Is there a Culture of Poverty?

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What, if anything, culture has to do with poverty is one of the great issues of contemporary cultural anthropology. This is so because urban poverty America can get about the increasing conflict and moral outrage in our society, because it has been intractable to solution despite the investment of enormous effort and resources, and because a large number of very diligent anthropologists have been trying to grapple with it. Many readers may find this paper a sort of briefing on the current ratio of knowledge and ignorance on this problem area which anthropology. Others may discover for the first time that there are not one, but two, major theoretical positions being  }

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I have two views, two ways of explaining why people have moved differently from people in the suburbs. Both Lewis and Liebow and the facts of ghetto behavior lead me to believe that they disagree more with each other than they do with the contrast between this behavior and that of well-off people in the suburbs. Is this difference in class or in culture, or to a difference in opportunity.

It is easy to get the impression that the point at issue is whether one calls it culture or not is simply a problem of definitions. But it is much more basic: for if one operates on the assumption that there is a culture of poverty, then the strategy for eradication is quite different. It is as well. Religion, art, literature, music, bands of kinship and friendship, local clubs, and local politics are more basic for their interests in the child-rearing process, where the dysfunctional values are inculcated in the children. This is the socializing process....

A body of recent data indicates that this may be the way. Roger Anderson and Neile Headline have studied a young man in the Jungle brings together Negro folklore collected in Philadelphia that is logical, complex, evocative and of a very separate nature from the rather impoverished oral tradition of the mainstream Middle Class. R. F. Rice argues that study of Negroes in St. Louis, behind Michael Watts, often parallels material. Linguist William Labov in The Study of Nonstandard English has analyzed the dialect of English used by lower-class New York Negroes and finds it rich in linguistic experience and open up new areas of research. We know that Negro children thoroughly contrasting with anything from my very, very uneducated Middle Backwoods. The study is important; we know of the American minority poor not to me that while standards of employment and domestic roles may be shared with the Middle Class, there is clear contrast when we move beyond these first.

Particularly for American Negroes this divergence may be widening as effort and pride are invested in furthering different conventional notions of fair play and compassion exhibit us to action, to open up new programs of massive intervention rather than mobilizing them. The implications of Liebow’s views are quite obvious. The very fragmentation of our society that is making the institutions barrier to an equal share of our society wealth, responsibility and opportunity are a challenge to the社会 structure...the differences involve far more than a disagreement over labels.

At this point the reader might well be wondering whether we are likely to reconcile the research that we have put together and to dismantle the institutional barriers to an equal share of our society wealth, responsibility and opportunity.

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