An Examination of the Self-Concept and Education of the Culturally Disadvantaged Black Student: Some Administrative Implications

McKinley Dillingham
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/2565

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1971 McKinley Dillingham
An Examination of the Self-Concept and Education of the Culturally Disadvantaged Black Student: Some Administrative Implications.

By,

McKinley Dillingham

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Arts.

June 1971
-VITA-

The writer was born in Richmond, Kentucky, on June 25, 1934. He was graduated from Dunbar High School, Dayton, Ohio, in 1952, and from Knoxville College in 1957 where he received an A.B. Degree in Sociology. He received an M.Ed. in Guidance and Counseling from Loyola University in 1970. He became a Ph.D. candidate at Northwestern University in March, 1971.

The writer served in the U.S. Army from 1957-59 and has been employed by the Chicago Board of Education as a teacher and counselor since his discharge from military service in 1959. He is also a consultant at Mundelein College which involves educational and psychological counseling for the student body in addition to serving as advisor to the Black Student Union.

The writer is a member of the American Education Association, American Personnel and Guidance Association and Phi Delta Kappa Professional Education Fraternity.
He also serves as Vice-President of the Advisory Council for the lower North Mental Health Clinic and Chairman of the Student Problems Committee at Mundelein College.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completing this paper, I was assisted by several individuals in various ways.

I must give credit to my wife, Mary, who assisted me in every way possible. Professionally, credit goes to the following members of the Loyola Faculty who assisted me directly and indirectly:

Dr. Ann Juhasz, Educational Psychology
Dr. Manual Silverman, Guidance and Counseling
Mr. Douglas Van Brammer, Administration and Supervision
Dr. Melvin Heller, Chairman, Department of Administration and Supervision

Major credit goes to Dr. Max Bailey of the Department of Administration and Supervision, who assisted and directed me in the research as my special advisor. Major credit also goes to Mrs. Barbara Bacon of the School of Social Work, who assisted me in the analysis of the research data.
"The public schools are the kind of institutions one cannot dislike until one gets to know them well. Because adults take the schools so much for granted, they fail to appreciate what grim, joyless places most American schools are, how oppressive and petty are the rules by which they are governed, how intellectually sterile and esthetically barren the atmosphere is, what an appalling lack of civility obtains on the part of teachers and principals, what contempt they unconsciously display for children as children."

Charles Silberman, 
Crisis in the Classroom
CONTENTS

PREFACE

PART I

INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1
NATURE OF RESEARCH ......................................................... 4

PART II

HISTORICAL FACTORS ............................................................ 5

PART III

THE SELF-CONCEPT .............................................................. 17

PART IV

THE STUDENT ........................................................... 35

PART V

THE SCHOOL .......................................................... 42

PART VI

THE PRINCIPAL .......................................................... 48

PART VII

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION ........................................... 61

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................... 68
PREFACE

Schools in depressed areas are generally perceived as difficult schools. Research has indicated that these schools very often fail to meet the needs of their students by not providing the proper school atmosphere, curriculum and staff necessary for learning.

This paper is designed to examine some of the forces which generally operate in the "Culturally Disadvantaged Black School". An explanation of how the school basically fails to meet the student needs by not recognizing the value of the students self-concept is discussed. The study addresses itself to an examination of the historical factors involved in the education of Blacks in general and probes into the value of the student's self-concept. In addition to the above, some suggestions are offered to the school administrator (Principal) on how he might be able to improve his individual school.
INTRODUCTION

Many educators and other professionals who work with the disadvantaged are fully sympathetic with the Black's social reality and keenly aware of the social destructiveness of poverty, slum life, unemployment and of the institutional discrimination which forces these conditions upon the Black American; yet in attempting to help the Black to lift himself above these conditions, the complaint is voiced that he is unwilling to help himself. Few people realize that the Black person too often fails to see such self-aid as possible or even morally right in the scheme of things. He has become deeply ingrained with a basic feeling of worthlessness and so accustomed to the notion that he is "bad". Among many Blacks this attitude toward self manifests itself in different ways which usually result in self-hatred, hostility and, in addition, with youngsters, low school achievement.

The Office of Education suggested that "it is in the depressed urban areas that the web of social problems is thickest: crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, poverty, illiteracy, disease, unemployment, and broken families are found in city slums in massively greater degree than in society as a whole".

---

The children in the depressed areas seem severely hampered in their schools by a complex of conditions at home, in the neighborhood, and in the classroom. These children are highly transient, mobile and the parents seem unprepared for the perplexities of urban life. Their educational level is low and illiteracy hits a peak among them. Generally, the schools have higher than normal rates of scholastic failure, truancy, disciplinary problems, dropouts and teacher turnover.

The student referred to as "disadvantaged" may be described as different from "advantaged" in language development, self-concept, and social skills, as well as attitude toward schooling and society. Bernard Asbel describes him as:

"a child of another world, our laws do not bind him... our standard middle-class ambitions do not inspire him... teachers in the first grade to third grade feel the child slipping away. By the fourth grade he has fallen behind. By the eighth grade he may be as many as three years back, his mind closed, his behavior rebellious. By high school age he is more than likely a dropout, headed for chronic unemployment, disdaining the 'outside' middle-class world that already disdains him, secretly contemptuous of himself, a waste of human being. A failure."

As we consider the evils of society and its dehumanizing forces that have all but destroyed the human dignity of blacks, we contend that the school can serve as a "repair shop" for our deprived youngsters. These children have much to learn from education and the writer tends to agree with Robert M. MacIver who declares:

"The school's function is to educate, and where the family and community fail to provide the social adjustment and the psychological development necessary to prepare the

---

young to receive the education the school offers, it must step in to provide it within the area of its capacity. The school is in a peculiarly strategic position to perform such a preventive and rehabilitative function.\(^3\)

It is clear that no large city school system is doing more than a fraction of what is necessary to give Black disadvantaged youngsters the kind of education to which they are entitled. There is a good deal of experimentation going on, however, it is usually limited to only a few schools. The educational systems are still faced with the hard task of teaching the basic academic skills to the depressed population.

It is the central thesis of this paper, that from pre-slavery days to the present, society has played a negative role in the education of Blacks in general. In addition, however, even today schools function in a fashion of indifference to the needs of the Black disadvantaged student. Due to this, schools continue to destroy the self-concept of these students through an irrelevant curriculum, insensitive teachers and poor administrators.

This paper will attempt to: 1. Define the complex problems involved in educating the disadvantaged Black student through a discussion of the past problems which lead to the present complex conditions; 2. The present status of education and; 3. To suggest some steps in bringing about a solution to these problems.

---

NATURE AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

It is the central thesis of this paper that (1) society, from pre-slavery to the present has had a damaging effect upon the self-concept of Blacks, (2) the school has functioned in a fashion of indifference to the basic needs of the disadvantaged Black student and (3) due to the school attitude the institution continues to destroy the self-concept of Black students through its irrelevant curriculum, poor or improperly trained teachers and administrators.

In this paper it is proposed to (1) historically, show how society has played a negative role in the development of the self-concept of all Blacks and how this attitude has filtered down from the past to the present, (2) to show the effect the self-concept has upon the low academic achievement of Black students, (3) to probe into the attitude of the student, school and administrator found in the disadvantaged neighborhood and (4) provide an analysis and conclusion of the total educational situation presenting some administrative implications.

The paper is directed toward the elementary-secondary level and is basically descriptive in nature.
"For the Black, poverty is not white poverty. Many of its causes and many of its cures are the same. But there are differences—corrosive obstinate differences—radiating painful roots into the community, the family, and the nature of the individual...They are solely and simply the consequences of ancient brutality, past injustices and present prejudice."

Lyndon B. Johnson
Presidential Speech
June 4, 1965
Over a hundred and thirty years ago, Horace Mann, referred to education as the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance wheel of social machinery. As the one institution in which most blacks come into contact, the school offers the greatest opportunity to break down the cultural barrier found in our society today. This racist barrier helps to block the black man's advancement into the mainstream of American life. This educational opportunity is being muffed to some extent because the United States fails to face up to the problem involved in educating the disadvantaged black student.

To understand the kind of education the black disadvantaged student needs and the urgency which underlies that need, it is necessary to look at the total educational situation from a historical point of view. It is important to put into context the different social, economic, psychological, political and educational factors involved in the life of blacks which lead up to the present state of being.

As early as 1773, Americans who were at all interested in the education of blacks regarded it as both natural and normal that blacks should receive their training in separate schools from whites, based on the inferior status of blacks. In 1774, Newport, R.I., had a colored school, maintained by a society of benevolent clergymen of the Anglican Church. In 1778, a separate private school was established in Boston, and two decades later, the city opened its first public primary.

school for the education of Black children. Around the same time, New York had established separate schools, the first one opening in 1790. By 1814 there were several institutions that were generally designated as the New York African Free Schools.

Thus the most liberal section of the country between 1770 and 1814 felt that Blacks should be kept out of the mainstream of American life. The basic status of Blacks in the English colonies was fixed at a low point that distinguished them from all other persons of the time. Blacks were forced to establish their own religious institutions, which were frequently followed by the establishment of separate benevolent societies. Likewise, if Blacks were to receive any special education, it was a special education provided in separate educational institutions. This principle prevailed in most places in the North throughout the period before the Civil War. In some places Blacks gained admission to schools that had been maintained solely for whites. But the school committee of Boston refused to admit Blacks, arguing that the natural distinction of races, which no legislature, no social customs can render intermingling in the public schools. The committee felt that separation was advantageous to both Blacks and whites.

2. Carter Woodson, Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, (Wash.D.C. 1919) p.93
3. Ibid: p.99
4. Ibid: p.102
5. Ibid: p.104
In the Southern states, where the vast majority of Blacks lived, there was no concession suggesting equal educational treatment of Blacks. It was a common thought among whites that:

"Give a nigger an inch and he will take a mile. Learning and especially on the same basis of whites will in the long run spoil the best nigger in the world." 6

Many whites thought that thinking and listening were words of power and if Blacks participated in these activities, they would use this power against them. The most important factor of all was that none of the Southern states permitted Blacks to vote or to enroll their children in the public schools.

These segregated practices had a damaging effect on the personality of all Blacks and especially Black children. These same segregated practices continue to exist in many places today throughout this country and the initial psychological impact remains in the mind of our disadvantaged. Viola Bernard offered a description of this when she stated that:

"Segregation means that personal worth, of either a white or Black person, is measured solely by group membership regardless of individual merit. Such a measure is realistically false and of necessity distorts the developing self-image of Black and white children as well as their view of each other. Under these psychological circumstances the Black child for example, is burdened with inescapable inferiority feelings, a fixed ceiling of his aspiration level which can constrict the development of his potentialities, and a sense of humiliation and resentment which can entail patterns of hatred against himself and his own group, as well as against the white group." 7

One might wonder why the concept of segregation is mentioned at this point since there has been such a change since the 1700's and 1800's. The life of Blacks has not changed that much and many of the negative factors which characterized segregated education in the past continues to exist today. In viewing the past and present, David and Pearl Ausubel viewed the Black child in the following manner:

"Black children live in a predomantly lower-class sub-culture that is further characterized by a unique type of family structure, by specially circumscribed opportunities for acquiring status, by varying degrees of segregation from the dominant white majority, and above all, by a fixed and apparently immutable denigration of social value, understanding, and dignity as human beings because of their skin color. Hence, it would be remarkable indeed, if these factors did not result in significant developmental differences in self-esteem, in aspiration for achievement, in personality adjustment and in character structure." 8

It is important to know that nearly all Black children in the United States today, both in the North and South live in segregated communities and attend segregated schools.

It is impossible to discuss Blacks without considering the effect the continent of Africa had upon life in America. Today, Africa is contributing greatly to self-pride of Blacks; however, yesterday Africa contributed more to self-hate. To understand this, it is necessary to recall the image of Africa which prevailed just a few years ago. That


image, indeed, still dominates most white thinking. Even the textbooks used in our schools viewed the Black American's ancestry in a negative manner. Charles Silberman, in speaking of V.M. Hillyer's book, A Child's Geography of the World, stated that Hillyer described Africa as:

"A continent without a history, a place of savagery and ignorance, whose people had contributed nothing at all to human progress. It states that Asia is the largest continent. Africa is the next largest. But Africa was the in-the-way continent. It was in the way of those who wanted to get to Asia. Everyone wanted to get to Asia but wanted to go around Africa. No one wanted to get to it. Sailors have been shipwrecked on its shores, but few lived to tell the tale of the jungles, of wild animals and wild black men. Africa was called the dark continent because no one knew much about it or wanted to know about it." 9

There were other textbooks just as destructive. It can be easily recalled the inevitable pictures of the five races of man. The African man was always the most primitive.

In contrast, to the Emersonian white man of intellect, the Japanese aristocrat, the Malay Nobleman, and the Indian chief. All obviously selected to depict the highest social rank in each case. Professor Harold Isaacs wrote that:

"The African appeared as a prehistoric figure of man, naked, stepping out of primeval ooze, carrying an ante-deluvian club and shield." 10

One text, Isaacs reported, classified the states of man as 'savage' (all black) or (all red), 'barbarous' (chiefly brown), 'half civilized' (almost wholly yellow), and 'civilized' (almost all belonging to the white race)." 11

10. Ibid: p. 43
11. Ibid: p. 47
Of course textbooks were not the only depreciative factors found in our society concerning Africa. The newspapers, radios and magazines have all played their negative roles. Hollywood almost invariably showed Africa as a land populated by half-naked cannibals. Against this debasing picture of the African, the Black child had no defense psychologically. He had no way of knowing that the pictures happened to be false. On the contrary to this falseness, Isaacs offered another point of view by writing that:

"This is evidence of the Black man's inferiority. It was borne upon him with all the weight and authority of the all knowing and all powerful, all surrounding white world, thereby, confirming the sense of his own worthlessness that white attitudes and actions had already established." 12

Silberman stated that Isaac's confirmation played an important, frequently crucial, role in the development of the Black child's conception of himself. Silberman goes further by stating that the early discovery of the African background had been a prime element in shaping the individual's knowledge and attitude toward himself. 13 Based upon these writings and other approaches by white Americans, Africa, served to alienate the Black American not just from America but from the whole human race. For the Black to disassociate himself from Africa meant also to disassociate himself from the African's color, hair, and basic features. However, Blacks could not disassociate themselves from the

12. Ibid. p. 47
color factor. So therefore, the rejection of Africa was really a form of self-rejection.

Whites used the above disassociation as a means of denying Blacks a place in history, thus, keeping them down in status. This denial has been a central theme to perpetuate the concept of Black self-hatred. White America deliberately excluded many positive factors about Africa in its history books. It is clear that the enormous gaps in African history serve to confuse Blacks and keep them without a history. This omission reinforced the superiority status of whites and an inferior status of Blacks.

The period of slavery in America is a key factor in the life of Blacks. The fact that Blacks were slaves is important in itself. It meant that few Blacks came to the United States voluntarily and that every Black bears in his color the stigma of slavery. Slavery was the basic defect with which this country was born and includes the depth of racist attitudes of whites today. Even today Blacks find it difficult to move into the mainstream of American life. This happens because they are unable to destroy the image of slavery in their own minds and in the minds of whites. This image stems directly from slavery which was abolished over a hundred years ago. However, Blacks are still bound by its effects on their minds and spirits. Logan and Cohen evidenced this
when they wrote:

"For more than two centuries the vast majority of Blacks in North America lived as slaves. They were machines with bodies owned by other men... these effects are still felt today."\(^{14}\)

Researchers stated that slavery damaged the basic psychic values of Black people in America. However, slavery was justified by the belief of whites that Blacks were barbarians, members of an inferior race, whose natural lot was slavery.\(^{15}\)

The southern period of slavery was described as the time when Black men feared whites because of the treatment they received from their masters. Short of deliberately killing or maliciously maiming the slave, the owner had absolute power over his chattel.\(^{16}\) Slavery was considered as a social phenomenon, but it was generally thought of as a practice of bringing strangers into society for economic use. These human beings became property. Benjamin Quarles wrote that:

"Chattel slavery tended to become fixed and centered on the Blacks for reasons peculiar either to him or his beliefs and attitudes concerning himself... Black women could be put to task in the fields, to do work that would not be expected of white women. This was psychologically damaging to all Blacks. Resentful and upset because of their status in life, they considered themselves 'lowly' beings eventhough they desired change."\(^{17}\)

\(^{14}\) Irwin Cohen and Roymond Logan, American Negro, (Boston: Mifflin Co. 1970) p.40


\(^{16}\) Ibid: p.35

One of the most persistent myths in America grew out of the above statement. White America stated that the slave did nothing to protest his enslavement. This myth is demonstrably at variance with the facts, which stated that there were many slave revolts. The power of the slave owner kept Blacks in bondage not the lack of desire for freedom as so many mythical historians have indicated.

The life of the slaves was very sad. Their housing was particularly bad. Overcrowding was a rule rather than an exception. Most slaves received insufficient food and clothing. A normal family life was impossiibel and the slave master did not regard slave marriages as binding. The masters did not hesitate to break up families when a sale could be made. Few slaves knew the security of a wholesome family life, a happy childhood or a serene old age. Today many of our children from disadvantaged communities come from broken homes which is a reflection of what slavery did to the Black family. In addition to destroying the family structure of slaves, slavery psychologically castrated the mind of the Black male. The Black man knew his status and realized that submissiveness and unmanly behavior was rewarded, while aggressive and assertive behavior on his part was subject to punishment. But with his submissive behavior, the Black male took on other traits that the white man labeled as lazt, shiftless, dishonest, irresponsible, unstable and

unreliable. Cobbs and Grier wrote about some of the same psychological hangups which exist today. They showed evidence of this by writing that:

"The culture of slavery was never undone for the master or the slave. The civilization that tolerated slavery dropped its slave holding cloak but the inner feelings remained. The peculiar institution continues to exert its evil influence over the nation. The practice of slavery stopped over a hundred years ago, but the minds of our citizens have never been freed."\(^{19}\)

Slavery and its dehumanizing masters created one of the most deadly social diseases in the history of this country. It molded the lives of its victims and stripped them of personal pride, positive self-feelings and a sense of 'somebodiness'. Erik Erikson viewed the situation thusly when he wrote that:

"There is ample evidence of inferiority feelings and of morbid self-hate in all minority groups; and, no doubt, the righteously and fiendishly efficient way in which the Negro slave in America was forced and kept in conditions preventing in the most the incentive for independent ambition now and continues to exist."\(^{20}\)

Self-hate can be easily viewed today in our schools where Black students very often act out their aggressive needs within the group. In our schools in the disadvantaged area, there is a lot of fighting, bickering and backbiting which is a characteristic of the relationship of the students toward one another.


Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a Black Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard placed the blame of self-hatred on slavery, attitudes of whites and American society in general. Poussaint wrote that:

"We can blame many of present conditions on whites and we could be largely right. We could say Blacks destroy other Blacks because this white regimented society is a violent one. We could say that our self-dislike is a result of racism and thus rationalize taking it out on one another...We are powerless and more competitive and jealous of each other's success, that is why we fight each other." 21

Blacks of today are at the end of a psychological continuum which reaches back into the time of their enslaved ancestors. Their history is somewhat lost and society continues to view them as inferior. Cobbs and Grier stated that:

"One of the keystones in white America's justification of its exploitation of Blacks is its assumption that Blacks are stupid...the essence of the concept of white supremacy is that every white man is inherently superior to every Black man....It is a vital piece of the American self-concept." 22

Finally, the schools in this country have all, until recently, kept the true facts of Black history hidden from their curriculum. It is interesting to note how our schools made little mention of some important facts about the Black man. A research of Black history has stated that:

"Prehistoric Black men discovered iron...An African led the expedition into New Mexico and Arizona...there were thousands of Black cowboys...A Black man invented the gas mask and the traffic light...A Black surgeon performed the world's first successful heart operation." 23


It would not be surprising to find classrooms today in which teachers and textbooks openly perpetuate the myth of Black inferiority. There also might be classes in which children are told that African cultures are inferior to the western world and that Blacks were suited for slavery. The manner in which the history of Blacks was recorded in America has basically led to self-devaluation of Blacks. Black children have been presented a number of inaccuracies, distortions, and omissions of their own ancestry. Of course, this was a deliberate act on the part of white educators.

Today our schools are filled with a number of disadvantaged Black students who view themselves negatively simply because of segregation, discrimination, slavery, racism and all the other negative factors that go along with being Black and living in America. Researchers have indicated that this negative self-concept or self-image has a reflection on the Black students school achievement, attitude toward learning, readiness for learning and basically the students total outlook on life in general.
"As minority group children learn their inferior status to which they are assigned and observe that they are usually segregated and isolated from the more privileged members of their society, they react with deep feelings of inferiority and with personal humiliation. Many of them become confused about their own self-worth. Like all human beings, they require a sense of personal dignity and social support for positive self-esteem."

Kenneth Clark
Educational Stimulation for Racially Disadvantaged Children
From Crombach it was learned that:

"The self-concept has been a concern of psychology for a number of years. Despite this, the subject remains elusive and confusing, probably because of the lack of precision in defining this concept. The lack of a really acceptable definition of self-concept contributes to the lack of really effective measurement techniques. Since the self-concept is an organization within the individual's perceptual or phenomenal field, it is not open to direct observation. To study the self concept it is necessary to infer its nature from observations of the behavior or the individual. One class of behaviors which may be used as a basis for making such inferences, of course, is what the subject has to say about himself. Self-descriptions are not always to be taken at face value, however, they are useful. Whatever the student reports about himself is significant. It shows how he views himself or how he wants the school to view him."1

According to Brammer and Shostrom, "the 'self' is a construct rooted in the Gestalt and phenomenological psychology. It is typically defined as the individual's dynamic organization of concepts, values, goals and ideals which determine the ways in which he should behave. It is the individual's consistent picture of himself and is best represented by what he calls 'I' or 'me'. Various terms such as concept of self, self-images, self-concept and self-structure are used to describe this personality construct."2 Jersild referred to it as "a composite of thoughts and feelings which constitute a person's awareness of his individual existence, his conception of what he is."3 Sullivan and Horney wrote that "the self can never be isolated from the complex of interpersonal relations in which a person lives".4

Jersild's definition and assumptions with relationship to the self-concept have been fundamental and accepted by most psychologists, sociologists and clinicians. It might also be noted that Freud referred to the self-concept as 'ego' and 'super-ego' whereas Erickson speaks in terms of 'identity'.

James C. Coleman defined the self-concept from a different and more basic point of view. Coleman stated that "the individual's self concept is his picture or image of himself—his view of himself as distinct from all other persons or things. This self-image incorporates his perception of what he is really like (self-identity) and of his worth as a person (self-evaluation), as well as his aspirations for growth and accomplishment (self-ideal)." In this section, Coleman's point of view will be used along with Carl Rogers, Adrian VAnn Kaam and Ross Stagner to substantiate the discussion on the influence of the self-concept in determining the Black student's development in education.

Coleman wrote that the 'self' is not a mystical entity but a useful and seemingly necessary construct for explaining many aspects of individual behavior. The genetic and environmental influence in shaping the personality, causes every personality to be considered unique. Coleman goes further by stating that "the continuous interweaving of heredity, envi-

5. Ibid: p.104
ronmental, and self-influences shapes all of us into a little different form from everyone else." Carl Rogers seemed to have similar thoughts but expressed it a little differently. Rogers stated that "the self, whether it be conceived as object or as process or both, it is not homunculus or "man within the breast" or soul; rather it refers to objects of psychological processes or to processes themselves and these processes are assumed to be governed by the principle of causality. Rogers felt in other words, that the self is not a metaphysical or religious concept; it is a concept that falls within the domain of scientific psychology. Self theory represents a serious attempt to account for certain phenomena and to conceptualize one's observation of certain aspects of behavior." 8

Ross Stagner and Adrian Vann Kaam attempted to compliment Rogers and Coleman but expressed themselves from still another point of view. Van Kaam stated that: "every one of us has his own project of existence which implies among other things the style in which we embody our strivings in daily behavior. Such a style of existence has been formed in the light of individual experiences of attitudes of the surrounding culture in which we are inserted by birth and education. This culture component of our style of behavior and perception is mediated by the

image of 'ideal' behavior as held by people of our home, neighborhood and society."⁹ Here Van Kaam explained to us that our style of life and the way we see ourselves permeates our human relationships which in turn is based upon how we feel we are viewed by others and our own picture of our cultural heritage. Similarly, Stagner stated that "the self can best be understood by relating it to the surrounding environment, just as, in any percept, the figure must be seen against a background. And in many cases, the quality of the individual (how he perceives himself) can best be inferred from how he perceives his environment."¹⁰ From this point of view it can be assumed that the individual obtains a mental picture of himself from his environment and his actions will be appropriate to this image.

Entering our school doors each day, are thousands of Black youngsters who have suffered from the effects of slavery, discrimination and from the worst crime of all "poverty". Based on the discussion of the historical factors and some theoretical analysis of the 'self' - 'self-concept, these youngsters possess what is called a 'negative self-concept'. To many, schooling is one long obstacle course, all along the way are signs with arrows pointing to the nearest exit. It

takes the will power almost of a super-human to resist these directional signs. Life at school, for this youngster, is uncomfortable and life for his group is always uncomfortable. The remainder of this section is directed toward a discussion of this poverty stricken Black student, who in reality does possess an intellectual capacity, but his educational development has been stifled because "he is who he is".

It is clear that children do not come to school equally prepared for the learning tasks of the first grade. Also, children learn at an early age to perceive many aspects of the world about them. This is of special consideration where the Black deprived child is concerned. Erik H. Erikson stated that "the individual student belonging to an oppressed and exploited minority, which is aware of the dominant cultural ideal but prevented from emulating them, is apt to fuse negative images held up to him by the dominant majority with his own negative identity."\textsuperscript{11}

Accordingly, this negative image begins at an early age for our Black children, whose environment conspires to destroy any sense of his own worth. By first grade, if not sooner, deprived Black children feel negative about themselves. In its work with Negro and white slum children, for example, the

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid: p. 43
Institute for Developmental Studies at New York Medical College gave youngsters a test in which they were asked to complete a number of sentences. One of them reads: "When I look at other boys and girls, and then at myself, I feel ________." Thirty percent of the white children completed the sentence with some unfavorable judgement about how they compare to other children ("I feel ashamed," "I feel sad," etc.). But fully eighty percent of the Negro children answered in an unfavorable judgement about themselves. This self-depreciation continues and expands as the child matures. 12

Low self-esteem, which is characteristic of most disadvantaged youth, is a result of deprivation and can be seen in school failure, early drop-outs, unemployment and delinquency. Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey have stated that "the Black youth's esteem suffers because he is constantly receiving an unpleasant image of himself from the behavior of others to him." 13 From a conference at Tufts University it was also learned that the environmental press of American color-caste system tends to develop conceptions of self in Negro children which result in defeated behavior as far as academic development is concerned. In addition to this, there were two other assumptions stated. Schools which tend to serve as part of this defeating process can instead serve to strengthen the

12. Ibid: p. 47
self-concept of Negro children and youth, with a consequence of strengthening of their performance as students and citizens. This kind of negative process can damage personality and distort or inhibit behavior. 14

The child from the culturally deprived home comes to school with an interest in the new experiences but without some of the experiences, skills and values that the school expects from students in general. The school's learning environment and materials are so very different from the settings which are familiar to him. His basic environment may govern his self-direction, interpretation, consistency and trend toward learning. Whether an individual's self-concept is accurate or not, he assumes it is and acts accordingly. Each day's learning reacts upon previous experiences, and day after day growth and behavior are slanted in the direction of the acquired or learned concept of self.

The importance of the self-concept as a factor in learning cannot be over emphasized. The problem of the negative self-concept of deprived Black children seems to be of greater significance since so many suffer from this disease. Robert D. Strom stated that "if we are willing to take the time and interest and if we are willing to spend the money, we in this culture know how to clothe the body, to remedy disease...If all are done, would there be a more satisfying life for the poor?...

This would not be true. Intensive and comprehensive forms of assistance are necessary to making possible a more productive live........but unless these outward changes are accompanied by changed attitudes, motivations, and behaviors, rehabilitation is not likely to take."\(^{15}\)

It is a known fact that our deprived students need to find more permanent satisfactions, more productive attitudes toward themselves and the established institutions of life. Please note that in considering the deprived, understand the exact number of children with this negative self-concept is not actually known. Some experts estimate between 20 and 35 per cent of the Black students. Whatever the number might be, it is clear that the schools are not meeting their needs; however, about one-half of this group still manages to achieve some success in school. Many even graduate and find some satisfaction in their future life.

Attitude studies show that the "unfortunate half" actually hate teachers, hate school and fear anything academic. In addition, they hate their peers of better status, carry a chip against society and of course hate themselves. Ruth Jefferson felt that "this Negro child becomes confused in regard to his feelings about himself and his group. He would like to think well of himself but often tends to evaluate himself according to standards used by 'the other group'. These mixed feelings

---

lead to self-hatred and rejection of his group, hostility
toward other groups, and a generalized pattern of personality
difficulties."\textsuperscript{16} This attitude is a characteristic of a
negative self-concept and present school practices offer very
little to this student which would interest him or motivate
him to learn.

According to research, there seemed to be four main
characteristics of the deprived students' self-concept and
school:

(1) FAILURE -- The deepest roots originate in the home. Very
often he is expected to fail and naturally his low-esteem pro-
duces a fear of failure. He usually acts according to these
expectations. According to Kenneth Clark, "a minority group
child who is expected to fail will almost always fail. His
failure will reinforce his sense of inferiority and the related
resentments and hostility."\textsuperscript{17} His strongest sense of failure is
likely to center around school experiences, for this is the
testing ground in which all children attempt to find a degree
of adequacy. These children discover very early in their school
careers that they cannot meet the expectation of teachers. They
begin to fear the disapproval and even ridicule of peers and
teachers; they try to avoid participating, and in a short time
begin to leave school. (2) ALIENATION from people. They are

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid: p. 35
\textsuperscript{17} Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Making of America, (New
aware that they are a burden on everyone and sense a feeling of unwantedness. Clark asserted that "as these children sense their status...they react with deep feelings of inferiority and with a sense of personal humiliation. Many become confused about their own personal worth...develop conflicts with regard to their feelings about themselves and about the values of the group with which they are identified."\(^{18}\)

(3) REGARDS himself as a victim in many life situations, feels that other people are out to get him. He never regards himself as having a fair chance—even break. David and Pearl Ausubel stated that "the deprived child perceives himself as an object of derision and disparagement, as socially rejected by the prestigious elements of society, and as unworthy of succor and affection....having no compelling reason for accepting this negative evaluation of himself, he develops a deeply ingrained negative self-image."\(^{19}\) This seemed to be the major criterion in their judgement of teachers; that is, whether teachers are fair or not in their dealings.

(4) HOPELESSNESS - a feeling that there is nothing in the future worth preparing for. These expressions of aimlessness, powerlessness and lack of purpose and goal are not confined to any age group but touches all levels. From a research conducted by R.W. Smuts indicated that "Negro children, from experience, have learned that it is best to be prepared for the absence, rather than presence of opportunity or, at most, to prepare

---

and strive only for those limited opportunities which have been open to them..."20

Within the school itself, the poor relationship between the students and teachers the curriculum etc., severely damage the confidence and the basic self-esteem of the deprived child. Finally his subordinate place in the school, as in society, tends to weaken his self-esteem. This self-depreciation is typical of these children and results in an even lower self-concept, even self-contempt. This negative self-concept can be observed from the mask of hostility and resentment which the pupil shows to the teacher.

The frustration inherent in not understanding, not succeeding, and not being stimulated in the school, although being regulated by it, creates a basis for further development of negative self-images and low evaluations of competencies. The child's early failure in school seems to attenuate confidence in his ability ever to handle competently challenge in any academic area. The student loses all motivation. Several different studies have been done along this line. Robert Havighurst and Allison Davis believed that "social class influences learning and has a monopoly on the child's concept of self. Davis stated that the most urgent problem for the

public schools is to learn the motivational structure of lower class Black children..."\(^{21}\) In some cases schools try to be effective but is not much success. The teacher becomes frustrated because the student can't learn and the student is left nursing a bruised concept of himself.

Helen Davison and Ferhand Lang, found that teachers were less favorable toward deprived children even when their school achievements were good. Furthermore, they observed that the underprivileged children accurately perceived the teachers' rejection of them. The teachers' negative image of the deprived child is reflected in a lowering of the child's self-perception or self-image, as well as affecting his academic achievement and classroom behavior.\(^{22}\) Kenneth Clark stated that "why wouldn't children possess a negative self-concept when the teachers and students regard each other as adversaries. Under these conditions the teachers are reluctant to teach and the students retaliate and resist learning."\(^{23}\) Frank Reissman observed education as well as the self concept, or self-expectations are different between social classes even within the same race. Reissman stated that "the average deprived person is interested in education in terms of how useful and practical it can be to him. Education provides security—he does not see it as an opportunity for the development of self-realization or self-expression. He has accepted the lables that have been attached

to him by the more privileged".24

Efforts have been made to revert the negative self-concept to positive in order to alter in learning - school. The concept or idea of self is a derived one as the roots of self are hidden. What is seen or known about the role of the self-concept is viewed only as a symptom of behavior. Much of what we know is suggestive rather than definite. This must always be considered before we can attempt to bring about a change.

Many educators feel that the negative self-concept will change if achievement levels are raised in primarily Black schools. In other words, expect more academically. An alternative approach would be to consider the behavior of the Negro as a function of role taking. Possibly the worst effects on Negro personality came about not so much from explicit teachings about inferiority to the Negro but the forced adoption of a culturally defined role of inferiority. Naomi Gilpatrick proposed the use of symbols and images to help elevate the self-concept.25 Many others have made suggestions along this same line.

Psychological death is slow but inevitably sure. The weakening of the self-concept is terminal. It surely strikes in infancy and gradually eats away stimulation, progress, power, and hope. Charlotte Towles wrote that "the most basic impulse

to secure... learning eases anxiety, and consequently the denial of opportunity to learn or frustration in learning may produce emotional disturbances... today, the impulse to learn, that is, the impulse to gain self-sufficiency in order to feel safe—is recognized as a positive, innate tendency."  

The child who regards himself as unful due to his deprivation which has stimulated his inability to learn and produce, is on the road to slow death. A positive, self-concept is developed and nurtured by security. Apparently, the deprived have little hope for life and survival, yet, they do not wish to die.

A close examination of research on the self-concept reveals many interesting factors. First of all, research and understanding of the self-concept is very vague and somewhat undetermined. However, in generalizing, Combs and Snygg revealed that:

"The construct, self-concept is considerably more difficult to measure than it is to define. It is however, defined as the symbol or generalization of self which aids in perceiving and dealing with self. The self-concept is the central core of one's personality structure. Change in the individual's behavior can only occur in relationship to events which are perceived as having a direct bearing on self."  

Other research has indicated that a positive self-concept plays a vital role in the development of a fully functioning personality. A positive self-concept, it is argued, is essential to the learner's personal, social and intellectual

The self-concept does relate to the school to some extent. Concerning the self-concept as it pertains to the school situation, Arthur Jersild observed that:

"The 'self' is a complicated subjective system which the learner brings with him to the school. There is a continuous impact between the 'self' and the flow of experiences involved in the process of learning and living at school." 29

In view of Jersild's statement, Cronbach stated that the child brings certain personality traits to school:

"The child's first identification is normally with his parents (or parents substitutes) within his immediate family circle. The parents are termed the primary identifying figures and the child's initial interaction is believed to establish with them his basic style in subsequent coping behavior with adjacent, abient or ambient may be a result of his early emotional interaction with his primary identifying figures." 30

In addition to the child's primary identifying figures (parent or substitute), researchers felt that adult outside the home may be identifying figures, too. Teachers with whom the child frequently intermingles, may be categorized as secondary indentifying figures. Researchers stated that these figures influence the development of the child's self-concept almost as much as the primary figures. The teacher figure increases in importance as time goes by and for many children quickly exceeds that of primary ones. 31

31. Ibid. p. 202
Personality theorist\textsuperscript{32} emphasized that from early childhood the individual's concept of self is an important factor in guiding both his immediate behavior and later development of his personality. The child acts consistently in terms of the kind of person he believes himself to be, stupid or bright, attractive or unattractive, capable or inadequate in meeting the challenges of life. The concept of self is thus his personality viewed from within and into it are integrated into the sum total of the child's experiences.

It is interesting to note the relationship of the self-concept and school achievement especially among disadvantaged Black students. Hirsch and Costello, in a study of white achievers and Black underachievers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds found that:

"The achieving white students derived satisfaction from reaching internalized goals and were motivated toward attaining internalized goals. We considered self-concepts to have two components: structure definition and evaluation. The achievers had solid self-definition as well as positive self-evaluation. The underachievers appeared vague in self-definition and their self-evaluation tended to be negative."

Reasons for this negative self-evaluation can be found in research by Clark, Goldberg, Davis and Deutsch. They evidenced that under certain conditions found in depressed areas, physical and economic deterioration, family transiency and instability - the child may develop conflicts with regard to his feelings about the group with which he is identified.

The end of these conflicts, doubts and confusions frequently is self-hatred, a defeatist attitude, and a lowering of personal ambition.  

The factor of segregated schools was mentioned in the historical section of this paper. In reference to segregated schools and the self-concept of disadvantaged Black students, some researchers found that the school related self-concept and level of aspiration of children, white or Black, attending the defacto segregated schools were significantly lower than those of children attending desegregated schools. It was also found that children having more positive self-concepts had higher academic achievement. 

Robert Havighurst stated that:

"The effects of desegregation upon school-related self-concept and level of aspiration are somewhat lessened when examined in the light of the possible effects of school climate. School climate is defined as a name for a complex of factors including the expectations on the parts of teachers, the examples of study habits set by the leaders among the pupils, and the attitudes toward education of the people who live in the community served by the school."

It should be understood that mention of segregated schools is made simply because most schools in this country are either all Black or all white. The difference between the two being that the Black school usually has all the negative factors associated with it.

Noted researcher Benjamin Bloom, was of the opinion that schools which have a large Black population tend to have a school climate which is not conducive to the development of confidence, basic self-esteem, and learning. Thus, the differences in school-related self-concept and level of aspiration may be due, in some measure, to the disproportionate number of Black pupils and the socio-economic composition of the school. 37

It is interesting to note that from the brief review of research on the self-concept and low school achievement of disadvantaged Black students, there appears to be a definite relationship between the two. It can also be generalized that the negative self-concept of Black students has its roots in the history of this country as reflected in slavery and racism today.

Educators and psychologists are not in total agreement on the best procedures to raise the self-concept, level of aspiration and standards of achievements for the disadvantaged Black student. It seems that much research is needed in this area. An approach to this will be reflected in the next section of this paper where the educational situation in the Black community will be discussed.

"The child from the culturally deprived home comes to school with an interest in the new experiences, skills and values typical of the middle-class child...He has difficulty in learning for its own sake and in learning for the approval of an adult."

Benjamin Bloom, Compensatory Education for Cultural Deprivation
In large urban areas the disadvantaged Black student represents approximately one-third of the students. It is generally known that he is a problem because he does not learn as the school desires, causes a lot of trouble and is basically unpleasant. Many teachers dislike him because he is hard to teach and administrators find it difficult to program him correctly.

Starting with the family, the home offers very few positive experiences which prepare him for readiness to learn either intellectually or attitudinally. His outlook on life is limited due to his family and environment. A large proportion of these youth come from homes in which the adults have a minimal level of education, large family size and most often broken homes. His neighborhood can be described as a "slum area" where education is secondary and sometimes unimportant. Here the student is not motivated to learn nor is he capable of coping with the kinds of verbal and abstract behavior which the school demands of him.

The disadvantaged Black student is responsive to the expectations of his environment. He reads clearly both the conscious and unconscious messages. The unfortunate child finds himself in a world where even his own parents can barely see beyond the color of his skin. He is confronted with the possibility of being perceived as stupid, ignorant, contemptible and black. So it can be seen that the Black child spoken of has been raised by parents or parent who have lived all their
lives on the "other side of the tracks" who may have held on to a perception of his own intelligence and capability but at great psychological expense. It is more likely, however, that the parents absorbed some of the poison of white society and to some extent the way society views blackness.

The problem the student has mastering the academic skills which the school demands, along with the problem of dealing with the other middle-class values offered by the school, very often leads to defeat and failure. He develops a negative attitude toward leaning and resents almost anything the school represents. The school is different from his background in that it is managed by a board from upper class circles and taught by teachers who possess middle-class values.

The concepts of cleanliness, orderliness and joyful acquisition of knowledge are all related in some way. Black disadvantaged students go to school and rapidly come to perceive the formal learning process as different, strange, unnatural and really not relevant for them. The air they breathe, water they drink and the words they read all tell them that white people are smart and Black people are dumb. As a result of this attitude and academic inadequacy, a large number of these students leave school at an early age. They are unable to view school as necessary for preparation for the later rewards in life. Many merely hand on until they reach the legal dropout age while others leave school regard-
less as to the law. Dropouts will be discussed later in this paper.

It has been suggested by Charles Silberman that schools fail the student because schools have operated on the assumption that the children should be cut or stretched or otherwise "adjusted" to fit schools rather than the schools to fit the student.\(^1\) This is especially true for the disadvantaged Black student. The student continues to be "fed" middle-class material. William Kvarceues stated "that learning can only take place when the attention of the disadvantaged student is attained and sustained. Much of the ritual and nonsense that takes place in the classroom only stirs up feelings of boredom, irrelevancy and resentment among students".\(^2\) The situation as described by Silberman and Kvarceues are not the only problems the Black student confronts.

The role of the teacher is very important in the development of the self-concept, academic aspirations and achievement of the Black student. However, teachers very often fail to realize their importance. Research clearly indicated that the attitude of teachers are often responsible for the failure of many students. Many teachers convince the disadvantaged Black student that he cannot learn. Many of the students, having made it to school, encounter a reluctant teacher. It can be noted that teachers in general are held in low repute simply

\(^1\) Charles Silberman, *Crisis In the Classroom*, (New York: Random House, 1970) p. 81
because of the institution they represent. Many are unhappy with their teaching assignment. This disenchantment possibly contributes heavily to the profusion of "bad teachers", bitter individuals, who sometimes reflect open hatred toward their students. Educators should understand that these students need the support of their teachers very often for psychological survival.

Robert Merton of Columbia University, indirectly placed the blame on teachers as to why so many disadvantaged students fail. In his "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy" he stated that:

"In many if not most, situations, people tend to do what is expected of them, so much so in fact that even a false expectation may evoke the behavior that makes it seem true." 3

Charles Silberman offered some justification of the above statement, relative to teachers, when he stated:

"A teacher's expectation can and does quite literally affect the student's performance. The teacher who assumes that students cannot learn is likely to discover that she has a class of children who are indeed unable to learn, yet another teacher, working with the same class but without the same expectations, may discover that she has a class of interested learners." 4

Kenneth Clark offered further evidence when he wrote:

"One may assume that if a child is not treated with respect which he is due him as a human being, and if those who charged with the responsibility of teaching him believe he cannot learn, then his motivation and ability to learn may become impaired. If a teacher believes that the child is incapable of being educated, it is likely that this belief will in some way be communicated to the child, in one or more of the many forms of contacts

inherent in the teacher-pupil relationship."\(^5\)

James Herndon, a former teacher in the inner-city of New York, referred to a supervisor who visited his classroom:

"Teaching these children is like training animals. For each task you want them to do, you must offer them a carrot...of course the reward may vary. There are individual differences as we know. A carrot for one, sugar cube for another."\(^6\)

It may also be noted that many inner-city teachers are more concerned with discipline, social control, docility, being respectful to the teacher than in educating or 'training' the student. Frank Riessman wrote the following description of one of the teachers he encountered in a study:

"As soon as I entered the classroom Mrs. X told me in front of the class that the parents of these children are not professional and therefore they do not have much background or interest in going to college....She discussed each child openly in front of the entire class and myself....She spoke about each child in a belittling manner....She told me in private that "heredity is really what counts", and since they don't have a high culture in Africa and have not yet built one in New York, they are intellectually inferior from birth."\(^7\)

Of course, students are keenly aware of their teacher's attitude toward them. Many feel they have been victimized.

One student stated:

"I couldn't get along with teachers; that is why or the main reason I quit. I really don't like any of them. In a way it seems better being out of school...."\(^8\)

Kenneth Clark viewed the situation thusly:

"The clash of cultures in the classroom is essentially a class war, a socioeconomic and racial warfare being waged on the battleground or our schools, with middle-class aspiring teachers provided with a powerful arsenal of half-truths, prejudices and rationalizations, arrayed against hopelessly outclassed working class youngsters."

In relationship to Clark's above statement, a disadvantaged Black student felt:

"The worst thing a teacher can do is make a boy feel like he is losing his pride or something like that... They've done that to me a lot of times and there is nothing like it. I tell you if I didn't have more self control, I would probably beat up the teacher or knife him...."

Another student in referring to his white teacher's attitude after the student became knowledgeable of Black History said:

"After I started learning about Black History in school a lot of teachers didn't like me....after you get some dignity about yourself, you get suspended from school. I got suspended one day and the teacher said I was arrogant...He said that I wasn't going to achieve anything without white people...By the time you stand up on your own two feet, that is when they are ready to knock you down..."

It would be wise if teachers realized their own feelings about their students and in turn realized how the students feel about them. Children become human through creative living with others who share a common concern for humanity. Students from their teachers. It is clear that the lack of ego strength, negative self-concept, motivation and attitude, has an effect on the learning of all students in the slum school. It is also clear that opportunities must be provided by the schools.

11. Ibid., p. 124
and especially the teachers, to compensate for the past deprivation of the students. Efforts must be made by the school to build a positive self-concept in these students. A concept of self which will supplant their feelings of 'hopelessness' and 'nobodiness'.
PART V

THE SCHOOL

"The school is the only institution that can give slum dwellers that self-concept and competence needed to bring about communal development."

Robert D. Strom,
Teaching in the Slum School
Schools systems have to some extent developed educational programs and effected changes which appear to work for a large number of students. However, based on the problems found in "slum" schools, it can be said that the educational needs of the deprived student are not being met. It is known and accepted that the school should not be held responsible for solving all the problems created by poverty. It is clear, however, that the schools do have a responsibility of at least meeting the basic educational needs of these students.

It seems as though schools in deprived areas were never really designed to be institutions of learning for the neighborhood kid nor do they offer much in the areas of positive self-development. Basically all students are expected to start reading at about the same chronological age and progress at about the same rate. Reference is made here to all students in a school system, Black or white, advantaged or disadvantaged. Standards are the same for all. This has an affect on the Black student because very often he is not ready to start reading as so desired by the school. In general, Earnest Melby, a Professor at Michigan State wrote that:

"In order to have a good life, to develop a positive self-concept, every student must learn the same material, at a given age, at an assumed rate, or he gets a low mark, develops a dark self-image and convinces himself that he cannot learn."

Schools are designed to train children to participate in the work of the society and to impart to the a certain attitude toward the nation. It must be understood that education has never offered a significant solution or approach to the dilemma in America. This can be easily understood because Blacks are not really included as important in the job market and the education he has received generally reflects this fact. Another point of concern is his attitude toward the nation. Blacks understand how they are perceived by the whites who run this country, therefore, their attitude basically remains the same as it was years ago. Schools cannot change this attitude until a change comes about from society toward Blacks.

Although education may in the long run be an important instrument for Black people, children may have a clearer vision when they see the classroom as immediately irrelevant. Their vision is clearer as they see how the schools fail them in so many ways. One evidence of the school's failure is the large number of dropouts can't even be counted because so many of them stay in school...E.Z. Friedenburg viewed the problem as follows:

"The dropouts, by and large don't like the middle-class culture; and they know quite well what we can do with it. Dropping out is one way of telling us, and it is about time we turned our attention to the things about the school that are bugging them... core values of both their culture and that which the school represents are at issue."13

Failure of the neighborhood school to meet the needs of these students cannot be directed toward the school or any individual completely. It can be said that blame might be directed toward society, school boards and others who have the power of control. They have assumed that there would be failure regardless of what changes are made. They see the disadvantaged Black student as "just not being academic".

This student may appear to be "not academic" because of what the school demands he learn and how they are expected to learn. Elizabeth Eddy observed that:

"Most of today's programs attempt to adjust the child to the school rather than alter school programs to suit the child."\(^\text{14}\)

James Olsen stated the problem in another way:

"As long as the curriculum is primarily the embodiment of middle-class values, only middle-class children will tend to do well with it."\(^\text{15}\)

Schools seem to have failed to sense the characteristics of the inner-city student as important when developing their curriculums. These characteristics are of extreme importance if the student is to make any progress in school. David Dav wrote that:

"The disadvantaged child has a here and now orientation; he has not developed the ability to delay gratification. Corollary to the immediate gratification phenomenon is proclivity of disadvantaged learners to "complete task" much more readily when they are able to see the beginning and the end as well as a means of immediately receiving an evaluation of their efforts."\(^\text{16}\)


\(^{15}\) James Olsen, *Challenge of the Poor to the Schools*, (Phi Delta Kappa, October 1965) p. 80

Weinstein and Fantini felt that the relevance of content is extremely important. Irrelevance they said, occurs for disadvantaged students if 1) teaching and learning styles don't match, 2) presented material is not easily related to the learner's knowledge or experience, 3) content and method of teaching ignore the feelings of the learner about his experiences and 4) the concerns of the learner are ignored. It is apparent that curriculum changes are necessary and changes should come about immediately. The National Advisory Council on Education of Disadvantaged Students reported that:

"As long as a child is subjected to handicapping influences outside the school, the curriculum must take account of those influences and respond constructively to them. It is essential, therefore, that need for reconstructing their curriculum be viewed as extending from kindergarten through high school."  

Benjamin Bloom viewed the necessity for curriculum change in the following manner:

"Since the present introductory years of elementary school do not effectively prepare the culturally deprived child for later years of school, it is a clear responsibility of the school to devise a more effective school program for these disadvantaged children."  

The curriculum in most settings is a complex set of general assumptions about that which is considered most important to learn and how it is to be taught. Need for curriculum changes is the greatest in the inner-city school.

where it seems to be least effective. It appears that changes in the curriculum can result in improvement in achievement of the student therefore building his self-esteem, self-concept and confidence.

Students in the inner-city are constantly faced with the problems of grades. This main factor seems to be a destructive agent to the student. In looking at grades from a basic point of view, Sidney Simon felt that 1) grades separate students and teachers into warring camps, 2) grades over-reward the wrong people and often punish students who need to be punished least, 3) grades tend to destroy what learning should be all about, 4) grades reinforce the archaic notion of "competition", and 5) grades contribute to debasing a student's estimation of his own worth.

The marking system is not relevant to the needs of the students, therefore, grades are meaningless to the deprived student. Basically the grading system glosses over the exceptional effort on the part of some students and the lack of effort on the part of others. Researchers state that grades say nothing about the most important outcomes of education. Studies have proven also that grades have no motivating affect on the disadvantaged student, however, the school continues to force this concept upon the student to his disliking.

---

The marking system is especially destructive of the self-concept of the deprived Black student. He enters the school with few pre-school academic experience, however, he is expected to read even though he is not ready to do so. This student is given a low mark for this inadequacy, marking period after marking period, year after year, as long as he remains in school. As a result, he convinces himself that he cannot learn and his self-perception is further damaged. Many deprived students perceive failure in one class as complete failure and often find themselves just giving up. Grades will continue to destroy the self-concept for deprived youngsters until individual achievement is based on the personal progress of each individual student. All factors involved in his life must be considered.

Research has shown that the disadvantaged student can learn when programs are designed to meet his needs. Research has also shown that schools can function in the area of ego-development for the deprived Black student when he finds success in school. However, most schools continue to reinforce unrealistic expectations of the disadvantaged student. Many educators want these students to think, act, speak, and feel according to the standards of middle-class society. Apparently educators fail to realize that the self-concept of the Black student after a day in school is far more important than what knowledge or skill he may have acquired. If schools accept the challenge of educating the disadvantaged Black student, then the objectives must be realistic, practical, and obtainable by these students.
"New and more effective administrators will have administrative and personal traits different from those currently exhibited in most schools. But they will neither flourish nor increase in members unless citizens and educators seek to develop new skills and knowledge."

William Wayson
New Kind of Principal
THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

According to Fantini and Weinstein:

"As chief administrator of the local school, the principal is responsible for everyone and everything in the school building. The principal is thus likely to see himself as part of a "management team", as a representative of the central office with governing powers of the system insofar as they apply to his school. Yet, in executing his administrative duties, the principal must interact with teachers, parents, students, clerical workers and maintenance employees. Ideally, therefore, the principal's role could be strategic in mediating the viewpoints of local school personnel and central office staff, and in effecting basic reforms in educational practice."1

Providing an education for the disadvantaged Black student is a part of the administrator's job simply because these children are a part of the educational population. The position of principal requires a myriad of duties and responsibilities because of the extremely large number of deprived children in the urban areas who are low achievers. In addition to this, the principal finds himself in the midst of the struggle for disadvantaged persons to attain full rights of citizenship and dignity of self.

Grieder, Pierce and Jordan contended that:

"One of the major responsibilities of administration is to provide leadership for improving the program of education. How efficiently teachers perform in a school system depends upon the environment provided for learning, the resources for teaching which are made available and the opportunities for professional growth of personnel. These areas of school administration

require the highest type of leadership. This leadership will see that school personnel and the general public have opportunities to keep informed on trends and other developments which affect educational needs and programs."2

Researchers have been very concerned about the above statement. They have found that some inner-city principals are successful; however, many are failures as administrators because they fail to meet the needs of students in terms of curriculum, appropriate teaching staff, and their own negative attitudes toward the disadvantaged student. In addition to the above, many are failures because of their lack of knowledge about their students, parents and community. Fantini and Weinstein wrote that many inner-city principals fail to become change agents because they are not interested in reforms or change simply because they are promoted from within the school structure. Therefore, they are likely to be protectors of the status quo rather than reformers.3 Teachers in the inner-city have also complained about their administrators. According to a research by the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, the teachers complained most about:

1. "The administrator lacks compassion."
2. "Principals forget what it is like to be in a classroom".
3. "Principals make unrealistic demands for achievement in order to enhance or build an institution's reputation."4

The principal for the disadvantaged student must realize the effect a negative self-concept has on the achievement of deprived youngsters. Therefore, his educational program should be directed toward the development of a positive self-concept.

Each student's concept of self can be enhanced by the attitude of the principal through his desire to understand and accept the student on the basis of his humanity. The principal of the slum school therefore must be dynamic and an innovative educator. According to Wiles he must:

1. Exert initiative
2. Be cooperative
3. Communicate his feelings and thoughts
4. Empathize with those he hopes to lead
5. Be creative and original
6. Be of service
7. Have ability to coordinate
8. Evince social insights

The principal for the disadvantaged must be flexible and adamant in his convictions and guidelines as he develops his school program. There should be agreement between himself and his faculty whenever change or educational reform is necessary. With this in mind he should be constantly aware of his own biases and their impact on the teachers, students and their parents. He must possess insights and understandings of different and diverse cultures from which the disadvantaged come. He must be able to cope with the frustrations which come from slow and minimal academic achievement along with non-conforming classroom behavior. According to Kenneth Clark, the principal must be aware of the student's perception of his academic achievement. Clark stated:

"The young people of the ghetto are aware that other people have been taught to read, that they have been prepared for college and can complete successfully for white collar, managerial and executive jobs. Whatever accommodation they themselves must make to the negative realities which dominate their own lives, they know consciously or unconsciously that their fate is not the

The principal must exhibit the know-how of dealing with the student's self-perception and offer guidance and encouragement whenever possible. This will indeed help each student to become a confident individual therefore developing a positive self-image.

The ghetto school needs a teaching staff which understands the disadvantaged Black student, along with the social, economic and environmental forces involved in the student's life. The principal should always be aware of this when he adds a teacher to his staff. Raymond Bottom explained that:

"The teacher who fails with the disadvantaged children do so because of lack of certain vital qualities. The successful teacher, above all, genuinely likes and accepts his students. Some teachers mistake tolerance for liking but they don't fool the kids. These children are experts at spotting phonies... warmth and a sense of humor must be present...understanding and empathy are essential qualities..."

The alert principal identifies these qualities as necessary to teach the ghetto youngsters. He must realize that the success or failure in his school, depends to a large extent on how well the teacher functions in the classroom. Researchers have found that the extent to which a teacher is successful in the classroom depends in part on the role assumed by the building principal. Clark feels that this has definite implications for educational administration. He stated that:

"Excellent teaching can be obtained and sustained only

under conditions of excellent supervision....the role of principals....must be examined....Those individuals who are assigned to schools are in deprived communities must be selected in terms of special competence and in terms of highest professional and personal standards. It should be understood that they would be judged primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of objective evidence. 8

The principal and teacher in the ghetto will face a number of human problems during the course of the year. Many of these basic behavior problems are consistent with the life style of the ghetto students. Tiedt contended that the principal should come to the ghetto having demonstrated unusual classroom skill in working with the disadvantaged child. 9 Therefore he will be acquainted with the behavior patterns of the child. Dolce expressed that:

"Ghettos are inhabited by people who live there because they have no other alternative. Their lack of alternatives tends to create feelings of entrapment and powerlessness....for most, the modern day ghetto is not open ended, rather it is closed and restrictive." 10

Clark viewed the situation as:

"The objective dimensions of the American urban ghettos are overcrowded and deteriorated housing, high infant mortality, crime, and disease. The subjective dimensions are resentment, hostility, despair, apathy, self-depreciation.....compensatory grandiose behavior...The overt delinquent, the acting-out rebel...seeks his salvation in defiant, aggressive, and in the end self-destructive forms. Because the larger society rejects him, he rejects or appears to reject the values, aspirations, and techniques of that society...His argument is that he cannot hope to win meaningful self-esteem through normal avenues ordinarily available to more privileged individuals. These avenues have been blocked for him through inadequate education...discrimination...which are not responsive to his needs." 11

Before the principal can establish an effective method of dealing with aggressive behavior, he must be sure in his own mind of what he feels and expects from the students. In order to maintain effective discipline, the principal must develop his own clearly defined philosophy of discipline, establish policies and a system consistent with the philosophy, and give teachers and pupils a part in making realistic rules and carrying them out.\(^1\)\(^2\) He must make certain that everyone involved—teachers, students, and parents—know what the expectations are. The ghetto principal must see that the instruction relates to the students' present conditions, needs, interest and general health. Should this not be accomplished, the school's philosophy and program cannot be viewed as relevant and only chaos can ensue.

After studying the possible reasons for success of some schools serving the Black disadvantaged, Martin Haberman found that the curriculum was one of the most important factors in bringing about success.\(^1\)\(^3\) Fantini and Weinstein, however, felt that the typical school curriculum taught in schools today is about as relevant to the disadvantaged pupil as the contents of the telephone directory. Therefore, administrators should readily break the bonds of uniform curriculum to the extent that it can be made to match pupil reality. This can be done by moving from a prepackaged, rigidly scheduled and

uniform curriculum to one flexible enough to be geared to the unique needs of the individual schools within a system. To accomplish this they stated that the ghetto principal must lead his faculty in seven areas:

1. From a uniform to a diversified curriculum.
2. From a symbolic conventional process to an experimental new one.
3. From a horizontal to a vertical sequence (as in a well run ungraded plan).
4. From remote to immediate experiences.
5. From a what to a why curriculum.
6. From an academic to a participating curriculum.
7. From an antiseptic to a reality-oriented curriculum.  

The principal must regard his role as an instructional leader and curriculum innovator. However, realistic instruction and curriculum development (change) should be a joint effort of the principal and staff. The curriculum should be based on the needs of the students and every staff member must be fully aware of these needs. In considering curriculum changes, it might be wise for the principal to consider the ideas of Phenix, Clark and Goodlad. Phenix has stated that:

"We must above all, teach the students to meet the problems of our time...sex, race, religion, standards, education....the problems must be met with courage and competence....problems are of concern because values are at stake....They are real problems because most people are not neutral toward them....Thus the use of genuine issues as the criterion of what shall be taught affirms that education is a moral enterprise."  

Clark stated that misinformation is often learned by disadvantaged Black students because of the improper interpretation of facts. He felt that:

"To obtain the truth of Harlem one must interpret the facts....Direct encounter with a starving child is a truth which is personal....to face social truths seems to require empathy, social sensitivity, and a peculiar type of courage." 16

Goodlad began to point to a new direction:

"Some educators claim that this cycle of discipline-centered curriculum is over....the new curriculum might be called...the humanistic curriculum...directed toward humanity...the present system of rewards and punishments, as reflected in our marking practices....which is probably deleterious....is based on society's materialistic conception of education." 17

It is a fruitless exercise to try to cram unwanted knowledge into deprived pupils...It is a normal reaction for students to shy away from irrelevant textbook materials. 18

The principal serving the disadvantaged Black school must be able to deal with the morale of the students. He must realize that all factors influencing student morale do not begin with the school and its program. There are many factors which affect his life. Clark stated that the ghetto child is both restricted and limited in his freedom of choice on the basis of his skin color. 19 His frustrations are often exhibited in a revolutionary manner as a result of anger, despair, desperation and unbearable living conditions. The principal must channel this raw energy in a positive fashion whereas the student can find meaning and dignity in life. Brammer suggested some excellent guidelines:

1. Responsibility should be delegated genuinely to students for their own affairs.
2. Schools should offer more attractive classes in which more responsibility is placed on the student for his own learning and less busy work assigned.
3. Schools must be open to innovation for involving students in education and community enterprises.
4. Treat students as mature and responsible individuals.
5. Provide opportunities for closer personal relationships with adults.
6. Listen to what students are saying in their actions, music...words.
7. Include students in educational planning and change.... 20

The principal must work to develop an understanding between himself, students and the teacher. This can only be done when each makes a concentrated effort to accept and understand one another. When this is done, morale will be maintained on a high level with the students and all others concerned.

Until recently, the educators in the ghetto school have felt that the school was their domain alone and involvement with the parent and community was really unnecessary. Today parents and other community members are concerned and involved with the school. With this in mind, the principal should know that a power structure exists and can work for or against the school program. He must know the community leaders, organizations, functions and problems of the community. He must then interact with all these organizations. Bottom stated that:

"If the principal is to learn the pulse of his people he must go out among them and learn what they are thinking, feeling and saying...the open door policy should apply to them...he should make an attempt to bring about greater understanding between the school and community..."

The principal must know the community and be assured that the community knows the school. In Wiles words:

"Keeping the community informed includes such customary activities as columns in local newspapers, radio reports and programs, annual reports to parents, open meetings open-house and visits to classes.... It also includes supplying teachers and pupils to talk at meetings...."22

Many researchers feel that community problems are school problems. The community should therefore participate in planning the school program. When community members have a part in determining policy and programs, they become valuable supporters. When they are kept out, they become suspicious and potentially hostile.

The ghetto community demands a role in policy and program planning but this need not mean that the principal will experience an undermining or weakening of his leadership. Wiles wrote the situation as follows:

"He should not, in an effort to influence the power structure or to retain his leadership of the staff, make statements or take action contrary to his basic beliefs. If he does, his integrity will be so impaired that it will be only a matter of time before he is discovered, rejected, or ousted, and new leadership is sought."23

From birth the Black child learns to feel that he is the object of scorn and disparagement, unworthy of love and affection. It becomes the insurmountable task of the ghetto principal to help the disadvantaged child elevate his self-concept. To this he should examine the school forces which down-grade the self-concept and do all he possible can to negate these forces. The disadvantaged child must be made to see himself in a realistically positive light by understanding the meaning of his color and race. The principal must remove all barriers in his school which tend to black the total development of the disadvantaged Black student.

Realizing the barriers and problems confronting the principal, William Wayson offered some excellent suggestions to the school administrator. He stated that the principal should have his own school platform which should include a real-life curriculum with a humanistic approach to education. In order to overcome the bureaucratic inertia, Wayson felt that the principal should never ask permission from the central office, however, he should be able to state what is to be accomplished in the event questions are asked by his superiors. In addition the principal must be honest in his intentions and be prepared to accept the responsibility for whatever might go wrong. 24

According to Martin Haberman there are three fundamental aspects of educational leadership which are distinctly incumbent on the school principal serving the disadvantaged environment: 1) his willingness to participate in educational change, 2) his ability to exert moral leadership and 3) his influence on the social matrix of the community. In reference to educational change he stated that leadership in the disadvantaged schools means participating in change. The principal should recognize the need for change, initiate change and respond to change when necessary.

Haberman evidenced that:

"Leadership in the disadvantaged schools means serving as a moral force. Current analyses of problems related to housing, employment and civil rights inevitable seem to lead to the local schools and to proposals for equalizing educational opportunities....Research studies in the areas of administration, supervision and curriculum development, point to the building principal as the single most important factor in determining the morale of the faculty, the nature of the school-community relationship, and the quality of the school program. The administrator serves as a powerful personal and professional model. He can be a vital person, mobilizing the energy of the faculty in a whole social cause (e.g., the development of educational aspiration among individuals who waste their potentials)...the principal must be predisposed by personality and experience to believe, to speak out and to take action."

Haberman went further when stated that:

"Leadership in schools serving the disadvantaged means affecting students and the community. To the middle-class child and his family, the school is just one of several very important institutions. In addition to his school, his home church and other community agencies exert important influences on his development....Some kind of college will be found even for the dullest, least motivated youngster provided his parents care .

26. Ibid: p. 327
27. Ibid: p. 327
enough and have the money to send him... The disadvantaged youngster, who probably lacks family support, monty, etc., must be highly motivated, successful academically or higher education is beyond his reach. In short, the disadvantaged have the least likelyhood, but the greatest need, to experience success in school... Considering high correlation between education achievement and the socioeconomic mobility, aside from the parents, the principal and teachers have the greatest influence on the disadvantaged student.28

The principal's responsibility in the inner city school includes many different duties. Perhaps his most important responsibility is to guide and direct the total operation of his school. He must function as a liaison between the teachers, students, supportive staff and community. He will be able to fulfill this responsibility only if he provides a context of emotional support, maintains realistic expectations, and relates in a friendly way to all concerned.29

28. Ibid: p. 328

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

An examination of this paper indicates that a large number of disadvantaged Black students are dissatisfied with the education they are receiving from the neighborhood school. They are also unhappy with their teachers and administrators. It is perceived by these students that the school functions more against them than for them. It seems as though no one has taken seriously into account the negative self-concept that the disadvantaged Black student possesses when he first enters school. A reflection of this concept is seen through the low achievement in school and the number of school dropout found in the Black neighborhood.

Some of the barriers confronting the education of disadvantaged Black students have been previously mentioned in this paper. It appears that there are contrasting attitudes as to who is to blame for this mes-education. Educators tend to blame the school's failure on the home and community. The parents and community tend to direct the blame toward the school, its teachers, curriculum and administrators.

The blame or responsibility of the school's failure must be studied deeply and change is imperative. Black parents have the same desires and hopes for their children as do white parents. However, most of them are not equipped academically to assist their children in school. It is realized that the Black child enters school somewhat eager to learn but not
ready to meet the demands of the school. They do not learn to read or write and very soon view the school in a negative manner. This attitude of hatred toward the school is reflected in anger and hostility. With this in mind, the failure to educate the student must be directed toward the school. It is in the school situation that the highly negative attitudes toward learning evolve. The school cannot shift the responsibility to the community or home in which it is located because philosophically, the school is supposed to be designed to serve the community. It is the responsibility of the school to educate the children and to remove any barriers which interfere with the learning process.

It appears that the school starts to fail the Black child when he first enters school by not teaching him to read properly. His failure to read serves to reinforce the negative image he already has of himself because of the color of his skin and the community in which he lives. Because of his inability to read, school failure is repeated frequently and in turn the child hates everything that the school stands for in general.

Failure to acquire functionally adequate reading skills not only contributes to alienation from the school as a social institution, but it goes on to insure failure in later life. It is almost impossible to understand the chain of reactions which can be touched off by early educational failure which so many disadvantaged Black students experience in even the
well-intentioned schools. Because the educational system has been ineffective in coping with teaching the Black child to read, it treats reading failure as if this failure were due to intellectual deficits of the child rather than the teaching process. The system is unable to teach the child to read, but very quickly teaches him to regard himself as intellectually inadequate, and therefore, of low self-worth and low social value. Reading was purposely not mentioned in this paper previously because we did not want to spend the time discussing any one aspect of the child's education. However, reading seems to be the root of the Black students' problems in school.

Another extremely important aspect of the disadvantaged Black student is his community. The problems of inner-city pupils are always intimately related to the problems of the communities in which they live. Because the inner-city residents tend to be concentrated in the communities which show a high incidence of unemployment and other social problems, such as delinquency and poor housing, local schools find it very difficult to develop programs tailored to meet the needs of the disadvantaged, Black child.

There is indication from this research that the school and community do not function in cooperative manner. It seems that in other situations and neighborhoods, schools tend to function best where there is partnership between the school and
community. There is a very little partnership or cooperation between the school and the disadvantaged community. It seems as though there should be a definition of the roles of the school and community in order to develop a line of communication. The school in the Black community should involve the community in the formulation of educational policy, and in planning the curriculum as a basic approach to the development of a partnership.

This research placed great emphasis upon the teaching of the disadvantaged Black student. The key person in the situation is the teacher because teaching is essentially interaction between pupil and teacher and the rapport between them affects the quality of learning. To develop this rapport, the teacher must have an ability to stimulate and inspire the Black student. In addition, the attitude of each teacher toward the students and their parents has much greater significance than the teachers sometimes realize.

Children develop self-images to correspond with society's expectations and thereafter behave as they see themselves to be. Nothing blocks learning more effectively than seeing oneself as a non-learner. The disadvantaged Black student in many of our classes have already seen themselves as failures. The fear of further failure is a big roadblock not only to learning but often to further effort. The student must experience some success, however, small, and have some encouragement. Disadvantaged Black students will learn when their behavior
is rewarded in the classroom and the teacher is in the best position to play this important role.

Change in the approach to educating the disadvantaged Black student must begin with the building principal. If the principal waits for the central office to initiate change, change may never come. In view of previous statements made in this paper, it appears that most inner-city principals have functioned in accordance to board policy even though this policy has done little to meet the needs of the student of community. Little individual concern has been shown for the academic background of the student and the community from which these students come.

The inner-city principal must design his own school philosophy based upon the needs of the community which his school serves. His school policy must be designed to bring about a change in the attitude of the community toward the school and the student's attitude toward himself and education. It is necessary for the principal to free himself from the status quo attitude and the many limitations placed upon him by the bureaucratic structure.

In order to be an effective administrator, the principal will have to overlook the conventional mode of organization and bring into being a new approach to staffing, programming, for teachers and students, and all other factors that might interfere with the students learning process. He will need
to institute an organizational plan where everyone in the school will be involved in the operation of the school, however, he must accept the responsibility of the program.

In planning his program, he will have to place less emphasis on classroom instruction and take the education of these students to the "streets" where learning will be relevant. Here the students can be directly involved in the learning process on a first hand basis instead of attempting to acquire knowledge from some irrelevant textbook.

The principal's leadership approach must be directed toward educational change and bringing about maximum effort by his staff. He must work to develop a line of communication between his office and staff, students and the community. He must keep all the involved people informed on what he is attempting to accomplish as the school administrator and solicit their support in meeting his goals and objectives.

Schools in the Black disadvantaged community have failed their students. They have failed because of their refusal to "reach out" or extend themselves to the community. The school is physically there, however, in reality it is isolated, separated and unrelated as far as the community is concerned. The schools have failed because of the preconceived attitude of teachers who have felt that the disadvantaged Black student cannot learn and vividly communicate this attitude to the students. Because of this attitude, the students perceive themselves as non-learners which reinforces the negative
self-concept that they brought to school with them. Schools have failed because of the attitude of school administrators who perceive the lifestyle of the disadvantaged Black student as different and distasteful.


BIBLIOGRAPHY CONTINUED


PERIODICALS


PERIODICALS CONTINUED


The thesis submitted by McKinley Dillingham has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director and the signature which appears below verifies that fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

May 21, 1971
Date

Signature of Advisor