SELF-CONCEPT AND THE BLACK CHILD

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ABSTRACT

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The theories of self-concept development proposed by social learning, psychoanalytic, cognitive-developmental, and ethnolinguistic writers are used as a foundation to examine self-concept development among black children. This thesis includes a survey of the research conducted in the past thirty years dealing with self-concept formation among blacks, and in particular focuses on the work of the psychologist, Kenneth Clark. In his research, Clark found that black children as young as three and four years of age have started to develop a concept of racial differences insofar as this is indicated by the characteristic of skin color, and that the majority of the black children he tested preferred white skin color.

Since Clark's original work was done in 1939, the question arises as to impact which the "Black is Beautiful," and other black-pride movements of the 1960s, have had upon
the formation of racial attitudes and preferences in young black children. To begin to answer the question of whether significant changes have taken place, this thesis will include a replication of Clark's original doll study.

In the responses received from twenty-seven black children, all four year old pupils in the Head Start program in Pacoima and San Fernando, results were obtained that were nearly identical to those of Clark's study. It was found that 78 percent of the black children preferred the white figure on the request for "likes the best." In comparing the number of white selections to brown selections on this question, the null hypothesis was rejected at the .01 level of significance by the chi-square test.

On the question calling for self-identification, 67 percent indicated the brown figure, the relation of brown to white choices being significant at the .02 level. Further, 74 percent knew which figure was the "Negro," the relation of brown to white selections being significant at the .01 level. Like Clark, I found that the preference for the color white among black children often exists at the same time, in the same set of attitudes, in which there also exists an awareness that the child himself is the opposite of that which he prefers.

Despite the emergence of movements emphasizing black pride, the fact that the preferences of the black children that I tested do not differ significantly from
those of the black children in Clark's original study, suggests a lack of basic changes in a society that is still white oriented in terms of attitudes fostered by the mass media, economic conditions, and social opportunities. The remainder of this thesis will discuss some of these interrelated factors as well as examine self-concept development among blacks from an historical and educational perspective, suggesting some implications that this perspective has for policy decisions.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Over three decades ago, the psychologist Kenneth Clark began a series of studies designed to measure racial identification and preference in black children. Using methods involving dolls, line drawings, coloring tests, and questionnaires, Clark came to the following set of conclusions: black children as young as three and four years of age have already started to develop a concept of racial differences insofar as this is indicated by the characteristic of skin color; this knowledge develops gradually from year to year to the point of absolute stability at the age of seven, and the majority of the black children prefer white skin color and reject black skin color. In his doll study, for example, black children ranging in age from three to seven were presented with four dolls, identical in every respect except for their skin color. Two of the dolls were white and two were dark brown. Clark then asked the black children to respond to requests such as: "give me the doll that you like the best," "give me the doll that looks bad," "give me the doll that looks like a Negro child," and, "give me the doll that looks like you." In their responses, approximately two-thirds of the black
children indicated that they liked the white doll best. Further, more than half of the children indicated that the brown doll looked bad. Moreover, three-quarters of the black children could identify the brown doll as being "colored" or "Negro," and two-thirds of the children indicated the brown doll in response to the request calling for self-identification. Clark concludes from his data that coincident with an awareness of racial differences and racial identity, there also comes an awareness and acceptance of the wider society's values and attitudes with respect to race. Even for the very young black child there is a growing awareness of the fact that to be black in American society is a mark of inferiority. The fact that young black children prefer the white doll reflects their knowledge that society prefers white people in terms of social and economic opportunities, attitudes fostered by the mass media, and segregated and inferior institutions. Learning about racial differences and preferences, according to Clark, are part of the intricate set of values and attitudes the child assimilates about himself and his social milieu (Clark, 1939, 1940, 1947, 1955, 1963).

Since Clark's original work was done in 1939, perhaps one of the most interesting questions to ask involves the impact which the "Black is Beautiful," "Black Power," and "Black Nationalism" movements of the 1960s have had upon the development of racial attitudes in young black children. In short, have these movements fundamentally altered...
color awareness and preference in young black children? Therefore, this thesis will include a modified replication of Clark's original doll study. First, however, it will be useful to review some of the studies, in addition to Clark's, that have dealt with the development of the black youth's self-concept, and to place these studies into a theoretical framework. This thesis will also examine self-concept among blacks from an historical and educational perspective, and will suggest what implications this perspective has for policy decisions.
Chapter 2

THEORETICAL MODELS

A common thread that seems to run through otherwise divergent theories of personality development is the assumption that a child acquires knowledge about himself as a result of experiences with other human beings. Providing what is perhaps the classic statement on how the individual acquires knowledge of who he is through interaction with other people, a statement which bears certain similarities to elements of social learning, psychoanalytic, cognitive developmentalist, and ethnolinguistic formulations, is George Herbert Mead's theory of self-concept.

George Herbert Mead hypothesizes that an individual's self-concept develops through interaction with other members of society by taking the role of the "other." The self, according to Mead, is formed by internalizing the attitudes, values, and norms of one's peers, parents, teachers, and all other representatives of the society. What a person does, thinks, and feels, depends upon the projection of oneself into the minds of others. Mead contends that this process in which the developing child assumes the role of the "other," takes place largely through the use of language. Further, Mead argues that communica-
tion should be conceptualized in a very broad sense as social behavior including not just language, but also gesture and other subtle social acts communicating underlying attitudes and adjustments to those attitudes. Language, therefore, is a social process, a means of communication "providing us with the material that exists in our mind. It does this by furnishing those gestures which, in affecting us as they affect others, call out the attitude which the other takes, and that we take insofar as we assume his role" (Mead, 1934, p. 75). According to Mead, it is out of these countless messages received from others in the society, that the individual contrives a picture of who he is. Moreover, the individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoint of other members of the social group to which he belongs. This social group, or community, that gives the individual his unity of self is the "generalized other."

Personality, in terms of Mead's framework, can be viewed as a function of social learning. The myriad of experiences and observations with which the young child is presented, as well as the values and attitudes fostered by significant models, can be viewed as the learning framework from which knowledge about the self is derived (Hall & Lindzey, 1957; Wylie, 1961). For example, Albert Bandura and his associates in elaborating upon the social learning approach contend that not only overt behavior, but also
generalized attitudes, beliefs, and values can be acquired through the observing and imitation of important adults in the child's life. Moreover, the parent, teacher, or television character that serves as a model for imitation need not "reinforce" the behavior or attitude for it to be learned. In describing the mechanism by which "observational learning" takes place, Bandura argues that attitudes and behavior can be acquired through simple exposure, independent of the observer's overt response or of its reinforcement (Bandura, 1963, 1968). In a similar fashion, Gerwitz (1968) contends that what he calls the "generalized imitation concept" can be used to explain a child's internalization of abstract values, attitudes, and life styles, and that this process of taking on the ideals of an important other person is not unlike the psychoanalytic concept of "identification." Further, not only do adults serve as models to be imitated, a young child also interacts directly with the social environment, assimilating attitudes and values through direct experience with social relations, economic conditions, and community life.

Mead's theory can also be related to psychoanalytic thought, especially in terms of the trend in recent decades among psychoanalytic writers to give greater importance to the role of social norms, values, and attitudes in the formation of personality. Freud's original reliance upon biological and instinctual factors, has been qualified and
expanded into greater reliance on environmental, social, and cultural determinants. Bronfenbrenner (1963) has referred to this shift in emphasis as the "socialization" of Freudian thinking, a trend which can be clearly seen in the work of Erik Erikson. Human personality, according to Erikson's eight-stage model, can be said to develop according to steps predetermined in the human organism's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with a widening social radius (Erikson, 1963, 1968a, 1968b). In a process similar to the one outlined by Mead, the individual as he develops through each stage of life internalizes a set of attitudes, values, or what Erikson calls "prototypes." Erikson contends that every person's psychosocial identity contains a hierarchy of positive and negative elements, the latter resulting from the fact that the growing human being, throughout his childhood is presented with evil as well as ideal prototypes by reward and punishment, by parental example, and the community's typology as revealed in wit and gossip, in tale and story" (Erikson, 1966, p. 237).

Further, many of these social prototypes containing positive and negative values, are not necessarily communicated through direct spoken language, but come instead through subtle behavioral cues. In a manner not unlike Mead, Erikson argues that social meanings can be communicated not only by words but also by "minute displays of emotion such as affection, pride, anger, guilt, and anxiety" which "transmit to the child the outlines of what really counts in his world" (Erikson, 1964, p. 30).
Although different in other respects, it can be seen that both social learning and psychoanalytic theory share common ground in their assumption as to the crucial role played by the surrounding social environment in shaping personality development. From the interactionist perspective, cognitive developmentalists such as Piaget and Kohlberg have also touched upon the role of social factors such as learning by observation and imitation of others in the development of knowledge about the self. The cognitive developmentalist would assert, however, that while socio-culture factors can influence the formation of self-concept, an in-depth analysis would also reveal the importance of factors dictated by the individual's developmental structure. In short, individual differences in cognitive structure, according to Piaget, play a crucial part in determining how an individual mediates his experiences. In viewing the role of imitation in the socialization process, both Piaget (1951) and Kohlberg (1966) reject any simple S-R instrumental learning conception due to the inadequacy of the concept of extrinsic reinforcement, the failure of the social learning theorists to recognize that increasingly more complex internal structures are tied to developmental levels, and the one-sided classification of all behavior as being environmentally determined to the disparagement of demonstrable inner-determined reactive states. With these qualifications, however, with the recognition that the
child is not merely a passive recipient of environmental stimuli, and with the constant awareness that "equilibrium" is always being "maintained between consciousness of self and awareness of others," Piaget can be compared to the social learning position. Thus, in contending that the young child comes to discover himself through a progressive comparison of his own body with other people's bodies, Piaget writes that

... with regard to psychical qualities, it is by imitating other people's behavior that the child will discover his own. In this way the individual passes to the "subjective" stage in which he is conscious of possessing an "I" that is identical with that of others" (Piaget, 1965, pp. 387-388).

In addition to bearing certain similarities to the cognitive developmentalist position, Mead's theory can also be related to language and personality models provided by Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir. For example, the ethnolinguist Whorf argues that language is not just a means of communication, but that it also structures the way persons think of and perceive their world. The way people organize the myriad of impressions presented to their minds, and the development of those impressions into concepts, is largely a function of their language. Since action often follows from the way people think and perceive, and since language is the most important influence upon the development of our thought patterns and perceptions, it follows that language thus determines a large part of human culture. In short, language not only
reflects but also shapes cultural and individual values, attitudes, and ways of thinking (Whorf, 1941, 1950, 1956, 1967).

In a related point of view, Edward Sapir contends that the individual's perceptions of the world are not only largely shaped by language, but that language acquisition is both a social necessity and a fundamental factor in the growth of individuality. Thus, human beings are "very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society" (Sapir, 1967, p. 76). The individual, Sapir hypothesizes, adjusts to reality through the use of language because the real world is "to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group." Moreover, Sapir provides a very broad definition of communication which includes more than just language proper. What he refers to as "primary communicative processes," also includes gesture, intonation of voice, and a "large and ill defined group" of processes called "social suggestion," consisting of those "unformulated and unverbalized communications of society" which may have more psychological importance than actual words (Sapir, 1921, 1949, 1967).

If Whorf and Sapir are at least partly correct in their contention that language helps shape the perception of the world held by an individual and a society, then it follows that world view and its language foundation is in-
tertwined with the way in which an individual perceives himself in relation to the society as a whole. An individual's world view, including a concept of himself within that world view, would in part, therefore, be a reflection of the language of the wider society. Thus, one could argue that in our society the black youth's perception of the world, and his self-concept within that world, is largely determined by the language of the social milieu of the America in which he finds himself.

The development of the black youth in American society can be viewed from the perspective of the models outlined above. The various theoretical conceptions of social learning, psychoanalytic, cognitive developmentalist, and ethnolinguistic writers can, for this purpose, be seen as complementary and somewhat overlapping rather than mutually exclusive, and can be utilized to look at the ways in which a black youth internalizes the values and attitudes communicated by the surrounding social milieu. What is different in each theoretical conception is the particular emphasis given: the social learning theorist stresses the idea that personality development is mostly a function of modeling and imitating others, the ethnolinguist focuses upon the importance of language in personality development, the psychoanalytic writer sees personality in terms of selected psychological determinants expressed at various stages, and the cognitivist views personality growth as being
tied to changes in logical operations occurring at various developmental levels. In looking for compatibility, however, one can use the models of both Whorf and Erikson, for example, as a frame of reference to help explain the way in which a black youth perceives his world and his place in it, as a result of being presented through communication processes with certain prototypes about himself as a black. One can employ Mead's model and the social learning theory to analyze the image reflected back at the developing black youth as he gazes into the mirror held up by parents, peers, and the wider society. Finally, one can utilize Piaget's theory to qualify the one-sided environmental assumption of the social learning theorists, making it clear that modeling and imitation are first conditioned by individual cognitive developmental factors. In the case of the preoperational child, for example, there may be inherent limitations on his ability to generalize, categorize, and classify the value-laden ethnic labels that he is exposed to. According to several studies, the values, attitudes, and expectations communicated to the developing black child, say, in essence, that to be black is to be inferior. To better understand the interrelationship between these negative social communications, the developing self-concept of the black child, and what Mead calls the "generalized other," it will be useful to turn to studies, in addition to Clark's, conducted with black nursery school children.
Chapter 3

STUDIES OF SELF-CONCEPT FORMATION AMONG BLACKS

In her study of black nursery school children in New England, Mary Goodman (1964) furnishes an hypothesis regarding the mechanism by which preference for white over black occurs among Negro children, a preference evidenced by the fact that three-quarters of the black children she tested chose the white rather than brown doll. Goodman argues that in talking to their children, parents are likely to consistently use certain terms to describe conditions which they like. The word "clean," for example, tends to suggest other things such as whiteness, brightness, and some of the pleasant attitudes of being around these conditions. In making such associations, preschool children will often talk about their clean hands or clean shoes with obvious pride and pleasure. The child's reference to dirtiness likewise means disapproval or displeasure. Goodman contends that when a Negro child is put before a white and a brown doll, it is the white doll that looks clean to him and the brown one dirty. Because he associates whiteness with cleanliness and cleanliness with a pleasant feeling and possible praise from parents, the white doll is chosen more often than the brown one. Goodman concludes that very
early in life Negro children learn what "fine" things are in America. Goodman learned that the mothers of four-year olds often speak of "fine people." When personal attributes are so described, the meaning is equally clear, and it is the attributes of whites which are "fine." They have fine, smooth, or silky hair. Negroes have coarse, kinky, or rough hair. Whites have "fine features," meaning small or delicate noses and mouths. Negroes have "coarse features," meaning broad noses and thick lips. The black child does not need to hear Negroes described in this fashion, or see Negroes who might reasonably be so described in order to get the general idea that they should be so described. He has only to become accustomed to hearing "fine" and similar words attached to the attributes of whites. Then, as he gets the idea that Negroes are the opposite, he will think of and use words opposite of fine in connection with Negroes.

Evidently, racial attitudes begin to take shape at least as early as the nursery school years in the form of an emerging racial awareness. During this period, and as part of the larger process of establishing a sense of self, the child develops an awareness of his own bodily characteristics by, as Piaget might contend, taking cognizance and making a progressive comparison of other people's bodies with his own. Individual differences in children's perceptual ability and growth of logic will determine when
differences are first noted and given significance. Moreover, while the child may indeed be starting to develop rudimentary racial attitudes, he is still confronted with the task of matching his level of understanding with his verbal ability. That is, Piaget might well argue that what eludes the preoperational child is not only the full meaning of a racial term such as "Negro," and therefore its consistently correct use, but more importantly, the conceptual nature of the racial labels he may be able to verbalize. Therefore, one could qualify Goodman's claim that even four-year olds can generalize the labels they hear to all Negroes, with the argument drawn from Piaget that it is only with the development of a higher cognitive level that the child will gradually learn to generalize concepts such as "Negro" appropriately to all members of that ethnic group rather than to specific people. In short, it is only when the child can grasp the categorical or class character of the labels he uses that his racial preferences and rejections assume the essential nature of the racial attitudes of the adult. This conception is not dissimilar to what Gordon Allport (1954) has called "pre-generalized learning." By age four, according to Allport, the child may not quite understand what racial terms and labels mean, but he has begun to realize that color differences have some type of social connotation. A child's growing racial awareness is by no means affectively neutral. Black and
white are already becoming emotion-laden concepts that can be applied to people.

The process of internalizing the values and attitudes communicated by what Mead calls the "generalized other" begins in early childhood. The black child begins to gain a concept of who he is by being presented with certain positive and negative values or "prototypes" about self. If Goodman is correct in her analysis, by nursery school age these values are closely tied to certain key words communicated by parents and others who the social learning theorist would designate as significant models: adults who have themselves been subject to the values of the wider society. Thus, from the Sapir-Whorf perspective, it could be argued that language, as it affects black parents and subsequently their children, sets up certain value-laden mental categories which largely shape how black children perceive their own physical characteristics.

Goodman's and Clark's studies are supported by a number of studies done by Gordon Allport (1954) in nursery schools. Allport found that black children were racially aware earlier than white children and that they tend to be confused, disturbed, and excited by the problem. This interest and disturbance, Allport found, can take many forms. Black children asked more questions about racial differences, often fondled the blond hair of a white child, and were often rejecting toward black dolls. Like Clark,
Gordon Allport found that when black children were given a white and a black doll to play with, they almost uniformly preferred the white doll; many slapped the black doll and called it dirty or ugly. Although they were too young to understand the nature of the trouble, some of them were already in various ways defensive, over-reactive, and tense as a result of their vague feelings of disadvantage. The dawning racial awareness, Allport concludes, comes with the development of a sense of inferiority associated with black skin. Negro children, very early, become vaguely troubled by the first awareness of a handicap in being black.

Studies by Landreth and Johnson (1953), Stevenson and Stewart (1958), and Kenneth Moreland (1958), support the findings of Clark, Goodman, and Allport. Using pictures rather than dolls, Landreth and Johnson's study of three and five year-old black children in California found results similar to those of Clark. Stevenson and Stewart, in their study of black children aged four to six, found a "high frequency" of race rejection. Comparing black and white children of the same age, Stevenson and Stewart found that a much lower proportion of black children made self-race choices in selecting playmates, companions to go home with, and guests for a birthday party. Further, the black children placed other blacks in negative positions in incomplete stories more frequently than whites placed other
white children in such positions. In trying to account
for the high rate of race rejection by black children,
Kenneth Morland hypothesized in his study that black chil-
dren are "unconsciously identifying themselves with the
dominant, privileged race. The superior position of whites
is emphasized to the Negro children in television, in
movies, in magazines and books, and in the pictures on the
walls of their nursery school. It might be expected, then,
that such unconscious identification should take place"
(p. 137).

These studies of black nursery school children can
be viewed from the perspective of the models proposed by
Mead, Sapir and Whorf, and the social learning theorists.
The black child, as he develops, gradually internalizes
values communicated by the "generalized other," which make
him aware of the societal connotation of his black skin.
That these negative values are closely tied to certain emo-
tion-laden words and concepts is a fact stressed by Robert
Coles in *Children of Crisis*:

> Words like "dark" and "black" or "light" and "white"
> have a number of connotations. Dirt is dark, and
> summons in hygienic middle-class minds all sorts of
> fears--germs, illness, and contamination. Man's
> waste products are black. The devil is dressed in
> black, and the evil of our sins is dark, a stain
> upon our good conscience" (Coles, 1967, pp. 333-334).

To argue that the development of a positive self-concept in
black children is hindered by the internalization of such
emotion-laden words and concepts is obviously a generaliza-
tion which undoubtedly has many exceptions. Nevertheless,
the studies in the field seem to indicate considerable support for this generalization.

From the psychoanalytic perspective, the "unconscious identification" which Morland noted among young black children can be seen in relation to the general theory of identification proposed by the Freuds and Erik Erikson. Sigmund Freud (1933) defined identification as a process in which "one ego becomes like another one, which results in the first ego behaving in certain respects in the same way as the second; it imitates it, and as it were takes it unto itself" (p. 90). Anna Freud, in her interpretation of identification argued that by identifying with an authority figure, by assuming the figure's characteristics, the individual was in fact developing a "psychic defense" against the threats emanating from that authority figure (A. Freud, 1948). Although the Freuds were addressing themselves primarily to the type of identification that occurs between a child and its parent, the theory of identification can be conceptualized on a broader scale to encompass the relationship between an oppressed minority and the oppressors of the wider society. This is exactly what Erikson (1963) sought to do in his analysis of black identity when he wrote that

... the Negro's unavoidable identification with the dominant race, and the need of the master race to protect its own identity against the very sensual and oral temptations emanating from the race held to be inferior ... established in both groups an association: light--clean--clever--white, and dark--
dirty--dumb--nigger" (p. 242).

The looking glass held up by American society reflects back at the black youth one central image: the derogation of blackness. This derogation can be viewed as a communication of negative and ideal prototypes. When a black person looks into the mirror held up by white society, he sees black skin and kinky hair being represented as negative prototypes and white skin and straight hair being valued as ideal prototypes. The values, attitudes, and norms espoused by the dominant white culture say to the black that he should strive to approximate the ideal prototype of light skin and straight hair. In reflecting upon his youth, Malcolm X provided a penetrating insight into the desire by the black man to approximate whiteness through hair straightening. In describing his own "conk," he reflected,

... and on top of my head was this thick smooth sheen of shining red hair, real red, red and as straight as any white man's. How ridiculous I was. Stupid enough to stand there simply lost in admiration of my hair now looking "white." I vowed that I'd never again be without a conk, and I never was for many years. This was my first really big step toward self-degradation: when I endured all that pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. I had joined that multitude of Negro men and women in America who are brainwashed into believing that black people are inferior, and white people superior. They will even violate and mutilate their God created bodies to try to look pretty by white standards. (Malcolm X & Haley, 1964, p. 54).

Malcolm X provides a concrete example of the way in which the "generalized other" communicates attitudes and
values calling for the derogation of blackness. At the esthetic level, the dominant white culture gives to the black a negative appraisal of thick lips, kinky hair, and black skin. At the psychological level, psychiatrists have tried to understand the effects upon the personality of the Negro as a result of living in a society dominated by the white ideal. In one study (Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951), psychiatrists interviewed twenty-five urban Negroes from various social classes. In describing a 33 year-old Negro woman from the lower class, the psychiatrists write, "A. F. is quite color-conscious. At first she denied she drew distinctions, but later, in the face of dream material to the contrary, she admitted her prejudice in favor of lightness." In one interview she stated, "I don't care for anything dark. My second child is dark. I've noticed when he does something I act as though it's very bad, but if my first child, who is light, does the same thing, it hardly aggravates me." Kardiner and Ovesey contend that this black woman uses color for status purposes. "One day, during her pregnancy, she was irritated by a neighbor who boasted of a light grandson. She promptly had a dream: 'All I remember is seeing my new baby. I saw him as he looked when he was born. He was very light. He looked white.'" The psychiatrists argue that she rejected the obvious wishful quality of the dream. She insisted she had no preferences. However, in the first interview after the delivery she triumphantly proclaimed, with evident satisfaction,
"Remember I told you I was going to have a white baby? Well, he came out pure white!"

In interviews with a 21-year old woman from the middle class, Kardiner and Ovesey had similar findings. This Negro woman's mother "taught her to reject being a Negro and to aim for white aspirations. Such instruction was tantamount to teaching self-contempt." She "learned her lesson well and incorporated the white ideal. But the incorporation of a hated ideal is a guarantee for perpetual self-hatred." In her dreams, this black woman experiences rebirth fantasies, "in which she sheds her blackness and is reborn white" (pp. 135-36, 286).

In their conclusion, Kardiner and Ovesey argue that the stigma of being black in a white-oriented society affects Negroes irrespective of class or sex. The internalization of the white ideal, the authors posit, has acted upon the black as a "slow, but cumulative and fatal, psychological poison." The more that a black accepts the white ideal, the greater his "intrapsychic discomfort" has to become. Moreover, this acceptance of the white ideal by blacks becomes a "recipe for perpetual self hatred, frustration, and for tying one's life to unattainable goals." The internalization and acceptance of the white ideal for beauty often means, for example, the attempt to destroy physical characteristics such as kinky hair and dark skin, by the use of straighteners and bleaches. "In its most regressive form, this ideal becomes the frantic wish to be reborn white"
Another study undertaken by a psychiatrist also reveals the concern of blacks about their physical characteristics due to internalizing the values communicated by the "generalized other." This preoccupation and its detrimental effects are described by the psychiatrist in the following case:

Lily was very unhappy and often wished that she were dead. She constantly worried about her looks, especially her complexion and her hair. She bitterly resented the fact that ever since childhood people always told her mother how cute her younger sister was but never said anything about her. The fact is that her sister is lighter complexioned... In fact, Lily's sense of unworthiness, as measured by the white evaluations of skin color, had gone so far that she imagined that people were talking about her, and found it difficult to believe it whenever her friends made any favorable comment on her clothing or her appearance.

In describing another black teenage girl, the author writes, "Nellie is light complexioned, but worried about her hair."

Moreover, as a young child,

So much importance was attached to the looks of her hair that her mother often told her: "When you are ready to get married, choose a good looking man with good hair; you have to think of your children." As a result of such a special stress on the color and the kind of hair, Nellie has flatly refused to associate with people of her own group who are very dark and who have bad hair (Dai, 1953, pp. 560-61).

The findings of Kardiner, Ovesey, and Dai seem extremely impressionistic. To make generalizations about all Negroes on the basis of a few interviews, as do Kardiner and Ovesey, is a questionable procedure. The blacks interviewed, since they came to the psychiatrist for help in the
first place, may not be truly representative of Negroes who are psychologically healthy. The intrinsic value of psychoanalysis involving dream interpretation, as a procedure for revealing an absolute truth about human personality, is also obviously subject to question. Nevertheless, other methods, such as those employed by Clark and Goodman, would tend to support the hypothesis that the wider society communicates to the developing black certain values tied to language symbols which have the effect of causing anxiety, self rejection, and even self hatred among those who are furthest removed from the white ideal.

The studies that have been cited with respect to the self concept of the developing black youth were undertaken in the 1950s and earlier. Further, the experiences described by Malcolm X took place in the 1940s. Perhaps a significant question at this point concerns the extent to which anti-black values and attitudes communicated by the dominant white society still shape the self-concept of the black youth. In the face of the Black Muslim, "Black Power," and "Black is Beautiful" movements of the 1960s, the concept which a developing black youth has of himself may have changed considerably. Nevertheless, a study done by Kenneth Clark in 1965 suggested the continuing preoccupation of many black youths with hair straighteners and skin bleaches. Clark recorded the following conversation between a group of teenage boys:
"You know, if he go in there with his hair slick up like white, they might go for him better."

"They might use him for a broom or a mop."

"Well, why do you wear brushes?"

"Why do I wear brushes? It's a blind, a front. Are you saying that I'm ignorant?"

"He's a playboy. He like to do his hair like that. He's ashamed of his own hair, you know. He feels that he's black and now he wants to be half and half. He wants to be a half breed" (Clark, 1964, p. 65).

William Grier and Price Cobbs (1968), black psychiatrists, explored the effects on the black woman of having internalized values that derogate her physical characteristics. After a series of interviews with a black woman the psychiatrists wrote,

She thought it a fundamental truth that black women with thick lips and short kinky hair were ugly. Intellectually, she could discuss varying standards of beauty, but they had no relevance for her--she was ugly" (p. 9).

Based upon their interviews and studies, these psychiatrists have developed several generalizations with respect to the way black women view their physical characteristics. In this society, the ideal type is the blonde, blue-eyed, white-skinned girl. Women exert great efforts to approximate this ideal.

The developing black girl finds that her blackness
is the opposite of the ideal of creamy white skin, her lips are thick, her hair is kinky and short. The writers feel that the overwhelming majority of Negro women have their hair fixed by some means. The use of bleaching cream is also widespread among black women. Publications aimed at Negro audiences, the psychiatrists continue, have always found a certain group of advertisers eager to buy space. These are the producers of bleaching creams, whose financial success provide objective evidence of the fact that black women have spent fortunes trying to be white. These attempts by black women to achieve an impossible ideal, the psychiatrists argue, can only be damaging to their self-concept.

The observations of Grier and Cobbs are undoubtedly as subject to criticism as those of Kardiner and Ovesey two decades earlier. It is difficult, if not impossible, to measure with any degree of accuracy the extent to which black women have internalized anti-black values, seek to attain an impossible white ideal, and possess a damaged self-concept. Whatever limitations may reside in the psychoanalytic method, studies conducted in the early 1950s and late 1960s using psychoanalytic techniques did come to the same basic conclusion: black women tend to reject their physical characteristics and wish to become white. Moreover, a 1965 study of black nursery school children came to conclusions that were almost identical to studies
In research conducted in 1965, Judith Porter (1971) employed brown and white dolls to construct play situations in which awareness, self-identification, attitudes, and preferences were measured among black nursery school children. Like Clark, she found that black children show an "overwhelming" preference for white dolls in questions designed to measure "incipient racial attitudes." By age four, Porter contends, the child is beginning to make an "affect-laden" connection between color and people. The colors white and brown are starting to be thought of in terms of good and bad, and people of these colors are often evaluated accordingly. Moreover, in one of the first studies to attempt to measure social class as a variable in determining preference among black children, Porter found that children from middle class homes tended to have even greater race rejection than children from the lower classes. Porter also attempted to take into account the sex variable as a possible source of differences among black children, but found that there was no substantial differences between boys and girls in doll preferences.

In a study conducted in 1967, Steven Asher and Vernon Allen (1969) also made an attempt to extend Clark's original study, especially with reference to possible social class differences. The black children they tested, ranging in age from three to eight, were divided into mid-
dle and lower class according to parent's occupation. The results showed that over 70 percent of the black children preferred the white figure and rejected the black figure. Social class did not produce a significant statistical difference on any item; however, on all the questions, middle-class children responded with a slightly higher proportion of white figure preference. In their conclusion, Asher and Allen suggest that the results of their test indicate that slight social and economic gains, will not necessarily lead to greater racial pride, but may instead contribute, through more frequent comparisons with whites, to increased feelings of inferiority.

Citing the call by "Black Power" advocates for blacks to develop their own values and goals and to cease striving toward middle-class ideals, the authors contend that "rejection of social comparison with whites may result in a more positive racial and self-conception" (pp. 164-65).

Asher and Allen's study was conducted in 1967, possibly the high-water mark of the "Black Power" and "Black is Beautiful" movements; at least at the rhetorical level. Therefore, it may have been too early to determine the influence of these movements on racial attitudes and preferences among black children. To begin to answer the question of whether the passage of five years, in relation to the height of the summons by many black leaders toreject white society's values and standards of beauty, has had much of an impact on the attitudes of the developing
black child, I replicated, with a few slight changes, Clark's original doll study.
Chapter 4

REPLICATION OF KENNETH CLARK'S STUDY

Method

A total of twenty-seven black children from the Head Start programs in Pacoima and San Fernando were tested. The children were all four years-old, and were in Head Start because their families were at or below the poverty level as defined by the Federal Government. Over 75 percent of the children in the two Head Start schools were black, approximately 20 percent were chicano, and less than 5 percent were anglo.

A pair of puppets, manufactured by Hazelle, were used to match as closely as possible the age of the children. In every respect, the puppets were identical except for skin and hair color. The "black" puppet had dark brown facial color and black hair; the "white" puppet had light skin and light colored hair. I thought that puppets rather than dolls might be more appropriate for both girls and boys. Also, by using puppets rather than dolls, I hoped to minimize selections which may only measure response sets to a type of toy the child owns. I found that almost all of the children had dolls at home, whereas only one child had any puppets.
To make the children as comfortable as possible, I went to the Head Start program for several hours on the day prior to the actual test day, and tried to involve myself in some of their activities. On the actual test day, I used their names in talking to each child. Each child was tested individually in a room apart from the other children. After inviting the child to play with the puppets for a few minutes, the two puppets were placed in a prone position before each child, and I asked the following questions adapted from the original Clark study. I asked the questions randomly to prevent any possible order effect.

1. Give me the puppet that looks like a black child.
2. Give me the puppet that looks like you.
3. Give me the puppet that looks like a Negro child.
4. Give me the puppet that you like the best.
5. Give me the puppet that is nicest.
6. Give me the puppet that looks bad.

Results

A chi-square test was performed to determine whether the relationship of white puppet selections to brown puppet selections was "statistically significant." Presented in Table 1 are the statistics showing that on all but question six, the number of white puppet choices in relation to brown puppet choices was "statistically significant." It
Table 1

AWARENESS AND PREFERENCE IN BLACK CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Give me the puppet that . . .&quot;</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Brown</th>
<th>x²</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Looks like a black child</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.34</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Looks like you</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Looks like a Negro child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You like the best</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is nicest</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Looks bad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear, for example, that in my sample a significant majority of the black children indicated the brown puppet as looking like a black child, a Negro child, and like themselves. On the racial awareness question, calling for the child to identify the "Negro" puppet, the null hypothesis that the relationship of brown to white puppet selections was merely a product of random selection, was rejected at the .01 level. On the racial awareness question, calling for the child to identify the "black" puppet, the relation of brown to white puppet selections was also significant at the .01 level. On the question calling for self-identification, the relation of brown to white puppet selections was significant at the .02 level.

It is also clear that a large majority of the black children preferred the white puppet. The relationship of white to brown choices on the items "likes the best" and is "nicest" were significant at the .01 and .10 level.
Although a majority of the black children indicated the brown puppet as looking "bad," the results just missed statistical significance at the .10 level.

Perhaps what is most significant, however, is the discrepancy in the choices of black children between identifying their own color and indicating their color preference. A comparison between those 21 responses indicating preference for the white puppet as the one "liked the best" and those 18 responses indicating the brown puppet as "looking like you," reveals that in 15 cases these two responses, indicating correct self-identification but white preference, came from the same child. Evidently, the preference for the color white, exists at the same time, in the same set of attitudes, in which there also exists an awareness that the child himself is the opposite of that which he prefers.

Comparison to Clark's Study

Presented in Table 2 is a percentage comparison between Clark's study and the one I conducted. Clark's study involved a total of 253 black children from segregated schools in Arkansas, and integrated schools in Massachusetts. Of this number, 29 were four years-old. This can be compared to the 27 four year-olds that I tested in a largely de facto segregated setting in Los Angeles. Like Clark, I found that even four year-old children seem to have an awareness of the relation between race and the
Table 2

PERCENTAGE COMPARISON WITH CLARK'S STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Clark's Study (1939) %</th>
<th>Present Study (1972) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Looks like a black (colored) child</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Looks like you</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Looks like a Negro child</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You like the best</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is nicest</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Looks bad</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(29 children, age-4) (27 children, age-4)

physical characteristic of skin color. The results that I obtained are very close to Clark's findings. The consistency of the results for questions "looks like a black child," "looks like a Negro child," and "looks like you," tends to support the conclusion that black children, then as now, are making identifications in a "racial" sense. In his 1939 study, Clark noted that a knowledge of racial concepts as related to the term "Negro" does not exist with the same degree of definiteness as it does in terms of the more basic designation of "colored." Today, the term "black" has obviously replaced "colored" as the more widespread and accepted designation of an ethnic and racial group. I changed my question accordingly. Clark also found that racial
knowledge in terms of the word "Negro" makes a sharp increase from the four year-old level (59%), to the six (78%) and the seven (85%) year-old level. The four year-olds that I tested, evidenced a knowledge (74%) of the term "Negro" comparable to what Clark found in his six year-olds.

In terms of preferences, I obtained results that were nearly identical to those of Clark's study. An exact comparison is not possible, however, since Clark did not control for social class. Like Clark, I found that the majority of black children prefer the white figure. As Table 2 points out, the percentages on the questions "likes the best," "is nicest," and "looks bad," are almost the same between 1939 and 1972. Clark contends that the responses to the question "looks bad" implies that along with a preference for the white figure there also comes a concomitant negative attitude toward the brown figure. Clark suggests that his results indicate that the "crucial period" in the formation of racial attitudes begins at around four and five years. At this age, children appear to be reacting more "uncritically" to the racial attitudes, mores, and values of the larger environment.

The black children that I tested, in expressing a preference for white puppets, are reacting to a society which is still largely white oriented. A black child prefers white because his social environment supports that view, or as Mead and Erikson might argue, the "generalized
other" is still communicating "prototypes" designating black as inferior and white as superior. In short, the fact that the preferences of the black children that I tested do not differ from those of the black children in Clark's original study seems to reflect a lack of basic changes in America. Insofar as generalizations are possible from my small sample, one of the major effects of being black in America continues to be the negative influence exerted upon the developing self-concept of many black children. Despite the "Black is Beautiful" movement, negative self-images still exist among blacks, affecting children's perceptions at least as early as age four, and possibly serving as a pervasive force in shaping later personality. Obviously, this generalization does not speak to the question of individual differences in the formation of self-concept among black children. The influence exerted in self-concept formation by an individual's distinct temperament, intellect, family environment, and school experience are areas for further research. The focus of this thesis, however, is upon the role played by broader social, economic, and historical factors in the emergence of self-concept among black children. It is to the history of the United States, therefore, that this thesis will now turn.
Chapter 5

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

One must look to the history of the United States to find the origins of the negative self-concept which the black has of himself. The historian Winthrop Jordan (1968) attempted to analyze the attitudes which Englishmen held toward the African Negro in the opening decades of the seventeenth century. In the mind of the Englishmen who introduced Negro slavery to America, the African's skin color played a crucial role in attitude formation. To Englishmen of 1600, the concept of blackness was loaded with deep psychological meaning. No other color except white expressed such ingrained values and had such an emotional connotation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* of the period, in describing black, used terms such as soiled, dirty, foul, deadly purposes, death, baseness, and evil. Much of the literature of the period likewise gave similar definitions to blackness. From a religious perspective, many equated blackness with a curse upon Canaan. The writer argues that for those first Englishmen who brought African slaves to America, "white and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the
Since the origins of slavery, the dominant white society has had mental categories tied to language which have influenced its perception of the Negro. One can only speculate to what extent these negative perceptions and values were communicated to the Negro, and to what extent a negative self-concept was formed by developing black slaves as a result of having internalized these values. Having been stripped of much of his own language and culture by the institution of slavery, one could possibly assume that blacks might be especially subject to the influences of the dominant white society's culture, and in a Whorfian sense, its language foundations.

Not only did the first English colonists hold certain negative concepts about the skin color of the Negro, but in addition the decades before the Civil War witnessed the emergence of a set of justifications for slavery that became the foundation for much of the racist doctrine still in existence today. The theory that the black man was an inferior being developed as a legitimating myth to support the social conditions of white superiority achieved through slavery. The idea of the inferiority of the black man enjoyed wide acceptance in the South and the North. It was the central component of the theory of society expounded by Southern thinkers and leaders. No less a figure than Thomas Jefferson, in his Notes on Virginia, expressed his belief in the inferior intellectual capacity of the black
man. Such ideas were developed into a well-defined body of thought by the biological and social scientists and ministers of the South, out of which evolved a theory of racial inferiority justifying white domination over the black man and control of the slave (Franklin, 1966; Gossett, 1963; Grimes, 1964; Jordan, 1968, Meir & Rudwick, 1966).

It is possible to formulate a general theory of the Negro slave's self-concept based upon the assumption that most slave-owners were racists and that personality develops as a result of contact with what Mead calls "significant others." As he developed, a Negro slave's self-concept became in part structured around one concept communicated by the surrounding milieu: he is inferior because he is black. From the perspective of the social learning model, it can be argued that the Negro child, as he matured, gradually internalized values projected by older Negro slaves and the white master, making him aware of the meaning of his black skin. The social mirror held up to the developing Negro child said that his blackness equaled inferiority. The negative prototype equaled the slave, whereas the positive of superior prototype equaled the white slave master. Decades after emancipation, the former slave Frederick Douglass would observe that,

Slaves would sometimes fight with each other, and even die at each others hands, but there were very few who were not held in awe by the white man. Trained from the cradle up to think and feel their masters were superiors, and invested with a sort of sacredness, there were few who could rise above the
control which that sentiment exercised" (Douglass, 1892, p. 145).

In his analysis of slavery, Stanley Elkins (1968) contends that in the closed slave system, in which all lines of authority descended from the master, the Negro child was offered no satisfactory father image other than his white oppressor. In terms of Anna Freud's theory of "Identification with the Aggressor" (1948), it can be seen that a young slave child might develop a negative concept of himself as a result of imitating his master, part of this imitation being an internalization of the master's racist values. This view of the slave master as being a kind of father substitute whom the slave child might try to imitate, can be seen in light of Anna Freud's statement about the tendency of children to impersonate and imitate an aggressor or authority figure, and can also be seen in light of the following observation made by Alex de Tocqueville as to the effects which racist attitudes had upon the personality of the nineteenth century black:

The Negro makes a thousand fruitless efforts to insinuate himself among men who repulse him; he conforms to the taste of his oppressors, adopts their opinions, and hopes by imitating them to form a part of their community. Having been told from infancy that his race is naturally inferior to that of the white, he assents to the proposition, and is ashamed of his own nature. In each of his features he discovers a trace of slavery, and if it were in his power, he would willingly rid everything that makes him what he is (de Tocqueville, 1851, p. 338).

In the view of Grier and Cobbs, the passage of more than a century has not fundamentally changed the situation
described by de Tocqueville. In 1968 these black psychiatrists addressed themselves to the question of the type of attitude developed against blacks during slavery, and the extent to which it dominates current society. They concluded,

Persisting to this day is an attitude, shared by black and white alike, that blacks are inferior. This belief permeates every facet of this country and it is the etiological agent from which has developed the national sickness" (Grier & Cobbs, 1968, p. 25).

A second major effect of slavery was the fragmentation and destruction of the African's culture, history, family ties, and tribal loyalties. Beginning in 1619, with the first introduction of slavery into America, the black slave was systematically stripped of his African historical and cultural foundations. The institution of slavery obliterated his African past, his family and tribal ties were severed, and he was often prohibited from initiating new family ties within the slave system. Slaveowners neither encouraged marriage among their slaves nor hesitated to separate slave families on the auction block. The slave household tended to develop in a fatherless, matrifocal pattern. Although blacks were to use this pattern to form a new sub-culture within the wider slave society, that dominant white society clearly communicated to blacks the inferiority of black skin. Unlike the European immigrant, the black slave coming to this country had few loyalties, and little history or culture to draw upon or identify
with. Although some African speech and thought habits may have survived (Herskovits, 1941), the black was left with little conscious awareness of his African past, because the white man had destroyed that past (Elkins, 1968, Pettigrew, 1964; Thompson, 1968).

A third major consequence of slavery is related to the major tenets of the Protestant Ethic. The Protestant Ethic contains as some of its major tenets the following: the belief that hard work and effort brings success, that self-assertion and expression designed to remake the environment is desired, and that from hard work and self-assertion one's environment can be controlled. In short, the Protestant Ethic, as it related to secular affairs, furnished the moral commitment to achieving control over one's world (McClelland, 1961; Tawney, 1926; Weber, 1958). The institution of slavery cut the black man off from the dominant cultural ideology insofar as it called for the internalization of the major assumptions of the Protestant Ethic. The slave was trained to be nonassertive, unaggressive, and docile. The structure of the slave system prevented the black from trying to achieve any sense of control over his environment. Blacks were placed in a completely dependent role. All their rewards came, not from assertion or achievement, but from absolute obedience and dependent compliance. This kind of relationship, between master and slave, all but eliminated the desire to achieve.

The above remarks obviously constitute a set of
generalizations for which there are many exceptions. Slave revolts, escaped slaves, the underground railroad, and the need to enact slave codes, all bear witness to the fact that not all slaves were docile and unassertive. Moreover, the harshness of the slave system may have been tempered somewhat in areas such as Louisiana which were more heavily influenced by the Catholic church's doctrine as to the essential human character and spiritual equality of the slave. Nevertheless, the brutality of the slave system beat the majority of black slaves into submission and prevented most from trying to assert personal control over their world.

Many of the values, attitudes, and norms, communicated to the Negro during slavery continued to shape his self-concept as a free black. The dominant white culture, after slavery, still communicated the concept that blacks were inferior, and that blacks should be nonassertive and docile. From the perspective of the Whorf, Sapir, and Mead models, the wider society still communicated certain perceptions about the world, the characteristics of which are partly described by the Negro psychologist Alvin Poussaint (1968) in the following terms:

The Negro most rewarded by whites has been the "Uncle Tom" the exemplar of the black man who was docile and nonassertive, who bowed and scraped for the white boss and denied his aggressive feelings for his oppressor. In order to retain the most menial of jobs and keep from starving, black people quickly learned such servile responses as "yassuh, massa": passivity
was a necessary survival technique. To be an "uppity nigger" was considered by racists one of the gravest violations of racial etiquette. Vestiges of this attitude remain to the present day, certainly in the South but even in the North: blacks who are too outspoken about racial injustices often lose their jobs or are not promoted to higher positions because they are considered unreasonable or too sensitive (p. 243).

American society has historically communicated different values, demands, and expectations to a person depending upon the color of his skin. The white is expected to be aggressive and assertive in order to gain a sense of power and control over the environment. Conversely, the black throughout the course of American history has had expectations communicated to him calling for him to be passive and docile. The black was never expected to exert himself to control his environment in the same sense as the white. The fact that blacks still have an inferior sense of being able to control their environment in comparison to whites is suggested by the Coleman Report (1966, pp. 320-21).

Related to the apparent inability of the black man to feel that he has a sense of control over his environment is the black's perception of the environment as being a hostile and threatening place. One study looked for possible differences between black and white teenage boys in terms of the way they perceive their environment (Mussen, 1953). The results showed that blacks saw the general environment as more hostile and threatening than whites. A
series of pictures were used about which the boys were to tell a brief story. It was found that a greater number of blacks than whites told stories in which the hero was hated, scolded, reprimanded, or was the victim of physical assault. Further, tests showed that blacks, less often than whites, saw themselves establishing friendly relations, respecting others, or being kind and considerate of others. Blacks infrequently saw themselves as being respected, followed, or obeyed by others. The general picture emerging from this study was one of feelings of inferiority, helplessness, and indifference among black youth.

The degree to which a person will accept personal responsibility for what happens to him is a function of the extent to which he feels he can extract material and social benefits from the environment through his own efforts. A child's feelings about whether his own efforts will produce rewards affects his perception of a given goal, and his expectancy of attaining that goal. In this light, a few studies have attempted to relate a child's sense of control over his environment to his ambition to achieve. The typical finding is that black children are often unlikely to develop ambitions to achieve comparable to those found among white children. These differences in ambition and needs to achieve are a function of the differences in the sense of control which black and white children hold over their respective environments. In an unresponsive and hostile world, hard work and extended effort toward
achievement appear to the black youth to be unrewarding (Coleman, 1966; Mingione, 1965).
Chapter 6

BLACK YOUTH AND THE SCHOOLS

From the perspective of Whorf and Sapir, American society during slavery and since emancipation has communicated to the developing black youth three interrelated negatives: a negative self-concept, a negation of his original culture, and a negative environment in the sense of it being hostile and beyond his control. In terms of the conceptual model of Mead, an institution to which the black youth brings these negatives, and an institution that largely perpetuates these negatives in the developing black youth, is the school.

Several studies have shown that one of the strongest indices of academic achievement is the extent to which a youth has a feeling of being in control of his environment and destiny (Coleman, 1966; Katz, 1967; Slaughter, 1969). Yet the black youth, as we have seen, living in an environment which is hostile and threatening, does not feel that his world is either responsive or controllable. He brings to the classroom this concept of being unable to evoke a positive response from his world. In the classroom, the black youth finds that the social environment further restricts his ability to control his world. Although
there are many exceptions, the existing school system largely insists upon the maintenance of order and the imposition of strict control over individual assertion. In describing the attitude toward control which one school administration gave to teachers in a junior high school in a black ghetto, James Herndon (1969), a former teacher, observed that:

... you were supposed to figure out the real attitude of the administration toward the behavior of students in your classrooms, with an eye to your own evaluation. That is, what degree of control were you being ordered to maintain or what degree of disturbance and chaos would be acceptable. On that afternoon, it was really made easy by Miss Bentley, the vice-principal. Miss Bentley offered us the example of the Army. The Army, she submitted, was an organization of people given certain tasks to perform. So was the school (p. 8).

Attempts to maintain order and discipline sometimes take a brutal form in ghetto schools. Jonathan Kozol (1967), a former teacher in a predominantly black grammar school in Boston, described the frequency with which corporal punishment in the form of beatings and whippings were administered to pupils. Reliance upon physical punishment is the ultimate means to maintain order and discipline. In the view of Kozol, it also grows out of deeply seated racial hate.

It has already been hypothesized that the black youth, as he develops, internalizes the racist values and attitudes of the wider society. Through this process the black youth acquires a negative self-concept. In several ways, the existing school system contributes to and
perpetuates the black's negative self-concept. Kenneth Clark (1963, 1965) has illustrated how segregation perpetuates a black's feelings of inferiority and contributes to a negative self-concept. Whether segregation is supported by law or custom, by public apathy, or by lack of understanding, its effects are the same: it debases and distorts the black man's personality. In 1954, the Supreme Court used a brief submitted by Clark and other psychologists and social scientists in declaring de jure segregation to be unconstitutional. In Brown v. Board of Education the court stated, To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.

Kenneth Clark has proposed that "residual psychological prejudices" underlie the continued inability of society to eliminate de facto segregation. For many years the existence of segregated schools was supported by law or justified on the basis of the existence of segregated neighborhoods. Today, more subtle explanations are used. These include doctrines of "cultural deprivation" and myths that the culturally determined educational inferiority of black children will impair the ability of white children to learn if they are taught in the same classroom. This cultural deprivation theory assumes that, because of their background, black children will not only be unable to compete with white children, but will also retard the white children. This
theory supports the continued rejection of black children (Clark, 1968).

In Mead's terms, the image that the dominant white culture communicates through the societal looking glass to the black, continues to say that he is inferior. "Cultural deprivation" has merely been added as another component in this concept of inferiority. The black is expected to be inferior because he emerges from an inferior cultural environment. This expectation on the part of the dominant white culture can be related to the entire question of self-concept, academic achievement, and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Robert K. Merton has provided the fundamental statement on the self-fulfilling prophecy. Merton feels that people respond not only to the objective features of a situation, but also, and at times primarily, to the meaning the situation has for them. The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false concept come true. In short, if men expect something to be true, they will govern their behavior accordingly, and may in the end make what was once false become true (Merton, 1948).

A study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968a, 1968b) provided a concrete example of the self-fulfilling prophecy operating in a school situation. In their study a group of teachers were told that on the basis of test
scores, certain of their students should be expected to show rapid increases in academic achievement through the next year. Actually the children designated as potential spurters had been selected at random rather than on the basis of test scores. Nevertheless, achievement tests at the end of the year revealed that the designated children did show large gains in academic achievement in comparison to the other children. The authors proposed that the explanation for the results of their test could be found in the subtle features of teacher-student interaction. A teacher's tone of voice, facial expression, touch, and posture, may be the means by which expectations are communicated to the pupil. Such communications change a child's conception of himself, his anticipation of his own behavior, his motivation, or his cognitive skill. Children who are expected to gain intellectually, and have these expectations communicated to them, indeed do gain.

Several other studies have looked at the expectations which the school has of lower class black youth. One study of teachers in a Northern city found that the majority of teachers and their supervisors rejected lower-class youth and looked upon them as inherently inferior. The children were seen as not being capable of profiting from a normal curriculum and not capable of learning (Trow, 1968). Another study showed that teachers place the burden of academic change on the minority student. The inadequacies
of the minority child were deemed the most important factors in his low achievement and general poor school performance (Carter & Hickerson, 1968). Another study, conducted by Howard Becker (1951-1952) in the Chicago school system, found that teachers generally felt that the lowest group—slum children—were difficult to teach and morally unacceptable. Another investigation found that urban teachers tended to describe black pupils as talkative, lazy, fun loving, high strung, and rebellious (Banks, 1969).

Jonathan Kozol recounted a member of the Boston School Committee's statement on this subject: "We have no inferior education in our schools. What we have been getting is an inferior type of student" (p. 60).

These studies and accounts indicate that teachers often have negative attitudes and expectations toward poor and lower-class black youth. Just as the study by Rosenthal and Jacobson showed that positive attitudes and expectations of the teacher can raise student achievement, it might be hypothesized that the converse is also true. If teachers have negative attitudes toward their students and expect little from them, students will likely fulfill these expectations in class, and on IQ and achievement tests. Negative teacher attitudes and school expectations, when coupled with the fact that for centuries the dominant white society has communicated to blacks the concept that black skin means intellectual inferiority, has possibly acted as
a self-fulfilling prophecy. The fact that researchers such as Arthur Jensen find that blacks score lower than whites on IQ tests, may say very little about actual intelligence, but may say a great deal about the working out of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For generations, black culture and history has been denied or distorted by the schools, its teachers, and textbooks. The school and its curriculum have communicated the myth of white superiority and black inferiority. Black youths in the schools have been led to believe that they never had a culture or civilization of their own. No mention has been made of the black African civilizations of Ghana, Mandingo, and Songhai, nor the cultural, commercial, and intellectual centers at Jenne and Timbukto. The civilization, culture, and history taught to the black youth, has been white, western European, and Christian.

History textbooks have largely distorted the position of the black man during slavery and reduced the harshness and brutality of the slave system. From the end of the Civil War until the 1950s, judging by the way many textbooks treat this period, the black man was virtually non-existent. A 1968 survey in Michigan revealed that current textbooks still presented false impressions of the black person, mostly through errors of omission. Textbooks were characterized by oversimplification, inadequacy, and incorrectness in their portrayal of the black man (Trezise,
In response to a question asking if Negro history had been taught in her school, one black student replied, "no more than George Washington Carver and his peanuts. I am sick of George Washington Carver and his damn peanuts" (Hill & Burke, 1968, p. 139). Textbooks were designed, Hill and Burke conclude, to prepare white children to live in a white society and to make the black feel inferior.

In writing of his experiences, James Herndon comments upon the absence of textbooks depicting black history and culture. "At GW there was the added difficulty that none of these books acknowledged anywhere within its covers the existence of Negroes or of a lower class of any sort" (p. 136). Jonathan Kozol's experience in Boston is similar to Herndon's. Kozol found that with one exception, storybooks for his black grammar school children did not contain references to Negroes. That one exception exemplifies much that has previously been stated:

The story seems memorable, because so far as I can recall, it is the only story in any storybook on any shelf that I ever saw within my school in which an American Negro child was described. The problem about the story was that it could not present the child in anything but a slavelike, superstitious and pathetic comic light" (p. 80).

Even at the pre-school and kindergarten level, black children until very recently have been exposed to stereotypic reading matter. Beyond the transmission of overt stereotypes such as Little Black Sambo, there has also been a great deal of more subtle communication of
color preferences and attitudes. Historically, it has been common for children's stories to identify black with dirt, the night, or something to be fearful of (Trager, 1952). By contrast, white is associated with things good, pretty, and fun. Moreover, a young black child who is exposed to only white faces in the pages of children's books might also make associations with respect to race, whiteness becoming a kind of model for identification (Martin, 1965). Thus, until very recently almost all children's books communicated positive white values reinforced by a cast of white characters.

With few exceptions, school reading materials have portrayed the contributions of white America, communicating an ideal model of white middle class. As a result, the black youth's self-concept is negated, his academic motivation is lessened, and his school experience takes on certain meaningless qualities. As the Kerner Report stated:

The quality of education offered by ghetto schools is diminished further by use of curricula and materials poorly adapted to the life experiences of their students. Designated to serve a middle class culture, much educational material appears irrelevant to the youth of the racial and economic ghetto. Until recently, few texts featured any Negro personalities. Few books used or courses offered reflected the harsh realities of life in the ghetto, or the contributions of Negroes to the country's culture and history. This failure to include materials relevant to their environment has made students skeptical about the utility of what they are being taught (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 434).

In addition to the fact that much of the public
school system has historically provided an environment fostering a negative self-image among young blacks, present school intervention programs designed to help young black children may actually hinder their development of a positive self-concept. The assumptions and methodologies of many early childhood intervention programs, the researchers Baratz and Baratz (1970) contend, not only dooms such programs to failure as measured by white middle class academic tests, but also constitutes a form of institutional racism. This racism, the researchers argue, takes the form of an a priori assumption which deems the black child's home environment in terms of the maternal child-rearing practices which he is subject to, and in terms of the language and cognitive skills which he is exposed to, as being distinctly inferior to an "idealized" norm of the white middle class home. Given this ethnocentric view of the superiority of white middle class culture, present intervention programs often seek to destroy the assumed pathological black culture which supposedly produces cognitively defective children, and replace it with what is assumed to be a superior white model. These assumptions and methods, Baratz and Baratz posit, are unrealistic, unworkable, and racist. The "social pathology" model, for example, has wrongly equated language competence with the development of standard English, and has thus incorrectly interpreted "the different, yet highly abstract and complex, non-standard vernacular used by Negroes as evidence of
linguistic incompetence or underdevelopment" (p. 34). In short, the authors contend that the intervention model rests upon the erroneous assumption that blacks have cognitive and linguistic deficits which must be remedied by the application of white middle class standards, yet a great deal of recent investigations do not support this "inferior" view of black language. Research by Wolfram (1969) and Dillard (1972) supports the contention that lower-class black children have a highly structured, well ordered and coherent, but different, dialect from that of standard English. What is needed, Baratz and Baratz conclude, are culturally relevant materials and procedures that supplement rather than destroy what is in fact a strong and coherent black cultural and linguistic system. The authors support early childhood intervention programs, but these programs must promote and utilize the positive features of a "viable cultural system" rather than destroying them.
Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the beginning, slavery destroyed much of the Black African's culture and linguistic patterns, taught him to be nonassertive and non-achievement oriented, and communicated to him a negative perception of his physical characteristics. The dominant white society, since slavery, has continued to communicate many of the same values. Much of the existing school system and even present intervention programs continue to tell the black that he either has no past, or that the remnants of that past which have helped form the present cultural and linguistic patterns are inferior. Moreover, what Sapir might call the broad communications of society continues to tell the black that he is inferior. In this respect, it is interesting to note a recent study (Colfax and Sternberg, 1972) which attempted to determine whether one segment of the mass media, major magazines, was portraying a more positive image of the black American. In going through five recent year's worth of nationally circulated magazines such as Reader's Digest, Ladies Home Journal, and Life, the researchers found that although the percentage of ads in which black persons were shown had nearly doubled in comparison to the previous five
year period (from about 2 percent to 4 percent), it was also noted that of the 673 ads in which blacks appeared, in only three cases did they appear in ads that depicted whites in lower ranking occupations. In almost all cases in which whites and blacks appeared together, it was the black that occupied the lower status. Moreover, almost all of the ads depicted black women or children, with black men appearing in large numbers only in ads dealing with public and private welfare, charity, and employment programs. Colfax and Sternberg conclude that "missing from these ads are black families and black males, at work and at leisure -- in short, the black American rather than the black stereotype" (p. 138).

An individual's self-concept is obviously structured by more than one component. Young black children may prefer white because the culture's ideal of physical beauty is light skin and straight hair. Black children may also prefer white, however, because as they mature they become increasingly aware of the social and economic disadvantages of being in a minority group in a racist society. Through the subtleties of family communication, a developing black child may be aware very early of the relationship between factors such as race and job opportunities, or between race and quality of housing. Through subtle learning processes, even the four year-old child may be aware that it is whites rather than blacks who usually enjoy the fruits of affluence. Studies (Trager, 1950; Coles, 1967)
have shown that even very young children are sensitive to
the relation between social and economic roles and condi-
tions on the one hand, and race on the other. Although
parents are certainly agents of society in the communica-
tion of values, they are not solely responsible for the
transmission of racial preferences and attitudes. Symbols
which imply black inferiority such as segregated and infer-
or schools and housing act as powerful agents in the com-
munication of attitudes irrespective of the positive or
negative attitudes fostered by parents.

While a stress upon black pride may change the at-
titudes of some blacks, black pride by itself may not be
sufficient to bring about significant changes in the con-
cept which many blacks have of themselves. As long as
poverty and race are connected, black skin will still con-
ote membership in a less desirable social and economic
group. If children are in fact aware of this connection,
then a change in the self-concept of black children will
come about only when black pride is accompanied by an elim-
ination of the relationship between race and social and
economic position. Indeed, the value of one component of
the drive in recent years to establish greater black pride,
namely the "Black is Beautiful" movement, has been ques-
tioned by Kenneth Clark. In recent years, Clark notes,
black men and women have tried to rebel against white stan-
dards and have given special emphasis to their "Negroid"
features and hair textures in a "self-conscious" acceptance of blackness. Clark contends, however, that "whether a Negro woman uses hair straightener or whether she highlights her natural hair texture by flaunting au naturel styles," she is "still reacting primarily to the pervasive factor of race and still not free" to take herself for "granted" or evaluate herself by the usual "standards of personal success and character. It is still the white man's society that governs the Negro's image of himself" (Clark, 1965, p. 64). Moreover, Clark suggests that the "natural" look may be a fad or cult of personal "escapism." It seems clearly easier, Clark argues, to reject programs which require personal expenditures of energy and commitment and to "embrace the fads which justify personal retreat and escape." The "natural look" Clark posits, may actually "mask a personal unwillingness to become involved in constructive programs for change" (Clark, 1967, p. 42).

It can also be argued that the "Black is Beautiful" movement has been taken over by corporate America, becoming another type of consumer good to be freely advertised by Madison Avenue. Rather than being the spearhead of a drive to build a positive self-concept for the black, the "Black is Beautiful" movement may have become merely another technique by which manufacturers attempt to sell their goods. One may question the degree to which a black man in an "Afro" drinking a can of beer, or a "natural"
coiffured black woman draped over the hood of a Ford or
dancing about in a brassiere will instill in black men and
women a positive concept of themselves.

Another example of how capitalist society has demon-
strated its ability to make "blackness" pay can be seen
in the recent outpouring of super violent, super "macho,"
black thriller movies. At least one observer of this
trend, Pauline Kael, contends that profit-motivated white
companies are exploiting "blacks whose ideas of beauty are
based on white stereotypes," in these movies which feature
blacks acting out the white man's worst fears of the sexu-
ally verile aggressive black man. Moreover, these movies,
according to Kael, portray black heroes adopting the worst
aspects of the money-oriented, consumer-good dominated,
and racist-white society which surrounds them (Kael, 1972,
pp. 159-165).

Rather than adopting the values of the surrounding
white society, many black writers at the height of the
"Black Power" years called for a rejection of the white
man's value system and the establishment of separate and
independent black institutions and values (Carmichael,
1967; Cleaver, 1967). Moreover, given the values of Ameri-
can society, several black social scientists set forth a
position with respect to the school system which challenged
several formerly held assumptions. One assumption that was
attacked concerned the values inherent in the schools them-
selves. According to several writers from the black
community integration into the existing school system was not necessarily a positive good because the values intrinsic in the schools were of the dominant white middle class. In integrated as well as segregated schools, the argument went, white supremacy dominated the pattern of teaching and the entire education process. The existing school system held up the model of the white middle class to be emulated. For example, to achieve high scores on tests geared for the white middle class student, black students in integrated schools were induced to internalize the culture of another ethnic group. Moreover, efforts at integration had always been based upon the assumption of white cultural superiority. From the "liberal" perspective of the 1950s and 1960s, the assumption had always been that black children needed to integrate into the existing school system in order to improve themselves. Integration, however, had always taken place on the white man's terms. White society determined when and if integration would take place, condescending to allow the black child to go to the white man's institution. This situation implied the inferiority of the black man, posited the superiority of white culture, and perpetuated a negative self-concept among black children (Hamilton, 1968; Poussaint, 1968; Galamison, 1968).

As a means of overcoming the racism in the existing school system, the concept of local community control was proposed by some black writers. One aspect of this
community control was to be the creation of local governing boards having the power to hire and fire superintendents, principals, teachers, and to control funds and fiscal policy. Another aspect of community control would be to turn the local school into a center of community life. The local school should become family and community oriented; a center for recreation, education, and social events; and should be open as a year round, day and night, center for the entire family. Public welfare and law enforcement could also be centered at the local school. As another way of bringing about changes, courses and curricula emphasizing black culture and history were demanded. This demand grew, as black writers put it, out of a quest for black consciousness, pastness, and collective identity. Having thus acquired a new self-image as a result of pride in his race and in its pastness, the black student, according to the argument, would seek to convey this image to others. Black history and culture should therefore involve or integrate the student into his community, augmenting his functioning in the community. The fostering of identity with the black community and the development of community consciousness would commit the black student to the task of helping to build the black community rather than seeking to escape it once his studies were finished (Hare, 1969; Galamison, 1968).

Clearly, there are fundamental limitations upon any
programs designed to promote greater black pride through black community control of local schools or other public agencies. Most of these programs would inevitably be tied to white society's economic institutions, tax base, policy making apparatus, and good will. Given the current political climate in America, the likelihood of achieving support for any kind of program for minority groups seems remote. Yet even if the black community did have complete control over its own schools, with the money and support to institute whatever intervention programs or curricula were deemed appropriate to help develop a positive self-concept among black children, assuming for the moment that such programs could be found and agreed upon, black lower class children would still be confronted with the realities of the wider society. The symbols of inferiority and inequality: relative poverty, poor housing, inadequate health and medical care, and inferior job opportunities, would still exist to adversely affect the developing black child. Insofar as the young child is aware of the connection between race and these social and economic inequalities, the concept which he has of himself as a black might still be damaged. Indeed, Marvin Lazerson (1970) has presented a convincing case that historically educational reform has often been used as a "surrogate" for real social and economic reform; educational changes being a way of avoiding the even more dangerous and controversial issues of providing new jobs or housing, ending poverty, or actively enforcing civil rights.
or antidiscrimination laws. What often happens, continues Lazerson, is that reformers, educators, and politicians place such high expectations upon the enormous influence which the improvement of educational opportunity will have upon improving social and economic opportunity, that when these expectations are not fulfilled, when the inevitable disillusionment sets in, support is withdrawn from any further commitments to education. In a similar vein, Christopher Jencks (1972) has recently argued that educational reform can't be expected to bring about an end to inequality in this country. According to Jencks, nothing less than a complete restructuring of the economic arrangements and institutions of America, along the lines of what European nations call socialism, will end inequality in this country. It can also be added that probably nothing less than an end to social and economic inequality will bring about fundamental changes in the way in which many individuals in those groups which suffer most from inequality will feel about themselves.

Based upon the hypothesis that communication in its broadest social sense in large part structures the concept which people have of themselves, it has been argued that the attitudes, values, and symbols of the wider society, rooted in historical, economic, and social factors, has served to shape a negative self-concept in the minds of many black children. To the extent that these factors
still shape the self-concept of the black child, there seems little cause for optimism.
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