"Let's *Try*
to Make It a Good Day"—
Some Not So Simple Ways*

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The title for this paper could easily be misunderstood. Given the latest fac of taking cute expressions from the talk of young children that are either semantic or syntactic illustrations of the topic of the paper, at first glance this paper could be about ways to make suggestions or about verbs that take infinitives. Instead, the paper is about trying; more specifically, it is about the social organization of trying (and not trying) in the face of intellectually and interactionally complex tasks.

The scene of which this utterance was a part involves a group of eight- to ten-year-old children who come to a club room at the Rockefeller University for their weekly cooking club. They straggle in, taking off their coats, saying hello to the adults waiting, and talking among themselves. Mike, one of two adult club leaders, asks if they want some soda, and they all predictably and enthusiastically shout, "Yeah!" One of the children, Reggie, announces, "We're gonna have a good day today! Whoever says we're gonna have a good day say 'I'"(or 'aye'). A chorus of "I's"("aye's") is heard. Then Adam, another child, very earnestly says, "let's try to make it a good day. If you want to try to make it a good day, say "I'" ('aye'). A much less enthusiastic and smaller chorus of "I's" ("aye's") follows.

This paper will offer an account of why the good of Adam's day sounds so tenuous, how he tried so hard in the face of this, the consequences of this trying, and all the trying by the other children and adults that make up

Adam's environment from one moment to the next. To anticipate one conclusion, we hope to illustrate, using a scene from Adam's life, the necessity of describing the social organization of situations in which abilities and disabilities are displayed by individuals. Such a description is needed in order to provide a strong basis for talking about individual abilities and disabilities themselves. But this is not our goal. As an alternative to a psychology of individuals, their intrinsic characteristics and their competencies, we are attempting to develop methods consistent with a psychology of person–environment interaction. We believe that a description of the social organization of intellectual behavior is an essential part of this task. A brief elaboration is necessary.

What precisely do we mean by a psychology of person-environment interactions? Frankly, we can't be precise. This paper as well as a more extensive discussion of the topic (Cole, Hood, & McDermott, 1978) are beginning attempts to formulate such a psychology in theory and in practice. We have been influenced by several psychologists of the 1930s and 1940s, notably Lewin (1943) and Vygotsky (1978), as well as contemporary interaction analysts (Sacks, 1974; Scheflen, 1973; see McDermott & Roth, 1978, for a review). We are interested in the description of apparent psychological events—attending, remembering, thinking, and the like—as they are sequenced, made noticeable and consequential in particular environments. We are impressed by the need to describe those environments as constitutive units of the variously phrased, "life spaces," "contexts," "constraints," or "contingencies of reinforcement" that people deal with in their everyday lives.

Because he has influenced us most, we will emphasize the contribution Vygotsky has made to our current way of thinking. In both theory and methodology, we see Vygotsky as an alternative to the viewpoint that characterizes the bulk of experimental cognitive and developmental psychology. Vygotsky's characterization of psychology as "fossilized" seems just as apt today as it was in the period in which he was writing (the 1930s). He criticized

> the standard practice of discarding the data from initial sessions, when the response is being established. Uniformity was sought, so that it was never possible to grasp the process in flight; instead researchers routinely discard the critical time when the reaction appears, and its functional links are established and adjusted. (1978, p. 68)

Vygotsky underscores several errors of method and theory in this passage. First, if we study behavior only in its fossilized form we cannot come to an understanding of behavior. "The fossilized form is the end of the thread that ties the present to the past, the higher stages of development to the primary ones" (1978, p. 64). The crucial task of analysis is historical and dialectical, by which Vygotsky meant the study of the process of change. "To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development in all its phases and

changes—from birth to death—fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for 'it is only in movement that a body show what it is.' Thus, the historical study of behavior is not an auxiliary aspect of theoretical study, but rather forms its very base" (1978, p. 65).

We are seeking to use this theoretical position along with its methodological prescription that we eschew the study of "fossilized" processes. Vygotsky believed the task of pscychology to be the reconstruction of each stage in the developmental process; one method he used to fulfill this task was to create the hypothetical process artificially. But in our view, Vygotsky himself did not go far enough in applying his theory or methods. What held him back, we believe, was his view of development, which was a unidirectional process with a definite endpoint.

> Any psychological process, whether the development of thought or voluntary behavior, is a process undergoing changes right before one's eyes. The development in question can be limited to only a few seconds, or even fractions of seconds (as in the case in normal perception). It can also (as in the case of complex mental processes) last many days and even weeks. (1978, p. 61)

The second part of this statement, concerning how long a developmental process can last, waters down the first part, which refers to ever-present and ongoing change. We seek to build on Vygotsky's work by emphasizing the ways in which psychological processes constantly undergo change, and *are actively maintained,* as a function of ever-changing socio-environmental circumstances. We want to be consistent in our insistence that indicators of development *always* depend for their definition and manifestation on the environment of behavior.

In order to develop a psychology of behavior–environment interactions, we have suggested the necessity of describing how intellectual behavior is socially organized. What precisely do we mean by the social organization of intellectual behavior? Again, we owe much to Vgotsky for his insight into the importance of the environment, especially the social environment, for the development of the child. But, again, we find a limitation in Vygotsky's position and attempt to expand his basic notions. The key concept here is internalization, one of the most important aspects of Vygotsky's theory, which we will only briefly summarize here.

Vygotsky believed that the higher psychological functions, which he defined as the combination of tool and sign in psychological activity, undergo a process of internalization, whereby an external operation becomes reconstructed internally, through a series of transformations. Particularly important for the present discussion is one such transformation:

> An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on, on the individual level; first, *between* people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (*intrapsychological*). This applies to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (1978, p. 57)

We agree, especially concerning the origins of functions, and in our research have found corroborative evidence. But where our viewpoint diverges and where our research indicates otherwise concerns the thoroughness and inevitability of internalization. Here we understand "internalized" to mean that the psychological function is independent of special interactions with the socio-environmental surroune. It is ideally expressed by such activities as remembering a list of words such as the states and capitals of the U.S. without aid of pencil, paper or any external sources of information. To Vygotsky, it is interaction between the ears, in which the individual supplies both halves of the dialogue (Wertsch and Stone, 1978).

In our observations of children in various settings—schools, tests, and clubs—we are constantly confronted with how little we need to postulate internalization in order to describe the children's behavior. While internalization may be a proper gloss on what people become more able to do as they grow from infancy to adulthood, our data show that in interpersonal situations most psychological functions remain to a large extent on the interpersonal level. Parties to any social interaction are invariably engaged in organizing environments for sequencing psychological activities; complete internalization is not necessary. People help arrange for constancy in personality and intellectual skills by arranging environments which allow for and encourage the use of the particular personalities and skills they have developed. To Vygotsky's statement that "All higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (p. 57) we would add that under many different circumstances of everday life, that is where they remain. People learn about themselves and about each other by the work they do constructing environments for acting on the world. And this is how we must come to know them as well.

To summarize so far, we are using two of Vygotsky's major contributions and taking them a step further together: the dynamic and developmental view of psychological process and the social embeddedness of higher psychological functions are, we want to claim, crucial to understanding behavior at any point in its history, not merely in its infancy.

APPROACHING THE STUDY OF A
LEARNING DISABILITY

To illustrate what we mean and to show what kind of observations led us to this position, we have chosen to concentrate on one particular child, a child who has been tested, diagnosed, and labelled as a child with a specific learning disability.

Where is Adam's disability? We will have to be careful about what we accept as the answer to such a question. The answer cannot be a place of substance. It is not useful simply to assert that Adam's disabilities are in his

memory bank or attentional devices. After all, most disorders involving human behavior are not disorders of such systems. Rather, Adam's disabilities are to be found and described as part of the contexts in which the disability(s) is made manifest to the people who notice it, suffer with it, and try to repair it. In accord with the psychology of organism-environment relations of the type Vygotsky formulated, we will have to do better than phrase an answer solely in terms of Adam's brain. In telling the story of Adam and his learning disability, we will point to how Adam's disabilities are socially organized. Whatever intellectual skills he has—or has not—internalized have to be well aligned and sequenced with ongoing environments. *Adam's learning disability is a much in the world as in his head, not just in the sense that the world is passively there as a medium of expression for the disability, but because the world can be described as a field of forces which organize Adam as a display board for the weaknesses of the system in which he is immersed.*

We hope that an illustration such as we are about to give would be equally successful with any child—one who acts particularly competent or one who doesn't stand out in any way. That remains to be seen. However, choosing Adam to illustrate out point is not arbitrary. The label of learning disabled is potentially disabling, and an attempt to show the incorrectness and consequences of such labelling as a *general* characteristic of Adam, rather than as he interacts with highly specific environments, should have priority over the dismantling of more neutral labels.

The historical and political motivations for this position played an important role in the development of this research and continue to do so. Here, we will touch only briefly on them. Start with a ubiquitous and seemingly trivial observation: Different people appear to know different things—about how to talk, how to interact, how to think, etc. This observation is both a part of common sense and a basic tenet of social science. Its general acceptance often obscures the question of why a *lack* of knowledge is often deemed so much more significant for characterizing children than what they either do know or could potentially learn. Why does lack of knowledge get built into the institutional arrangements of the lives of both children and the scientists who study them? These questions, and the further questions they suggest, are issues we hope to be able to address as our research proceeds.

Adam's Try For a Good Day

In the fall of 1976, we undertook a study with a group of primary school children in order to explore the representativeness of experimental cognitive tasks and evaluative and diagnostic tests as these appear in the worlds of the classroom, after-school activities with friends, and the home. We chose a small private school in Manhattan, a school with a heterogeneous student population in terms of social class, ethnicity, and performance levels. We

worked with 17 eight- to ten-year-olds who were in the same class, equivalent to the third-fourth grade.

Over a two-year period, we observed and audio- and video-taped these children in a variety of settings; taking IQ-like tests individually; in their classrooms; in other special subject areas of the school, such as art class and shop; in after-school clubs that we set up for them; on their four-day trip to a farm where they weaved, milked the cow, baked bread, and were wild. We also took the children individually on trips and visited them in their homes, but these situations were not taped.

In our final after-school club with the children we set up an "IQ bee." This was the setting for Adam's try for a good day. An IQ test was administered as a competition among the children. We divided the children into two teams and implemented an elaborate turn-taking and scoring system, with prizes for all the children, but with the winners getting first choice.

In IQ tests such as the WISC, the difficulty of the questions is gradually increased, and so for the digit span subtest, for example, the first item would be extremely simple for ten-year-olds (repeat 6,3,8) while the last item would be relatively difficult (repeat 8,3,4,6,1,9,5,2). As it happened, Adam was the third child to get a turn on his team, and since the two teams alternated turns, this meant that by the time Adam got asked a question, it was the sixth one in the series. In the subtask "general information," for example, the first question asked was "From what animal do we get bacon?" The child given this question had no trouble with it. The last question presented to the children (which was given to Adam) was "How many pounds in a ton?" Adam guessed 100; three other children offered 1,000, 200, and 12. Adam took another chance with 1200. Finally the club leader had to give them the answer.

How did Adam and the other children and adults react to this situation? Was Adam's failure attended to, and if so, was it attended to in a way different from the errors of the other children? The answer to the latter two questions is "yes." In order to understand how this came about, it is necessary to look at earlier events, before Adam was given this question. At the very beginning of the "bee," Adam was sitting up straight in his chair. As the questioning and answering proceeded, however, he slouched more and more, receding into his chair and away from the table. It was clear to all that the questions were getting progressively more difficult. At first Adam was raising his hand enthusiastically along with the other children, laughing at the simplicity of the questions. But by question 5, "What does the stomach do?" Adam had begun to appear nervous. The first question given to him, "In what direction does the sun set?" was a difficult one for the group. Adam said, "The ocean?" His teammates tried, "East," "South," and, finally, "West." But in spite of the fact that they missed this question, and other children had missed others previously, Adam's error was noticed and commented on while the other children's errors went unnoticed, particularly by Adam. For example, when it was time for the last question in this category Ken, the adult test administrator, tried to determine whose turn it was and Adam's teammates tried to use Adam's previous error to their advantage.

KEN:	Whose turn is it on this side?
Reggie:	Mine!
Helene:	I only got one turn!
KEN:	I think it's yours Adam.
Helene:	Adam didn't, Adam had his turn, but remember he can't guess.
KEN:	He only had one turn so far.
Adam:	Right. (He begins to cover his eyes with his hands.)
Reggie:	And he doesn't even have any points on the board.

Ken gives Adam his turn. While Adam is silent (thinking about how many pounds might be in a ton or about how to get out of the limelight, or about any number of things), Reggie and Helene wave their arms wildly in the air. When Adam guesses incorrectly, they become more excited and beg him to call on one of them. As mentioned above, when they finally do get a chance to answer, they are both wrong. Adam's reactions to this are to become very quiet and small; he sinks lower and lower in his chair, elbows on the table with his hands covering his face, speaking in a whisper, if at all.

The next category of questions is from the digit span test. Here we can see most clearly Adam's disability made visible, in large part because he and everyone else are working simultaneously both to display it and to keep it hidden. To show this, it is necessary to go into some detail. The first items are three digits long. They are answered by Peter and Helene with ease, and the other children laugh about how easy the questions are. The third item is four digits long, and Lucy quickly answers it, commenting, "But it gets harder when you get, um, nine numbers." Adam, who is leaning on his arm on the table and looking down at the table, quietly and whiningly says, "By the time it gets to be my turn, they're gonna be so hard." As the fourth item, again four digits, is successfully completed by Reggie, Adam sulks and crouches down lower to the table. The next item is five digits, and Nadine has no trouble with it. Adam sinks even lower, and now both hands are covering up his face. Natine notices and says, "Adam, what's the matter?" Reggie offers, "The questions are too hard for him." The "bee" is continuing, however, and they are up to six digits, which Peter manages to complete successfully. Immediately after Peter finishes answering, Mike, the adult score keeper who has noticed Adam's unhappiness, says, "hey, if this one is too tough for you, Adam, you want to pass to someone else to take your turn?" Adam shakes his head "no." From this point, a transcript of what was said is needed to capture the attention paid to Adam. (The children are numbered by team. Members of team 1 can take turns for each other. Members of team 2 can only watch and root, generally for a bad performance from team 1, although on this occasion they appear to root for Adam's success.)

Helene (1):   Will you pass it to me; Adam?
KEN: OK Adam, is it your turn now?
Adam (1):   I'm not passing it to anybody.
Helene (1):   (in a resigned voice) Oh-h boy.
KEN: It's your turn now, Adam, right?
Helene (1):   Why are you crying, Adam?
Lucy (2):   Cause its' hard. It's hard for him.
MIKE: Well, just pass it by, that's all.
              It's no big deal.
Helene (1):   I'll do it for you, Adam, please?
Reggie (1):   You want _____
Adam (1):   No, I don't want to pass it by.
Nadine (2):   No, let him do it himself.
Peter (2):   He wants to answer questions but they're hard.
KEN: He can try it.
MIKE: Everybody misses some of them.

   (Uh-hums of agreement from several of the children)

KEN: OK, Adam, you're ready?

   (Adam's hands remain in front of his face)

KEN: 6, 1, 5, 8.
Reggie (1):   Ah!
Adam (1):   6, 1, 5, 8?

   (The children, except for Rikki (1) and Adam (1) cheer "Yea!")

Reggie (1):   Gimme five Adam! (holding out his palm)

   (Adam still has his head in his hands)

Reggie (1):   Please?

   (Adam shakes his head 'no')
   (Helene (1), Lucy (2), and Nadine (2) laugh)

A crucial aspect of this scene is that Adam was given only four digits, instead of seven which was the next item for presentation. And, although Adam refused Reggie's congratulations, and continued to sulk for a while, this moment was something of a turning point in the club session. Slowly at first, but clearly, Adam became more and more involved in the "IQ bee": He volunteered answers to questions other children missed, he correctly answered the ones he was presented with, and the other children praised him for things he did well before he did them (e.g., weaving together a comprehensible narrative from four picture cue cards: "Adam is really good at this"); and he wound up with the second highest number of points on his team.

Over the course of about 45 minutes of being in club, Adam's "disability" was manifested on a number of occasions and was made an issue by Adam himself, the other children, and the adults. The same has been true of his

ability. His failures, which were noticed more than those of the other children were part of the environment for his later success in two ways. First, his right answer was celebrated by virtue of his previous failure on the first two questions, as highlighted by his and everybody's attention to these wrong answers. Second, his first right answer, his first success, was to a question that was easier than the one he was supposed to have gotten, namely, four digit instead of seven. This "success" was in some sense also a failure; everybody including Adam, was aware of the special treatment he got, and work still had to be done for it to be taken as a display of success and not of failure. Adam' success in getting an easier question and his "right" answer were part of the environment for this later success, a success not merely in terms of giving more correct answers and getting more points than his teammates, but in terms of having a good time and feeling competent. Adam and the other children did indeed make it a good day, but not without a tremendous amount of trying.

This is one conclusion to the story we've been telling—Adam tried and succeeded in making it a good day. To make this ending even happier than it is, we can add a few more things about how Adam has progressed during the following year. He learned to read up to grade level; he learned long division; he kept up with his classmates; and to quote his teacher, "He struts around as if he owns the place." On a recent visit to the school, he suggested that we hold another IQ bee.

Psychological Events in Adam's Day

The other conclusions to be drawn from this account are more relevant to the theoretical arguments we have been making. In terms of a psychology of organism-environment interactions, Adam's account is instructive in warning us about the difficulties of systematically locating the environments people actually make use of in organizing their behavior. Since the turn of the century, psychologists have understood well the importance of an environment as a record for internal events; thus, introspection gave way to experimentation with well-controlled environments. However, what psychology has failed to realize is that its experimental fervor has restricted the environments used for recording and modeling internal events to static, predefined tasks which are available for analysis only as a subject performs differentially across variations in the task or different subjects perform differently on a single task. The task environments or stimuli offered to subjects for their response are (for methodological purposes) necessarily assumed to be identical across occasions of their presentation. Missing is any account of how both subject and environment are dynamically involved in the organization of any particular behavior display. Missing is any realization that if the analysis is to allow for conclusions about the performance of

particular persons in a variety of real world scenes, task environments (or stimuli) must be defined in terms of how subjects are using them to organize their behavior and their environment.

Just what is Adam's task environment? How could we ever be sure of what Adam is working on at any given point in the IQ bee? It is not the case that a task is simply presented to an ever-waiting organism, well-organized to pounce on the question asked. Rather, we can see Adam squirming about, attending carefully to the remarks of his peers, organizing an environment in which everyone feels uncomfortable about his plight, and reorganizing both the social and the intellectual task put before him by the rest of the group. The same kind of behavior, albeit in attenuated form, can be found in observations of Adam in formal tests as well. Theories of intellectual activity must take into account the fact that task environments are defined in the context of the pressures of the moment; the skills any person brings to bear on any task environment must be understood· in terms of such dynamic person-environment interactions. Recall the line cited above from Vygotsky, "Any psychological process is a process undergoing changes right before one's eyes" (1978, p. 61). What must be understood are the environmental constraints which help to organize the display of a particular psychological process at a particular time. What is the difference between Adam performing successfully on one occasion and not on another? An answer to this question is impossible if we cannot establish that Adam is working on the same task on these different occasions. However, this is no easy point to establish because Adam can differentially prepare for, organize, act on what to us may be "the same task."

The answer rests on moving beyond preoccupations with the task facing Adam to a consideration of organism-environment relations. This would include the work Adam does on his environment (including the work others in the environment are doing) to arrange for a task of a particular kind— preferably, no doubt, one that he can handle; and a description of the kinds of constraints on Adam in terms of which he organizes for a task of a particular type. The task facing Adam in the IQ bee is not just the complexities of holding a set of digits in memory for a short period of time. We need also the activity Adam engaged in to prepare for the presentation of that task. This includes his participation in the group and his careful observance of all the organizational junctures in their concerted behavior. A final aspects of Adam's relation to the task, others, and the environment are the pressures on Adam arising in the course of his involvements with group members (as seen, for example, when he avoids difficult questions and others in the group surge forward, calling not only for their own turns but occasionally for Adams turn as well).

A necessary step in developing a psychology of organism-environment relations is the specification of how intellectual performances are socially

organized. The face-to-face social world is the most powerful environment for the organization of intellectual performances (and, contrary to the methodological assumptions of contemporary, cognitive psychology, social interaction provides a systematically reactive and therefore informative environment for psychological events). Vygotsky was clear on how the social world provides supports for the development of higher psychological functions. His ideas were followed by an extraordinary set of natural history experiments by Soviet colleagues (e.g., Istomia, 1975; Manuilenko, 1975) and recently some more experimentally constrained attempts by American developmental psychologists who have greatly expanded the described repertoire of skills available to young children by providing training and other kinds of environmental support (Brown, 1977; Siegler, 1976; Wertsch, 1978; see Gelman, 1978, for a review). Culture is pedagogical, and everyday life provides an apparent abundance of supports for children developing complex psychological skills.

Adam's story can be used to make this point, but with some interesting twists. Vygotsky did not make the point (although we think he would have greatly appreciated it) that the world systematically witholds support at certain times. Not only must we understand any appearance of a particular skill as well sequenced and aligned with particular environmental happenings (rather than as an internalized state simply making its way to the outside); we must also understand the nonappearance of a particular skill at times when it could be useful as equally well orchestrated. Both performance and nonperformance can be understood in terms of the particular configuration of supports given a child at different times.

In the IQ bee, Adam both receives supports and suffers their lack. On occasions when they are lacking, Adam has to give relatively more attention to the management of his identity than to the intellectual task put before him. He must work on two tasks at once; on the one hand, he must get off the hot seat others in the group have constructed for him, and on the other hand, he must concentrate on the questions put to him. By sliding away from the table and moving to tears, Adam manages both tasks; not only does he arrange to have others rooting for his performance, but he arranges for a simpler question as well.

Similar organizational work appears in Adam's intellectual performance in other situations in which we have collected videotapes. When there are few supports for his performance, as, for example, on the individualized test we administered to him on another occasion, Adam goes to work to win the supports back. He chats with the tester, stalls for time, and makes jokes with questions, apparently waiting for a next cue as to what the answer might be. In the classroom, his life is less constrained, but each day he still has to fend for his intellectual identity when he is asked to perform a task in front of group members. Even in the informal afternoon clubs in which Adam and his

friends were asked to make cakes, Adam was still presented with occasions on which he had to handle information which could be had only by his manipulation of print and at times when all were organized for noticing the success or failure of his manipulation.

From this range of situations, it has become clear that there are two ways for Adam to run out of supports for developing and displaying intellectual skills. There are occasions in which he finds a task genuinely difficult to do; at the time we took these videotapes, reading was such a problem, and it is plausible to assert that he also had a difficult time handling digit span tasks. In the face of such difficulties, Adam would take a long way around the problem. Rather than try to read the recipe on his own, Adam would commandeer a compatriot to work with him, the one handling the reading and the other the cake making; or he would proceed slowly, watching the other children as they made it through the cake making. Interestingly, during such times Adam would actually get reading practice, by checking his version against the readings of the other children.

Such a reliance on others was not possible during the IQ bee. And many of the other situations Adam encountered, his long way around problem solving became noticeable to the other children; he was often teased for his efforts. On a few occasions, it seems that the other children actually arranged the situation for him as a set of traps for displaying his inability to read (the rather paranoid language used here is actually quite descriptive, a point which we are developing in a longer discussion now being written; Cole, Hood, & McDermott, 1978).

The second way Adam runs into a lack of support is on occasions when social pressures dictate a long way around a task even if it is a task that is simple for him. There are times when the social pressures are so intense that Adam spends all his energies on hiding the possibility that others will discover a way to degrade his intellectual capacities. One day, Adam made a green cranberry bread. Such a mistake is easily defended; to wit, "So we made a goddamn mistake. Anybody can make a mistake." But there are certain kinds of displays Adam cannot own up to. Everyone can make a mistake, but not everyone can get caught not knowing something simple such as how to read a recipe. Although Adam can read some of what he encounters in his assignments, he cannot afford to do it slowly or with obvious mistakes. On such occasions we see Adam feigning reading, in class or in club, while keeping a careful eye on a person he might depend on for a nonincriminating helping hand. The same collection of people on different occasions can represent as much a hindrance to Adam constructing an intellectual display as a set of supports. Both performance and disability have to be understood in terms of the social environments with which they are linked.

CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS

We have been at pains to make two points: (1) That a description of psychological events must be made in terms of dynamic, mutually constitutive, and reflexive relations between organism and environment; (2) That the observation of the development of intellectual skills at particular moments in the social world can be very informative about the environments actual persons use in the organization of complex intellectual performances. We have raised the important issue of how social environments may be as well organized for the encouragement of incompetence as for an easily documented display of competence. Specifically, we have tried to suggest that Adam must make it a good day against considerable odds, not only in the sense that he has a difficult time performing some of the intellectual tasks the world asks of him, but in the sense that the world seems well designed for making his performance of certain tasks even more difficult than would be suggested by an analysis of the task considered in isolation.

Although we are far from having answers, this inquiry into Adam's day has forced two questions on us: (1) Why do so many activities involve children and adults organizing each other not only for successful intellectual displays, but for avoidance of unsuccessful intellectual displays, even though these could be good grist for a diagnosis of what a child needs next? (2) Why are social and behavioral scientists so oriented to the discovery of disorders in ways which do not take account of their embeddedness within the social world? These questions can be phrased more specifically in terms of Adam's day: Why are learning disabilities so carefully arranged for, and why are observers so systematically organized for noticing them and making them objects of studies which do not elaborate their strangeness—and this in the face of so much information that just about anyone can learn to read unless organized by perverse constraints to not learn?

It is appropriate that we end our foray into Adam's day and Vygotskian psychology with difficult questions. The relations between good questions, emerging methodologies, and possible answers are in no way linear. Indeed, given the present state of the art, good questions may be the best outcome of our inquiries. As Vygotsky has stated well:

> The search for method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding uniquely human forms of psychological activity. In this case, the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study. (1978, p. 65)

We hope that this brief account of Adam can serve to give some direction to this search. Neither Adam, his abilities, nor his difficult days are easy to characterize. But the effort is central to achieving a description of and

remediation for many in our society who suffer the charge of not adequately performing psychological displays of intellectual competence.

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