

PSYCHOLOGY

Stress Affects Success

Psychological factors rather than intellectual ability determine the level of scholastic performance and achievement of a Negro student placed in a newly integrated classroom.

► WHEN A NEGRO student enters a de-segregated classroom, he may fail to make the grade for psychological, not intellectual reasons.

On the other hand, his academic career may flower in integrated schools if psychological factors foster such achievement.

These points were made by Dr. Irwin Katz of New York University's Research Center for Human Relations in a report to members of the American Psychological Association in Lancaster, Pa. The report reviews the effects of educational desegregation on Negro scholastic performance.

Dr. Katz' setting is the newly integrated classroom, where the minority child simultaneously experiences a change in racial environment and exposure to relatively high academic standards.

If the Negro child is isolated, rejected or harassed, he is likely to be distracted from his scholastic tasks. If his success threatens to arouse even more resentment and hostility in schoolmates and teachers, he may abandon all efforts to excel.

Social acceptance by white classmates, however, will improve the scholastic motivation of the minority child. And if good performance is rewarded with friendliness and approval from white teachers, it is likely to continue.

When the intellectual standards of the integrated school appear too high to be attained, Negro students may flag scholastically. Most Negroes in integrated classes are confronted with some kind of "achievement gap," Dr. Katz points out, due to the inadequacy of their education from the earliest days of elementary school. Low expectation of success may discourage effort at the start.

So may feelings of inferiority—the white group's stereotyped view of the Negro, mirrored by the Negro himself. These damaging attitudes can seriously affect the student's aspiration level and his capacity to learn.

Reports from desegregated schools are now inadequate for drawing conclusions about the effect of biracial environments on Negro academic performance, Dr. Katz said. However, research on psychological stress generally supports the assumption that learning is impaired by social rejection and fear of failing.

Experiments with Negro college students have also guided Dr. Katz and his associates in postulating the effects of various psychological factors on learning.

When Negro and white students were assigned to a variety of tasks, the Negroes subsequently rated their own performance

inferior, although they had scored equally well.

Negroes working with white partners on intellectual tasks where they had to agree on a single team answer displayed marked social inhibition and subordination unless forced to express opposing opinions.

In tasks described as tests of eye-hand coordination, Negroes worked more efficiently when tested by a white adult rather than by a Negro. When Negroes assigned the same task were told that it was an intellectual test, scores were markedly lower with a white tester.

These findings, says Dr. Katz, have certain implications for educational practice if we are to achieve equal education for all children:

1. Educational standards of Negro schools must be raised to the level of white schools to give minority group children a reasonable chance of succeeding academically.

2. Parents of Negro children should be taught to prepare them for schooling and to foster achievement once they are in school.

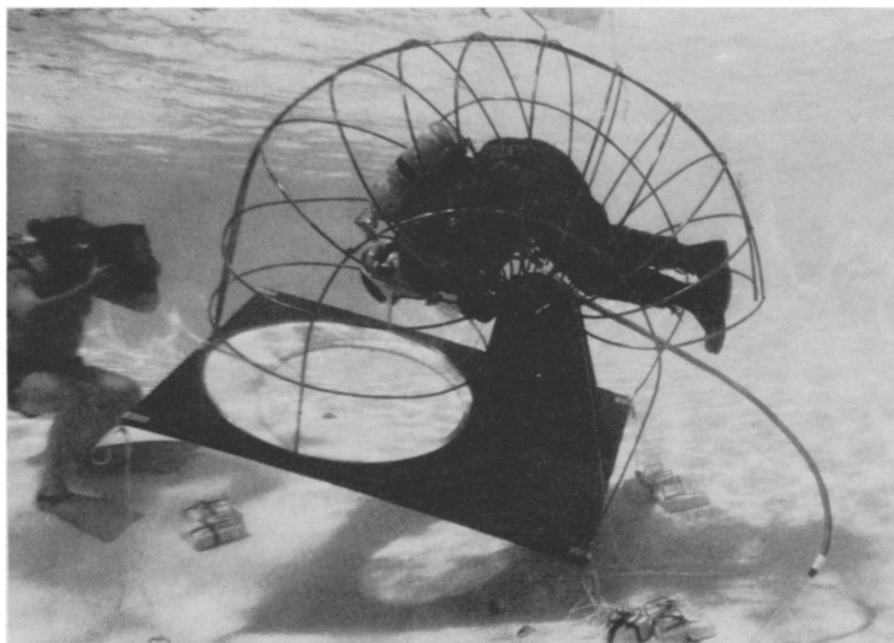
3. Teachers and other personnel in newly integrated schools should be trained to develop awareness of the emotional needs of children in biracial situations.

4. The track system assigning children to homogenous ability groups should either be abandoned or modified to afford maximum opportunity for periodic re-evaluation to avoid freezing teachers' expectations and children's self images.

5. The grade-a-year plan of desegregation should proceed upward from the lowest grades, where Negro children have the smallest educational handicap.

Dr. Katz' study was reported in the *American Psychologist*, 19:138, 1964.

• Science News Letter, 86:23 July 11, 1964



General Dynamics

SPACE TUNNEL—An "astronaut" passing through open rings underwater simulates a trip through a tunnel connecting two vehicles in space in a test for the best means of transferring from one spacecraft to another. The research was conducted by the astronautics division of General Dynamics Corporation, San Diego. A cameraman at the left records his movements.

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Scientists More Admired Now Than 15 Years Ago

► MEN OF SCIENCE now rank third in the latest admiration poll for the United States.

In the esteem of their countrymen, scientists are exceeded only by two other professional groups: the black-robed paragons, the Justices of the Supreme Court and the guardians of our health, the physicians.

Admiration for scientists has increased noticeably over the past 15 years, according to the recent prestige poll analysis made by the National Opinion Research Center, an affiliate of the University of Chicago. The 1963 poll shows interesting comparisons with a similar study made in 1947.

Nuclear physicists made the biggest jump upward, moving up to third place.

While Supreme Court Justices rank first, and physicians second, bankers dropped the most, from 10th place to 24th in this list of 90 occupations in the United States.

Fifteen years ago, while the physicians still ranked second and the Justices first, scientists ranked seventh, and nuclear scientists tied for 18th place, along with chemists, lawyers, dentists, architects, priests and others.

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