



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Frank Riesman, Chairman, Department of Psychology, Bard College,
The Culturally Deprived Child. Harper and Row, 1963.

Trevor Ward,
Thursday Island, Qld.

This book gives a frank assessment of the problems besetting the teaching of underprivileged children and outlines genuine proposals for overcoming them.

The purpose of this book is to challenge the widely held notion that the *culturally deprived* child is not interested in education, and to present a new *cultural* approach for teaching these children.

The author points out that the terms *culturally deprived* and *educationally deprived* are interchangeable, and that to bring about effective education for these deprived children requires a basic, positive understanding of the child's traditions and attitudes. One of the most important attitudes is that of the disadvantaged towards education itself.

The author argues that education is desired by the culturally deprived more than is generally recognized.

Different segments probably want education for different reasons. Some desire it for vocational improvement, others so that they will not be deceived as easily in the modern world, and still others because of their respect for science. The difficulty in the school system arises because the school stresses education for its own sake and as a means for the development of self-expression - orientations which the culturally deprived do not share. Furthermore, the discrimination unwittingly practised in the school has produced alienation and anger by children and parents against the school system.

That discrimination between the middle class teacher and the underprivileged child does exist is accepted, but the author points out that the teacher has more control over his own behaviour and prejudices than he does over various aspects of the environment in which the child lives.

The problem is magnified by the fact that there is a greater turnover of teachers in these areas than in other better middle class environments.

Only by understanding the culture of the underprivileged - and this must include a proper evaluation of strengths and weaknesses - can discrimination be rooted out.

The disadvantaged child wants respect, not love or paternalism. The only way the teacher can honestly give him respect is by comprehending his way of life and his efforts to overcome the negative aspects of the surrounding environment.

In outlining the culture of the underprivileged, the author points out that by focusing on the negative side of the culture, the teacher excludes other potentially healthy traits and prevents the development of good relationships with the children and their parents.

An approach characterized by a physical orientation to school subjects might have more significance than an intellectual approach.

Perhaps the use of more male teachers might be an important step forward in this respect, particularly employing the kind of man with whom the youngsters can identify.

The position of the child in the home is significantly important. The home of the underprivileged is often a crowded, busy, active and noisy place where no one child is focused upon. Consequently the children spend much of their time in each other's company or with relations. Self discipline and the development of initiative for these children takes longer than it would in a middle class family.

That many of these children are intelligent is noted by the author. Standard IQ tests administered in their present form often give an inaccurate indication of the child's ability. Experimentation has shown that by giving special training lessons before the actual test is administered and by altering the language pattern throughout so that the questions become meaningful to the child, the results in many cases have improved as much as 40%.

Slow gifted children, however, and there are possibly many amongst these children, have language problems which prevent them from asserting their potential creativity. Tests conducted with slow gifted children ascertained that many characteristics found in these children were very similar to those of a highly creative person.

Further, the author points out, the deprived child has considerable facility with informal or public language and it is essential that the method of teaching formal language takes advantage of their communication style by employing teaching techniques that stress the visual, the physical and the active as much as possible.

To be effective, the teacher will have to develop the auditory attention of these children, by teaching them how to listen and constantly making sure they understand what is being discussed.

Co-opting the assistance of the parent, not only for discipline problems, but especially when the child has achieved something new or has done something delightful, proved very successful in maintaining continuous progress in the classroom in the experience of one teacher mentioned.

The author lists many *Ideas for Action* which would be conducive to an overall improvement in the education of the culturally deprived. Some are listed below:

1. Understanding the culture of the underprivileged, promoting the positives and omitting the negatives.
2. Making formal tests and IQ tests more meaningful to the child.
3. The development of reading ability by introducing material incorporating things that the children see, feel and do.
4. Introducing specialized teacher education programs.
5. Encouraging more teachers to look upon the teaching of these children as a special vocation; this might reduce the teacher turnover rate.
6. The employment of more psychologists, teachers and social workers who themselves have come from a deprived background.
7. Role playing activities and the introduction of programs whereby the child *learns by doing*.
8. Introducing a special three or four year program for the very slow.
9. Smaller classes.
10. The involvement of the children in out of school ground activities.

11. Greater use of experienced teachers to take over responsibilities in certain areas of the school and its curriculum.
12. Recognition of education deficiencies and giving special attention in areas where interests lie.
13. Having a genuine respect for the efforts of the deprived in coping with their difficult life conditions.

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Rowley C.D., *Outcasts in White Australia*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, 450 pp, \$2.50. (also in hardcover from ANU Press, Canberra, 1970).

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There is no longer any excuse for ignorance of Australian anthropology or race relations. The proliferation of books on these subjects in recent years has ranged from coffee table trivia to scholarly tomes, ensuring that any who still adhere to the racial stereotypes of a generation ago do so through disinclination to know better.

Amongst this proliferation Professor Rowley's work deserves particular attention. It is the result of several years of careful study by qualified researchers throughout Australia; certainly it is the largest and most systematic investigation of its kind to date. It is distinguished, too, by the emphasis Rowley brings to it. Work in Aboriginal studies has been published by linguists, ethnographers, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, archaeologists, educators and physicians, but this is the first definitive project from the viewpoint of political analysis.

Outcasts in White Australia is Volume II of a trilogy entitled *Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, commissioned by the Social Science Research Council of Australia. Volume I, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, deals with the conflict between European and Aboriginal cultures that all but annihilated the latter. For the purpose of Volumes II and III, Rowley