

Parents and teachers can influence children's behaviour by rewarding them in some way after they have done things they want to encourage. i.e. by providing extrinsic motivators. Different children find different things rewarding and it is difficult to generalise about rewards. However **praise**, interest, attention and care are usually regarded as important. Attention may be so important that a child may find it satisfying even in the form of scolding or punishment - especially if the parent or teacher does not give attention for 'good' behaviour at other times.

It has been said by teachers, especially those in large classes, that individual attention to each child is impossible - that the children a teacher usually notices are the very bright ones, and the 'naughty' ones. The average child plods along unnoticed. Anyone who has worked with groups of children knows this to be the case.

However, more important are the ways a teacher reacts to these children and I suspect it would not be unreasonable to say that in most cases a teacher responds to the above situation as follows :

- (a) he rewards the bright boys with attention and good marks and praise
- (b) he punishes the naughty boys with sarcasm, ridicule, poor marks and beatings.

In the case of the bright boys this is an effective approach - learning is more likely to become intrinsically rewarding for them.

In the case of the naughty boys the teacher stands in danger of teaching the boys that to be noticed they have to be naughty, and in so doing he learns only to punish such boys, often to the exclusion of noticing any good work they might do.

There can be little doubt that such a boy finds no intrinsic satisfaction in his work, nor any extrinsic rewards, the latter coming more from not doing work!

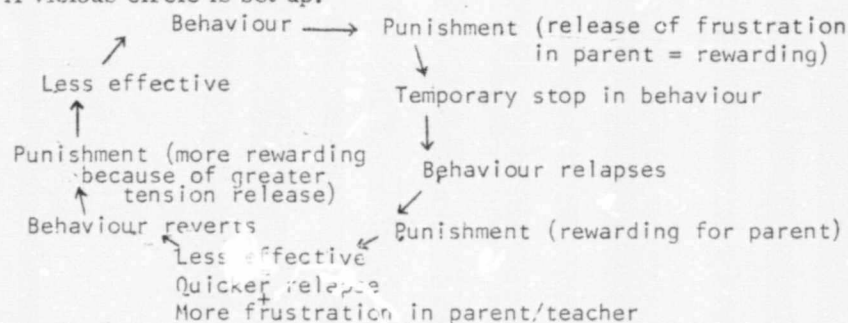
After a while such a boy may take on the role of 'bad boy' in the class - when he is naughty he receives attention from the teacher, and after a bit other pupils in the class may come to treat him as such as well. The way he gets rewards, attention, laughs, admiration, and praise from his schoolmates is by being 'cheeky' to the teacher, disobeying rules and not doing any work, or by being beaten or sent to the headmaster's office.

This brings us then to a further dilemma - how to control a large class when there is little time for individualisation, and when one really wants to get on with teaching.

### III SOME THOUGHTS ON DISCIPLINE AND TEACHING CORRECT BEHAVIOURS.

- (a) Punishment: providing an unwanted consequence for a behaviour. Punishing the child by beating or shouting is often immediately effective. The unwanted behaviour stops and the teacher is given a chance to give vent to his anger and frustration. However the following dangers are inherent in administering a punishment :-

- (i) it doesn't teach a correct behaviour
- (ii) the effects are often only shortlived, and when the punishment is over the child's behaviour soon reverts to its earlier form. Punishment temporarily suppresses behaviour - it does not permanently change it.
- (iii) as the child gets used to the punishment, and reverts to his previous behaviour, parents learn to punish more often. The child actually learns to withstand punishment and its effects diminish as the parent learns to give it more often. A vicious circle is set up.



Thus while the punishments increase, often so does the unwanted behaviour.

- (iv) the result of this is that the teacher (or parent)/child relationship deteriorates and becomes based on punitive control rather than encouragement and learning of positive behaviours. Serious emotional reactions may occur, and one effect in the school situation may be a loss of interest in learning.
- (v) the child learns from the teacher or parent to use aggressive behaviour to get his own way.
- (vi) the child may learn to fear the teacher and the learning situation in which he is punished, resulting in even less motivation to learn.

Great caution should be used in giving punishments - their effects are not well known in any particular circumstances, except that they produce immediate but only temporary changes in behaviour.

Despite these warnings it is recognised that in some circumstances, especially where aggressive/violent behaviour is being shown immediate intervention and punishment might be necessary.

Alternative to punishment include :

(a) (i) Reinforcing alternative ways of behaving

Spend time rewarding, praising, giving attention to behaviour that is incompatible with the unwanted behaviour you want to discourage.

e.g. if the child moves out of his seat often and walks around the class, give him lots of attention whenever he is sitting in his chair. Notice him there, and ignore him wandering around. It may be that you only notice him when he is wandering around. If you change this around there is a better chance of changing his behaviour - he is getting attention by your punishments and shouts (attention) when he wanders around. Now make it that he can only get attention if he sits in his chair. Remember also that whenever you shout or punish you probably make the boy more of a 'hero' to his schoolmates from whom he gets attention (rewards) for being a 'bad boy'. By changing your attention from his bad behaviour you take away this sort of reward as well.

Remember that in such cases a boy's wandering behaviour may increase for a while, as he tries to make you notice him but that after a while it should diminish especially if you pay him attention while he is in his chair.

(ii) Cooling down or think time

To reduce 'bad behaviour' the child is removed from the situation where he is getting attention for his behaviour. Send him to another room where he doesn't get any rewarding attention from his classmates for his behaviour, for up to 10 minutes. No fuss or arguments are allowed, and normal teaching continues in his absence.

Remember that this may become rewarding in itself - a means of avoiding classes, and of loitering in the hall to distract other classes or children - so rather an empty room allowing for no contact with other people's attention.

This is a method to help children gain self-control and must be used every time the unwanted behaviour occurs or immediately after. Be consistent.

This technique is particularly effective if used when the unwanted behaviour occurs, and this punishment used, during an activity which is important to the child.

For instance I have realised that Cooling down time is not likely to be as effective in my group of boys in the classroom situation, as during a soccer game when there is high motivation to be involved.

In the study/discussion times I make efforts to use reinforcement of alternative responses. For instance I make a point of greatly praising correct answers especially from the not so bright boys with learning problems.



These boys usually answer fewer questions and have shown a lack of confidence in volunteering to do so. Now despite the more overwhelming responses of their classmates (which I ignore) they are given a chance to answer and if the answer is correct given a lot of praise. If the answer is partly correct also praise but tempered with "part of the way there but good up to now". In such a way pressure is placed (by wanting to get praise) on the child to do some study, to be able to answer questions correctly be noticed by me and his classmates. Any signs of wanting to answer are noticed and used. It means watching such children a little more closely but provides more positive interest than an occasional remark like "you never answer : you're useless : you're stupid : you can't do it." All get a chance to answer but special attention is paid to those identified as poor learners.

- (b) Rewards : providing desired consequences often on behaviour  
- reinforcement.

Rewards are what keep behaviours going and for children include material things (toys, sweets etc), school marks, stars etc, points, tokens, activities, games and praise and attention.

(i) 'Promises' of rewards are not as effective as 'real' ones. Don't promise rewards you can't give as the child is likely to lose faith and trust in you. Therefore make use of rewards which are easy to administer and important to the child. Praise and attention are very effective rewards despite their simplicity of use.

(ii) Rewards like punishments differ from child to child and circumstance to circumstance. It is important to find out what is rewarding to a child. A rich child with numerous toys is unlikely to regard a football as rewarding as a deprived child with no toys.

(iii) Rewards like punishments should be given during or immediately after the wanted or unwanted behaviour. Rewarding a child for work two weeks after it has been done is not as effective as an immediate "well done".

For instance a child does his homework, is then cheeky to his mother, and kicks the dog for no reason. If he is punished for the latter actions and his homework is ignored - it is also punished in a way - no discrimination is learned between behaviours which are approved or disapproved of.

Ideally the following would occur :

- |                        |   |                          |
|------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| (i) homework completed | - | "well done"              |
| (ii) cheeky to mother  | - | 10 minutes in room alone |
| (iii) kicks dog        | - | 10 minutes in room alone |

Each action is separately and distinctly responded to with reward or punishment.

- (iv) When trying to increase a behaviour (such as answering questions) reward every occurrence of the behaviour. When it has improved to a desired rate reward it 'every now and then' to keep it at that rate. This is how we are usually rewarded by praise in real life.

#### IV OBSERVING AND RECORDING BEHAVIOUR

Before starting any program to change a behaviour it is necessary to identify the specific behaviour that is troublesome or inhibiting a child's learning and which you want to change.

It is of little use saying a child is cheeky, lazy, aggressive, violent, disobedient or troublesome. These are all generalisations and of little informational value to anyone who wants to change such behaviours.

It is necessary to know the events surrounding a child's behaviour to know how to work on changing it. Three factors are important :

- (a) Antecedents: events which precipitate an act
- (b) Behaviour: the specific acts which the child does
- (c) Consequences: the results of the behaviour on the child and his environment.

e.g. (a) Antecedents: during an arithmetic lesson where pupils were required to complete problems on their own

(b) Behaviour: X leaves his seat and makes as if to leave the room

(c) Consequences: teacher shouts at X and the other pupils laugh. X returns to seat smiling at his friends.

When information is this specific it can provide important indicators as to possible 'causes' of behaviour.

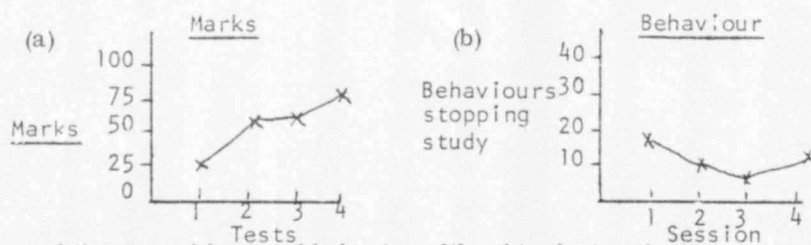
In this case, if the behaviour mentioned only occurs in arithmetic it may be that X has a problem in this subject and seeks to avoid doing it - his behaviour results in attention from the teacher and rewards from his classmates. His response is one of pleasure rather than one of fear or repentance.

I have explained to my group that during their 20 minute study periods I will be watching behaviours that 'stop them learning', and reporting back to them on these. To do this I asked them to study history for 20 minutes. The following behaviours occurred:

Punching	staring around the room
Giggling	looking at one's shirt
talking	leaving of seats

of the boys. I explained to them that such behaviours were directly related to a failure to learn, and that in future I would be watching and reporting back to them on who did what which prevented himself or others from learning.

At a later stage while discussing graphs, I explained to the group how graphs could be used to watch progress in the following areas:



and that I would record behaviour like this during the group sessions.

There is nothing secretive about the method - indeed, a full understanding of the project and its workings has reduced suspicion among group members and should result in fuller participation in it.

A number of aspects of behaviour may be recorded.

- (i) How often (frequency) a behaviour occurs in a given time period
- (ii) How long (duration) a behaviour takes in its completion
- (iii) How much (intensity) of a behaviour occurs during a definite time span - the proportion of time spent in it.

Also as mentioned a record should be kept of

- (iv) the place where the behaviour occurs
- (v) the circumstances under which it occurs
- (vi) the consequences of the behaviour.

One important result of recording that has been noted by researchers is that once someone is aware that his behaviour is being observed and recorded, this is often sufficient to change that behaviour. This has occurred in my group where once the boys knew what I was looking for, they dropped the behaviours inhibiting study with the result that we now have quiet controlled study periods.

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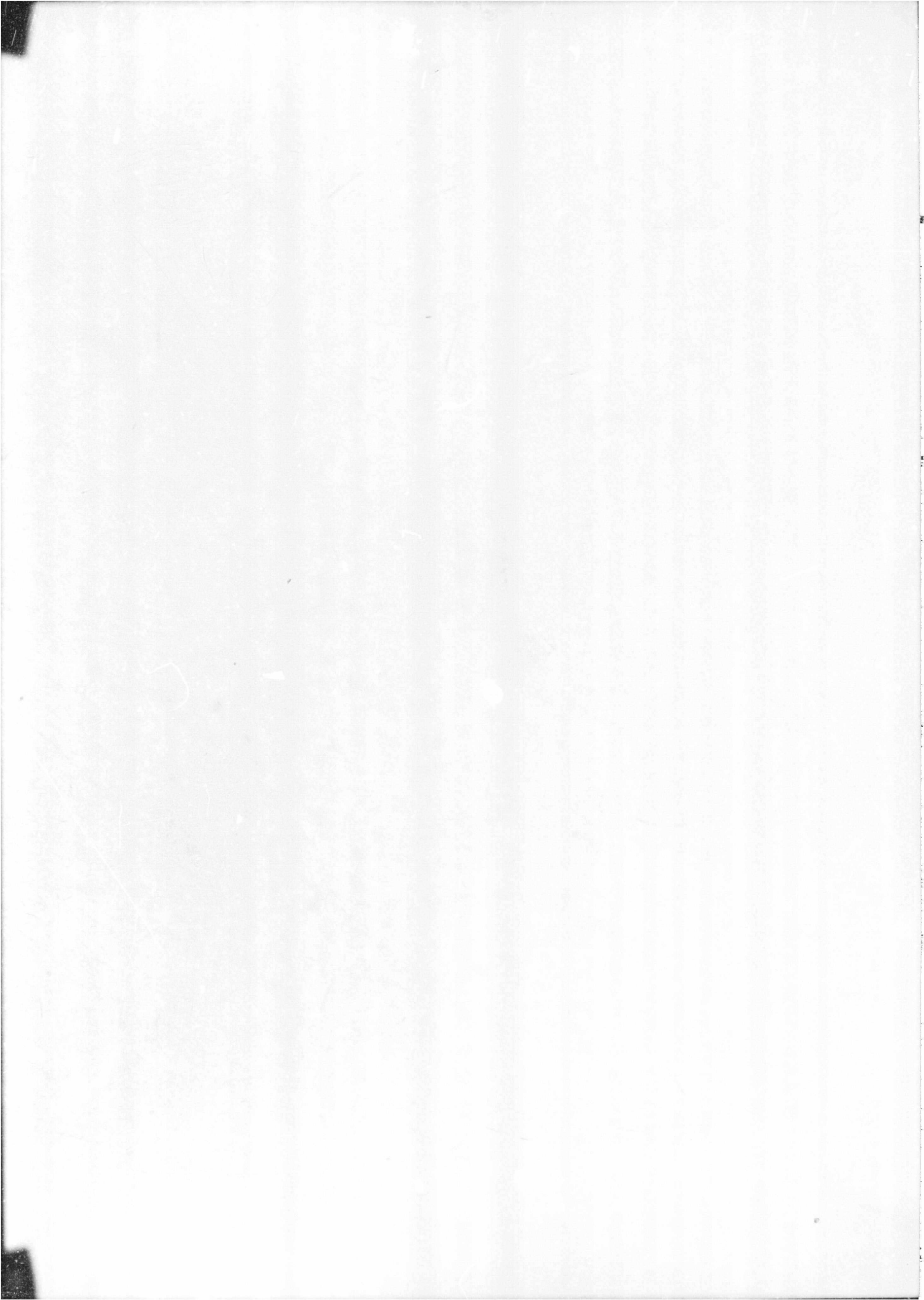
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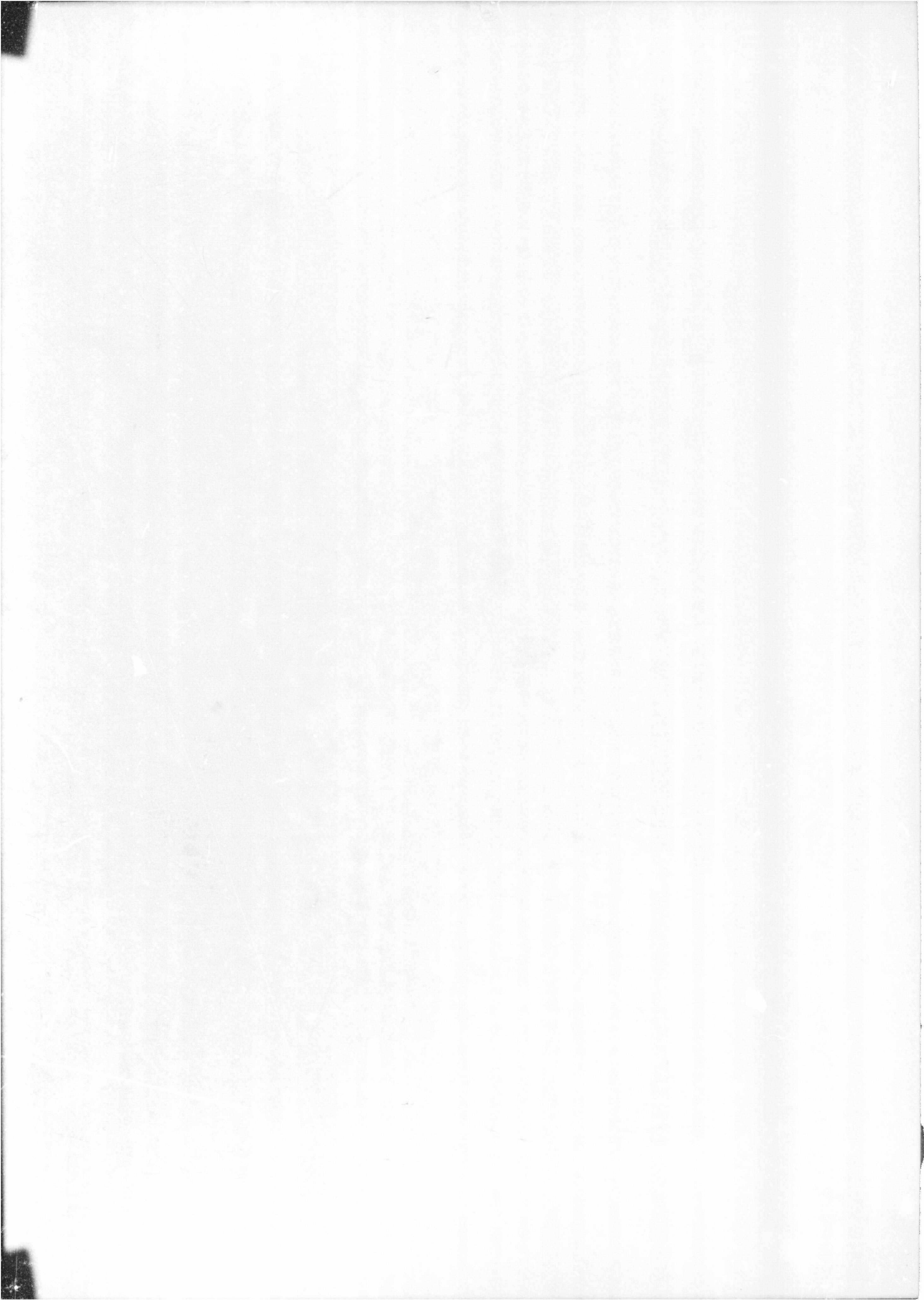
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