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"SELF-IMAGE"

A KEY CONCEPT IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS
FOR THE CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED PRESCHOOL CHILD

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by
Muriel V. Henderson
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This study is concerned with one approach which educators are taking to find a solution to the problems which prevent the culturally disadvantaged child from achieving his full intellectual and psychological potential in our schools. It examines programs of intervention in the disadvantaged child's preschool years which offer enriched environmental stimulation and attempt to bridge the gap between the values and attitudes of the poverty subculture and those of the school culture.

Two main recommendations are considered, namely:

- (1) there must be changes in the home and the preschool environment in order to prevent or compensate for deficiencies in the child's social, emotional, and cognitive growth, and
- (2) there must be changes in the school and the teacher attitudes for growth to occur and to continue.

Part I provides an overview of the psychological theory which presents evidence that the development of a healthy self-image is a crucial task in the educative process. Current literature dealing with the uniqueness of the experiences and culture of the disadvantaged child is reviewed and the role of the school in the life of these children is investigated.

Part II surveys the programs of Head Start, The Institute for Developmental Studies, and The Children's Center at

Syracuse University, to discover what methods have been most successful in strengthening the child's self-image and his cognitive abilities.

This paper concludes with a summary of the findings of these three research and action programs, which brings self-image into focus as a key concept in compensatory programs for the preschool child.

Included in the Appendix is a list of sources for further information about other compensatory programs for preschool children which are now in operation in all parts of the country.