also doubt that bicultural programs of any sort are an adequate response to our current understanding of the impact of sociocultural forces on individual success.

To take the cultural difference argument seriously already leads to a call for social transformation. But it is the policy implications of the social constraints argument that are the most radical, and it is not surprising that no programs have been created that take them seriously. It was the insistence on the structural complementarity of actors in social systems that gave power to Bernstein's argument and now gives power to the more complex arguments of sociologists and anthropologists like Boudieu. As they have all shown, though in different ways, the broadest of social patterns reveal themselves in the most local of interactions. The implication is that one cannot transform these local interactions in any radical fashion without changing the patterns that structure the whole.

It is not surprising that this argument, when it was first made systematically by Bernstein, was not taken up by the educational establishment: revolutions are not fomented by dedicated school administrators. The new form of the argument may be even more radical. Bernstein wrote in a structural-functionalist style as if nothing could really be done about the quality of the social relations that prevail in the various classes. When it is shown that the principle of these relations is a matter of historical happenstance and that things could be organized differently, the argument becomes more dangerous for the status quo.

The intent of this article has not been to prescribe the best policies, but rather to highlight their respective power and consequences. A minimalist position can be sketched, however, that reflects the fact that we must live within the system, for the time being at least. It is a teacher's duty to know that black children who do not speak out in class are not necessarily "dumb"; that non-verbal messages do not carry absolute messages; and that no speech, however far from the accepted norms, is ever formless, nonstructured, or incapable of communicating. There is no excuse for a teacher not to be aware that what a child brings to school is not simply a matter of the child's personality or personal competence. Children always bring their homes, their parents' jobs and friends, their own peers into the classroom. The more the teacher can incorporate actively what all these people are teaching the child, the more successful will the teacher be in making the school a satisfying experience. Teachers are obliged to be aware that much of what happens to chil-

dren in classrooms is a direct reflection of what they themselves are doing—even though they may not be aware of what it is they are in fact doing—interactionally with the children, rather than to them. Even more important perhaps, there is no excuse for school systems in their administrative capacities not to be aware that all these things are important and that teachers cannot be left by themselves to juggle them. Nowadays, a child with a particularly severe problem is sent to a school psychologist or guidance counselor, on the assumption that the problem lies with the child himself. This is considered normal and proper, and most school systems do not hesitate to finance school psychologists any more than they hesitate to finance mathematics teachers. Schools should also finance various types of "interactional" specialists whose task it would be to learn very concretely about the "community" of the school, in order to help teachers create curricula that integrate what parents are doing. Such specialists might also be able to observe classrooms and help teachers deal with their actual pupils.

None of these proposals are radical in their implications, and some are being implemented. They will not solve the basic problem created by the fact that "achieved individual inequality" (failure) is the foundation of the American system. Some students—a great number, in fact—will always fail. They will, necessarily, suffer. Out of their experience may (will?) come a new system that will transform conditions enough so that some of the very conditions for the sufferings will be eliminated. Until then, we must be modest, as dictated by the extent of our power within the present system. For those of us who have been given some power, there is a concomitant responsibility to act on the basis of what we know. □

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