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PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

by

Diana T. Slaughter

These are two lectures delivered as part of the Visiting Afro-American Scholars-in-Residence Program at the University of Illinois

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PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PARTS I AND II

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Afro-American Studies and Research Program

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INTRODUCTION

I remember well the controversy surrounding the issue of Black children and their families in the sixties. This controversy began with the Moynihan report in the middle sixties, and is a basic part of the continuing and recent history of Black Studies. I vividly recall my own and others' participation in the struggle against assimilationist theory and our call for new theoretical models, research paradigms, programs and courses of study which more accurately reflected the Black experience. In fact, in at least two published articles (McWorter, 1969, 1970), I pressed for these considerations, particularly on behalf of Black Studies' professionals, as well as others, in our colleges and universities. Further, the literature on the Black family has long been rich with the pioneering work of W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, E. Franklin Frazier, Oliver Cox and many others. There is a general consensus among Black Studies professionals that a study of the Black family is essential to a full and comprehensive curriculum.

For both of these reasons, as Director, I initiated a formal effort to work in this area this year.

For the academic year 1980-81, we have been fortunate to have Dr. Diana Slaughter, Black developmental psychologist, as a Visiting Associate Professor in Afro-American Studies at the University of Illinois in our Afro-American Studies and Research Program. She has been on leave from the School of Education of Northwestern Univer-

sity, Evanston, Illinois where she is an Associate Professor, and where she teaches and conducts research in the areas of Black child development, parent-child relations, and early childhood education. A major part of her contribution to the development of the theoretical focus and research orientation of our program has been her two distinguished lectures: Perspectives on Afro-American Children and Families, Parts I and II. They were well received and are having a continuing impact.

In these lectures, Slaughter critically appraised the two major paradigms that have shaped research on Black children and families in general, and that conducted by Black researchers in particular. For the 1980's and beyond, she is making a focused systematic proposal for a new research agenda that fully incorporates the role of culture and class without overstating or understating the role of nationality.

We are publishing these lectures in response to repeated requests to have printed versions available for study. The first lecture is being developed into a book chapter by both of us. The second will be expanded into a longer book-length manuscript. So, since these are quite literally "works in progress", we welcome comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

Gerald A. McWorter
Director
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PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: PART I

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I. Introduction

In this first lecture of two to be given by me, I am going to critically evaluate the most important early paradigm used to generate social and behavioral scientific knowledge about what it means to be Black and young in this nation: the Assimilationist paradigm. Largely generated by faculty linked to the Chicago School (i.e., University of Chicago), it guided researches from about 1940 until the late sixties. Further, early pluralistic perspectives on Black childhood development and family life did not adequately challenge it. I shall argue that the inability to mount an effective challenge was because those who advocated culturally pluralistic perspectives often did not fully understand the rationale for the assimilationist perspective. I hope to describe some of this rationale from the vantage point of the scientific inputs of Blacks. This lecture is a preliminary working paper and, therefore, I invite your comments and criticisms. It is a beginning, not an ending.

I'll not be approaching the subject of Black children and families at the level of specific parenting attitudes and practices or even social policy in this paper, but I think that an investigation of the assimilationist paradigm has clear implications for the fields

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of socialization and social policy, as applied to Black people.

II. The Assimilationist Paradigm

Frazier published the Negro family in the United States in 1939, around the time of the publication of the American Council on Education studies conducted by Davis and Dollard (Children of bondage), Warner (Color and human nature), Johnson (Growing up in the Black Belt), and Frazier (Negro youth at the crossways). Essentially, for the next 30 years, 1940-70, the primary theoretical paradigm for characterization of Black family structure/stability emerged from these researches. It has been described as historical-evolutionary (Staples, 1974; Hare, 1976). According to it, the Black family was severed from its African cultural heritage during American slavery. Frazier theorized that the bases for a new family foundation emerged in the Americas. Further, the advance origins of social stratification within the Black community were to be found in the invidious distinction made between the more "privileged" house slaves, frequently mulattos insofar as they were direct descendents of the slavemaster, and the lesser privileged field slaves, typically of obvious Black African descent. These early bases for ranking Black families had become more elaborate by 1940, and Frazier believed this all to the good. The emergence of diverging socioeconomic classes, according to Frazier, reflected gradual improvements in the social conditions of Blacks, particularly with reference to job stability, improved incomes and housing patterns, and higher educational levels. Frazier, and others who conducted the American Council on Education studies, fully expected that as the

social and economic conditions of Blacks improved, the entire race would benefit such that (a) signs of family instability (e.g., single parent homes, high incidence of juvenile delinquency, illegitimacy) would diminish and (b) Black family structure and functioning would increasingly approximate white American norms. The norms, Frazier and others held, provided the rationale for the conditions for the optimal growth and development of all American children, including Black American children.

Importantly, normative standards for lower or working class Black families were to be set by middle and upper class Black families. Families in the latter groups were perceived to be morally and socially superior to other Black families. They could best assume the responsibility for "uplifting" the race. Lewis (1955), for example, reports identifying in his research in a southern Black community in the forties "respectables" and "nonrespectables" within a relatively homogeneous occupational and educational social context:

> The most significant status cleavage from the point of view of the people themselves seems to be along the respectable-non-respectable line referred to earlier. These broad status categories have behavior or role correlates that amount to two distinctive styles of adaptation to the cultural situation. In general, the respectable persons are defined by what they do not do. They are people who are careful of their public conduct and reputation: they don't drink whisky in public or get drunk in public; they don't frequent the taverns; they don't get in trouble; and they are proud of their lack of contact with the law and the courts. The respectables are not clustered in any particular section of the town, nor does any of the churches have a monopoly on them. Although the category is not composed exclusively of the persons with the best jobs, the most property, or the highest incomes, these features are positively associated with the status. The reason is that respectability--or conventionally-moral conduct--is an expected accompaniment of education and a good or responsible job. People with education and economic advantage are looked upon as persons

> who have achieved, and they are people who have a standard of public demeanor to maintain; they are people the nonrespectables tend to want to look up to...The categories respectable and nonrespectable cut across all segments, levels, or groups in the Negro population--occupational, educational, kinship, religious ...there appear to be no institutional or organized group activities which are participated in exclusively by persons of either of the categories. (pp. 233-236)

Even more importantly, under the influence of Davis and Havighurst (Davis, 1940, 1948; Hess, 1970), who conducted researches on social class and color differences in childrearing practices, the emphasis on color/race as an explanatory variable in Black behavior was diminished and the historical focus in the concept of class substantially transformed. Because Davis and his colleagues found more variation in, for example, pressures for independence and achievement training by socioeconomic class than by color/race in maternal reports of childrearing practices, they concluded that class-linked explanations were better explanations of group differences in achievement behaviors than color/race-linked ones. They also found it expedient to adopt Warner's concept of social class in their researches. This definition of social class stresses consensual community agreement about existing patterns of intimate adult social participation. In 1948, Warner argued that such behavioral patterns would best be indexed by ratings of individuals (a) occupational prestige, (b) educational level, (c) income, and (d) place of household residence, in that descending order of priority.

This openly assimilationist model, relative to analyses of Black family life and childhood development, was used throughout Children of bondage by Davis and Dollard in application to the study of Black

personality development. For example, in Children of bondage, the authors state the following toward completion of a lengthly case study report of a 15 year old dark-skinned urban southern girl:

> One must remember that there is a white lower class also, and that in it there are millions of people whose behavior is very similar to that of Mary and her family. There is little that is peculiar to Negroes in the description of Mary's life and class. The critical fact is that a much larger proportion of all Negroes are lower class than is the case with whites. This is where caste comes to bear. It puts the overwhelming majority of Negroes in the lowest class group, and keeps them there. What cannot be cured, for the moment at least, must be endured. Let us see how the Hopkins family and Mary have learned to adjust to their color-caste subordination. Their policy may be stated in a word, "submit"--to all but the most violent and most direct of physical assualts. (p.65)

The psychological parallel to the occupation of a particular class or caste position is the individual emotional reaction to perceived immediate social status. Warner and Davis and Dollard in particular emphasize that accomodation is only one strategy used by the Black youth interviewed. It is a strategy most characteristic of those youth who were least likely to inadvertantly experience or actively pursue any change in their evaluated social status position. Black youth at the extreme ends of the upper and lower classes were found to be least likely to emotionally link their personal life experiences and changes with either their skin color/race or the friendships and social networks of their immediate family members. The youth most sensitive to barriers stemming from color/race or class contacts, according to the assimilationist model, are those youth who are either upwardly or downwardly mobile in the American social strata. However, the model has been most consistently applied to the analysis of the behavior of Black youth who strive for higher social status, that is

to those youth who, at least consciously, seek to significantly better their life chances and broaden their social and material options within this society by comparison to those of their immediate family members. Two examples from Children of bondage are illustrative, Ellen and Chester. Davis and Dollard state:

> As Ellen grew toward adolescence, her striving to attain higher status within the Negro group (basically a flight from the social and economic punishments of lower class life) was increasingly expressed as "racial ambition." Like Chester...and many other lower middle class Negroes who are agressive and socially mobile, she began to express her push for higher class position as a desire to be a "race leader"...Ellen says that she has always been conscious of the color differences within her family...her dreams reveal a wish to be even lighter than she is...She bursts through middle class restraint, enforced by her parents and teachers, and challenges white superiority...Unlike Chester Olivier whose intense hatred of any class subordination drove him to attack (verbally, during interviews) upper class Negroes as violently as he did whites, Ellen is highly disposed to identify herself with these Negroes...(pp. 169-172)

The problem with such strivings, according to Davis and Dollard, is that the chances that Ellen and Chester could achieve significant social mobility within Black society are slim:

> The class system is a stubborn reality. Like the caste system, it cannot be reasoned away. There are, it is true, techniques for rising in the ladder of social rank and for increasing one's privileges. Education, profession, and forms of talent may secure upward mobility for an individual from the lower levels. Even with these qualifications, however, the "rise" is slow; to rise one subclass in a person's life is to have a high degree of mobility...Her family (i.e., Ellen's family) is on relief, and will undoubtedly remain there. Her father is gone. Her one chance is that her grandmother may pay for her college education... This straining toward the future is (therefore) Ellen's unrealistic escape from her present class position, and it may lead to more serious mental difficulties than those she developed in meeting the class barriers at school...(pp. 180-182)

A similar argument was developed by Warner and his colleagues. They found lighter skin color, on the part of both Black men and women, to be

systematically associated with higher material social status. Since men chose their marital partners, the relative proportions of darker men with lighter-skinned wives in high social status brackets was greater than the converse, darker wives with lighter-skinned husbands. According to these authors, the most psychologically disadvantaged Blacks were those youth those immediate social status position was essentially atypical, relative to their skin color. Examples of such mismatches included lighter-skinned Blacks in lower status positions and darked-skinned Blacks in, or more typically, striving towards, higher status positions. This view was highlighted (sic) in the discussion of brown-skinned Negroes:

> ...the situation encountered by a brownskin type does not involve the serious inherent conflict that attends the position of being "dark and high (class)" or being "light and low." For the brown-skin individual, varying evaluations of his appearance in relation to his class position become causes of personal conflict only if he has accepted and organized within himself a single evaluation that is inconsistent with that most commonly and consistently (underlining ours) applied to his social status... a brownskin individual can alternately feel superior because he is light, inferior because he is dark, or satisfied because others think him good-looking...(p. 291)

It was Warner's contention that color distinctions within the Negro community had a profound impact on feelings and attitudes about the self, especially if, as noted earlier, the social status of the individual adult was normatively atypical for persons of his/her skin color. Conversely, openly expressed hostility toward whites was perceived to be a projection in the service of upward mobility. Reflect upon these contrasting portrayals of two lower class Black women:

> There is nothing unusual about Eulah's (age 18) lower class "respectable" adjustment as a recent migrant to Chicago. Her dark color and background in the plantation South account for the greater part of her present attitudes. Her chief problem

> is learning city ways and modifying a few of the expectations producted by the plantation system, such as her notion that "white friends will get you out of jail"...she is adequately equipped to adjust as an adult in the lower class, and she displays little interest in climbing socially. She expresses only a normal amount of antagonism toward white people and toward lightskin Negroes, and she does not seem to feel that her dark color or her castelike position present any overwhelming difficulties. (p. 121)...As an attractive lightskin girl, Dolores (age 23) might even now climb socially with some success, had her mother provided a more appropriate orientation and had she not come to project her antagonism toward her middle class husband and his family into her relations with other middle class people in Chicago. However, she never really accepted their standards of conduct, and so she has tended to expect acceptance almost solely on the basis of her physical appearence...In general (she) has not been preoccupied about her status as a Negro. Only when white persons are rude to her does she become resentful and defiant. Her primary interest in life is not the abstract problem of racial injustice, but the immediate question of how to have a good time...Unable to adjust with her middle class husband, she fell socially and has exploited her highly valued appearance in attempts to find affection and security in "shady" affairs with older men. (pp. 260-262)

Briefly, from the perspective of these early researches, being of lighter or darker skin color determined the class-linked privileges a Black was likely to enjoy, or expect to enjoy, among his or her fellow Blacks. Further, openly expressed antagonisms toward white Americans were assumed to be projections in the service of status strivings within the Black community, rather than honest beliefs and attitudes. Otherwise, it was assumed that existing psychological theories (e.g., Freudian, social learning perspectives) and methods (clinical interviews, later supplemented with projective personality tests) could be used to study Black behavior. It was also assumed that the Black family, insofar as it functioned optimally, would function precisely like the white middle class family. If it did not, it was (a) deviant, even pathological, in orientation and (b) likely to produce children with defective personalities, whether or not

a high degree of class or race consciousness was part of the individual's personal expressions of attitudes and feelings.

Importantly, this assimilationist model also influenced educational perspectives on Black people, as in Davis' Social class influences on learning. Davis and his students, one of whom was Hess, my own dissertation advisor in Chicago's Committee on Human Development, believed that the fundamental basis of the consistent relation found between average IQ/achievement test performance and social class position of individuals was due to the "cultural" life styles associated with a particular class position. In 1948, at Harvard, Davis stated:

> Culture...may be defined as all behavior learned by the individual not only to recognize certain phenomena, but also certain symbols of phenomena, and the logical relationships among them. Culture also sets the goals of human problems, and teaches the inferences (logic) which people in a particular culture regard as justifiable...Culture consists of the acts (symbols, skills, inferences, and so forth)...In the interaction between the group and the individual these acts are accompanied by certain social and physical sanctions of the group...As a result, the acts are "learned" by the individual; that is, they are repeated and integrated into a system of behavior. How they are learned is not quite clear to psychologists...In short, the individual learns to think as his group defines thinking...one may conceptually isolate the cultural system of a socioeconomic group for the purpose of studying it...Cultural problem-solving activities, furthermore, constitute a system in that, although existing in many different individuals, they are interconnected by learning and by social interactions between the individuals. (pp. 59-62)

While Davis did not believe that performance tests measured adaptive intelligence, he did believe that group variation in performance outcomes were associated with interpersonal life styles led by the divergent groups, and the resultant behavioral repetoires which developed. His former student Hess (1965, 1967), for example, put this model to empir-

ical test in the early 60's in a major study with an all-Black population of Chicago-area mothers and children from diverse social strata. This study stimulated a number of subsequent studies of language behavior and development within Black populations, and also the growth of several widely respected early intervention programs (e.g., Levenstein, 1977; Bereiter, 1966), including Project Head Start.

The research itself, attempted to integrate macroscopic sociological perspectives with microscopic analyses of the communicative exchanges between parent and child. Particular attention was given to maternal verbal behavior and the implications of that behavior for cognitive outcomes in four year old preschool children.

Several assumptions guided this research. The first assumption, in part stemming from Hess' work with Davis in the late 40's-early 50's on the development of culture-fair tests, was that early social experiences shape cognition. The second assumption was that cognitive outcomes could be partially indexed by performance tests of mental ability. The third assumption was that social class, as a concept, implied a probabilistic statement that certain communicative transactions between the members of that class would occur, both among themselves and in regard to other members of the social strata. The fourth assumption was that language shaped thought, and that in effect, indices of verbal behavior would constitute indices of cultural transmission of thinking patterns. This fourth assumption found support in the early writings of Bernstein of England who in 1961 distinguished between "restricted" and "elaborated" codes.

Bernstein argued that the two codes represented different mediums of social control, and had different implications for information processing. Specifically, a restricted code implied personal familiarity between speaker and listener(s), such that complete specification of meaning would be unnecessary. The speaker could afford to be "egocentric" in style and assume that in such social contexts meaning would be grasped despite the apparent lack of specificity in syntax and referent to any unfamiliar observer or social outsider. A restricted code also implied a form of social control which emanated from the total external social situation, rather than one induced, either by reason or emotional persuasion, by the speaker in the listener. Conversely, an elaborated code implied detailed verbal expression of meaning, and social control mechanisms which stressed personal, rather than status, appeals. Personal appeals, presumably, increase the subjective sense of self on the part of the listener, while status appeals increase the sense of commitment to a group collectivity. Preferred mechanisms of social control, according to Bernstein, emanate from the nature of social experiences that are encountered by adults in the total society. Lower status persons only have the opportunity to develop restricted codes, while higher status persons can use both in communicative settings. Adults use their preferred mechanism of social control in the socialization of their young children.

A fifth and final, more methodologically oriented, assumption that an experimental university setting could be an equivalent stimulus to all study participants regardless of their social class background was later to be the source of considerable controversy (Baratz and Baratz,

1970; Sroufe, 1970; Tulkin, 1972). At its core was the question of whether the Black lower classes are culturally different, rather than deficient in relation to the white middle classes (since Davis' emphasis on the Black middle class as a point of comparison had by now been forgotten by the larger society).

It is important that the Hess and Shipman research spanned the fields of child development and education. They specifically addressed the question of the educability of the child from lower status families, a question in their view, of resocialization, and a view not at all unlike that expressed by the authors of the American Council on Education studies in the early forties:

> The essential points of our argument about a relation between cognition and social structure are inherent in the notion that availability of alternative ways of action and thought encourages cognitive activity, particularly comparison, anticipation of consequences, and other features of choice and decision-making. The availability of options in society in the United States is not evenly distributed. The lower class, urban Negro family, for example, has relatively few opportunities and alternatives from which to choose in the major areas of family life. It is usually alienated from the sources of power and influence in the city and is relatively helpless in its relations with the institutions of the community. In addition, it is subjected to informal controls and economic exploitation. In this position of weakness in the social structure, parents are little inclined to encourage their children to consider alternatives, to develop criteria for choice, and to learn the basic elements of decision-making and anticipating future consequences of present actions...This view... suggests that the role of the school in disadvantaged areas is not only to fill in deficits of language and specific cognitive sillls but also to resocialize the child into more adaptable styles of learning. Styles of learning are part of a larger complex of behavior that includes motivation for achievement in gognitive and scholastic tasks, orientation to authroity, and more general aspects of the role of pupil. (Hess and Shipman, 1967, pp. 58-60)

The principal findings of this study center upon the results of several detailed analyses of interview data and observed interactions

between 163 Black mothers and their four-year old children. These mother child pairs were from three different social status levels: middle class, working class (skilled or unskilled). Social status was defined by occupation of the family's principal wage earner, and parental education. Since the investigators' primary goal was to empirically demonstrate how social status positioning influenced the acquisition of specific cognitive modes, much of the data analyses centered upon comparisons of mother and child behavior in the strata identified. In the observational studies, message units, defined as the mother's attempt to transmit a single thought or idea to the child, along with the child's immediate reaction to that transmission, were coded and related to: (a) child performance test outcomes, and (b) child behavior during and after the observation. In one instance, of the three laboratory tasks the mother had been instructed to teach her child about in advance of the laboratory experiment, the child was given a post-observation trial to determine whether, and to what degree, he had learned a conceptual block sorting task. In another instance, the child was given a score for his best effort on each of five copying designs which he worked on jointly with his mother, under her instructions.

From the viewpoint of its primary goal, the study appeared successful. Predicted social status differences in maternal controls and language styles were found. Maternal message units, specifically the tendency to orient the child as to what was expected of him in the simulated teaching situation, and the tendency not to seek physical feedback, were moderately correlated with Binet IQ (.27-.35), and with the child's correct subsequent placement of the blocks in the con-

ceptual sorting task (.20-.39). In addition, maternal WAIS IQ, child Binet IQ and familial social status correlated .47 (multiple r) with the child's total design copying score. However, the addition of three maternal teaching variables increased this multiple r to .64. Those behavioral variables were (a) the degree of specificity in instructions by mother to the child during the advance practice period, (b) the degree of specificity during the child's actual construction of the designs, and (c) the extent to which the mother used some available models of each design throughout the task to instruct the child.

Brophy (1970) did a subsequent analysis of these data, using a somewhat smaller sample (137 mother-child pairs), in an attempt to analyze the phases in the maternal teaching sequences relative to the block sorting tasks, as well as the implications of these phases for whether, and how well, the child learned the task. He identified three phases: (a) orienting, (b) preresponse instructions, and (c) post-response feedback. He found the major social status differences to be during the orienting and pre (child)-response phases. Middle class mothers were more proactive, initiating, and structuring, during these phases than lower class mothers. Furthermore, regardless of the social status of the mother, these styles were more highly predictive of successful child outcomes.

Stodolsky (1965) also used these data to study 56 of the pairs more intensively. Males and females from intact families in each of the three social strats were selected for the study. Her study examined the relationship between aspects of maternal teaching style and expressive

language in interaction with the child, and the child's subsequent performance on a measure of receptive language vocabulary (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) one year later. She found that measures of the quality of maternal language (Wechsler Vocabulary subscale), of the use of positive feedback during interaction, and of discriminations of the environment (Cognitive Style Tasks) significantly related to the children's vocabulary scores in predicted directions. The multiple correlation of these variables, using child PPVT score as the dependent variable, was .63. Most important, children of mothers who gave high positive feedback, but who were viewed as low relative to the quality of language models provided, scored lower on the PPVT than children of mothers with lower positive feedback who provided a high quality language model. Finally, further follow-up by Hess and Shipman (1969) through the end of grade 2 revealed a similar pattern of moderate correlations between preschool and contemporaneous maternal behaviors and children's performances on school achievement tests. These relationships were considerably stronger and more consistent for standardized test results than for teacher evaluations of academic competence.

In summary, the assimilationist model, as elaborated by Davis and his colleagues and students, dominated perspectives on the relationship between Black parenting styles and Black child development during the years 1940 through the late sixties. This perspective dominated whether the Black child's personal-social or cognitive development was considered. I have described it at length, including some sample researches, because I think subsequent perspectives either (a) have not responded as thoroughly and as comprehensively as they might to the specific

concepts (e.g., class, race, culture, skin color) elaborated in the model, and/or (b) have not generated sufficient data on Black parenting and childhood development to really challenge that information thus far amassed by behavioral scientists using this model, and (c) have not had as powerful an impact on public policy decisions affecting Black families and children. Certainly, subsequent Black behavioral scientists have not yet offered an alternative analysis of the relationships between class and color <u>within</u> the Black community.

In reference to public policy, and as an example of another instance besides early intervention, it was really the assimilationist model which guided Black and white efforts to desegregate American schools, beginning with the May 17, 1954 Brown vs. Topeka decision (Strickland, 1979; Bell, 1979; Newby, 1979) However, as Strickland (1979) has observed about this decision:

> The Court was saying that separation of races is bad or harmful (and therefore unjust and illegal) when the separation is based solely on the criterion of race, because the injustice of such assigned separation automatically subordinates the status of the separate group. The primary issue in that decision was the status of black people as a group. On the other hand, the Court was not saying, and should not have been interpreted as saying, that whenever blacks were separated from whites, blacks were likely to suffer psychological damage. If that were so, well over 95% of Afro-Americans would be in trouble just being at home.

Strickland attacks the mental health imperatives that became associated with the Brown decision, partly due to the efforts of Black psychologists. The Clarks (1939,1940) found significantly more Black, than white, children had out-group racial preferences and attitudes. In testimony related to the Brown decision, they argued that these findings were evidence of the low self esteems of Black

youngsters, in part a function of attendance at segregated schools. Newby asserts that W.E.B. DuBois, and even E. Franklin Frazier (1968) toward the latter years of his life believed that:

> Black intellectuals were erroneously abandoning the cultural uniqueness of Blacks by pursuing assimilation in an unqualified fashion...(further) these two leaders suggest that Black people can maintain their integrity as a people and still be full-fledged Americans. (p. 25)

III. Early Pluralistic Perspectives on the Assimilationist Paradigm

Hare (1976) reminds us that critiques of the assimilationist perspective emerged slowly during the late sixties and early seventies. Even then, these critiques did not address the central issue of how we are to understand the reciprocal roles of the concepts of class, race, culture, and color in the family life of Black people and in their children's development. Rather, the critiques usually centered upon particular interpretations of the individual Black family of of the Black child's behaviors. Consider, for example, the question of the social consequences of family instability.

The index of family instability used by Moynihan (1966) is the number of female headed households in a community. Moynihan (1966) reported a considerably higher incidence of such households in the Black, by comparison to white, community, a trend which continues to the present time (Williams, 1980). He argued that the family instability in the Black community fostered Black occupational and economic instability because the children of such families were more likely to fail in schools. Hare (1976) observes that while a number of critics (Billingsley, 1968; Hill, 1972) objected to Moynihan's interpretations

insofar as most believed, like Frazier (1939, 1957), that conditions of Black life determined family stability, few critics seriously considered the correlation itself, namely, that lower socioeconomic status and a high incidence of female-headed households are consistently paired in the contemporary urban Black family:

> ...the strength-of-Black families school has misled the Black movement away from an attack on the suffering of Blacks in their family situation and related conditions. In the name of a false racial pride, they (i.e. Black intellectuals) pretend that all is well with the Black family in America, despite our recognized economic, educational, and political deprivation. In the process, the strength-of-Black families dogma minimized and neglected the psychological effects and the social destruction of the Black male's unemployment and underemployment, of the instability provoked by the siphoning of the Black male labor-market surplus into prisons and military camps...Predictably, the proportion of Black females doomed to head family groups swells accordingly...These intellectuals fail to distinguish between a family form or culture of resistance, between a culture of choice and a culture of necessity. While they correctly argue that the Black matriarchy is a myth, they ignore the most salient proof that it is so: the Black matriarchy is a myth because it does not constitute a cultural ideal among Black Americans. (p. 12)

This position is clearly in sharp opposition to that offered by some writers such as King (1976) who praise single parenting as a form of adaptive survival consonant with our "African" heritage but give little or no significance to its obvious link to the contemporary social and political oppression of Black children and their families. King states:

> For just as in Africa, there are forces which tend to assure that black women outnumber black men, due to imprisonment, lynchings, lack of proper medical care, disease, job discrimination, suicide and desertion. Polygamy, then, guarantees the survival of black people, since the more children are born, the greater is the chance that some will survive...The extended family can be said to consist of members who basically see themselves as one. It is usually from such families that large numbers of common-law marriages originate. Common-law marriages are beneficial to Afro-Americans for several reasons.

> They enable black American women, who outnumber black males, to share the males, thus preventing spinsterhood among black females. (pp. 157-162)

Clearly, King assumes that common-law marriage is a manifestation of a Black American cultural value, a belief unsupported by the behavior of Blacks during all of slavery, reconstruction, southern rural life, as well as in contemporary times (Blassingame, 1972; Johnson, 1934, 1941; Edwards, 1963; Bernard, 1966; Lerner, 1972). Further, the idea that polygamy, as an adaptive response, serves to encourage passive acceptance of an intolerable, and from the viewpoint of many young Black children, highly undesirable, oppressive condition is reprehensible. While there is no evidence that Black children from single parent homes cannot thrive provided they have competent, resourceful mothers (Ladner, 1971), we do know that such families, whether headed by Black or white females, are least likely to have the social and material resources to support optimal early development (Smith, 1979; Williams, 1980). Further, we know decidedly little about Black cultural values. Assertions of Africanity by analogy notwithstanding, we are not likely to make any progress on this issue until we scientifically investigate the question in relation to Afro-American socialization and child development and produce <u>unequivocal</u> data.

In conclusion, the Assimilationist model presents case studies which are used to illuminate how the researchers understand the operation of class, race, culture, and color in the individual personalities under study. It initially involved commissioned, separate, simultaneous replications across widely diverging sections of the nation which were heavily populated by Blacks. There is

little question but that, from a behavioral science perspective, it has led the more sophisticated, privileged existence.

Those who have supported culturally pluralistic perspectives have often not attended to how concepts such as skin color/race, class or development affect their theorizing. Rather than elaborate alternative research questions and methods many, at least early-on, summarily rejected the research enterprise. Finally, they have often not had the power or resources to significantly impact the study of, and policy toward, Afro-American children and their families. I am not entirely pessimistic. I think that during the sixties and seventies more Blacks struggled to appraise and define the essence of their own peoplehood, using a scientific assessment of their historic strengths and weaknesses as a basis for projecting future goals. In my second lecture, I intend to review what information some of these more contemporary Black scientists, including myself, have and are generating in this field of child development and family life. I hope to by so doing, suggest what the likely next steps will and should be in the eighties. By now, I'm sure you might well guess that you can expect us to be engaged in attempting to scientifically topple the Assimilationist paradigm.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: PART II

I. Introduction

In this lecture, I am going to primarily discuss what Black researchers who access the field of child development and family studies and who choose to study Black people have produced in the past ten years or so. Obviously, this cannot be a comprehensive review. Rather, I hope to identify some of the major issues and critiques implicit or explicit to these researches, using illustrative examples from the areas of self-concept development, language behavior, and family research. Be aware that many white researchers have been working in this field. Because their works are more often visible and readily available, I'll not focus on them here. I plan to take advantage of my continuing roles as first, early founder, and most recently, chairperson, of the Black Caucus of the Society for Research in Child Development to advance this information. I have been privileged to have witnessed many of these ideas emerge from the grass-roots of the profession, so to speak.

In the last lecture I argued that research prior to the seventies was usually characterized by the Assimilationist paradigm--toward the goal of no difference between Black and white peoples. The researches of the seventies initially developed in reaction against this model; most recently, they have generated their own set of problems which have naturally evolved from the research process itself. Black re-

searchers in this field entered in the early seventies; only three to four of us got what might be called a "Head Start" during the Kennedy-Johnson eras and the "Great Society."

Blacks qualified to do research in the field existed much earlier. Early developmental psychologists in my field such as Ruth Howard Beckham (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1933) and Carleton Goodlett (Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, 1938), though educated at what were considered the leading institutions in this field in the nation, never had the opportunity to practice their professions as researchers. The more typical pattern for a Black person entering the field of child and youth development prior to the late sixties was to enter teaching or administrative work. An excellent example of this pattern is Dr. S.O. Roberts of Fisk University. Dr. Roberts, who also received a Ph.D. from Minnesota in 1944, founded the Psychology Department at Fisk. Observe that the Society for Research in Child Development itself, was founded in 1933. Thus, from about 1933 to the early sixties white American children and families were the objects of scientific study and research by developmentalists.

With the exception of the few researches generated by persons trained in, or connected with, the Chicago School of Sociology to which I referred in my last lecture, and the Clarks' who worked in the context of social psychology, Black children and their families were excluded. Not until the sixties did we begin to accept the idea that results from the study of whites could not generalize to Blacks. I think we accepted that idea because scientific study, to that point,

had been so singularly unable to predict the rebellions of the sixties! I recall Hylan Lewis' commentary at the conclusion of his study of the Blackways of Kent in the early 50's. He commented that he did not anticipate social change for a long, long time. Soon after we were in the throes of the Montegomery bus boycott!

In any event, let me now turn to what the "children of affirmative action" have and are producing in the academic research arena. I think that a good deal has been accomplished. In particular, I would argue the case for the cultural difference paradigm has been made, and to a considerable extent, developed and refined. However, there is much work to be done because neither class nor development as concepts have been sufficiently integrated into these studies.

II. Self Concept Development of Black Children

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the works of several Black researchers in my field who are currently studying the development of Black children's self-concepts. The earliest studies in this area were published by Kenneth and Mamie Clark in 1939-1940, around the same time that Allison Davis, E. Franklin Frazier, Charles Johnson, and W. Lloyd Warner published the four American Council on Education studies of identity formation in Negro adolescents and young adults that I referred to in my last lecture. The Clarks' studies, however, focused on young preschool and primary grade children. Black children were found to less often positively evaluate, prefer, and see themselves as similar to a Black doll, by comparison to white children in response to a white doll. Both Black and white children had the

opportunity to relate to both Black and white dolls in the experimental play sessions provided. Until very recently, these data were used to buttress the hypothesis of developing self-hatred on the part of Black children. However, some of my colleagues have developed at least four alternative interpretations of the essential data generated by the Clarks, as well as others who have used this paradigm over the 40 years since this earlier research.

One position has been articulated by Banks (Banks and Rompf, 1973; Banks, 1976). He argues that the bulk of the researches proporting to demonstrate a pro-white bias among Black children and youth actually demonstrate no evaluative preference. Thirteen of 19 studies can be so characterized. That is, Black children do not behave significantly different from chance expectations in either a pro-white or pro-Black manner when forced to choose between favoring Black or white dolls. From Banks' perspective, essentially a methodological error has left Black people a legacy of presumed self-hatred. The error occurred because Black children's responses, rather than being considered for their own intrinsic meaningfulness, were instead compared to white children's responses. This question of the appropriate comparative paradigm is, of course, absolutely crucial. In 1973, in an article entitled "Psychological scientism and the Black scholar," I wrote while discussing a 1971 publication by Judith Porter, Black child, white child:

> The conclusive proof that Black children in Boston expecially reject group identification is to be found not in a comparison with white American children, but in a comparison with (1) Black children from other parts of the world, (2) Black children from other parts of the United States, or (3) Black children who do not misidentify. The kind of comparative analyses suggested

> above could offer guidelines as to what we should then do about the negative racial attitudes of some Black American children. Scientific comparisons between Blacks and whites lead only to biased, unscientific educational proposals, since there is no possibility that Black children can become white while there is a possibility that they can derive guidelines from the experiences of other Blacks. (p. 471)

Still another position is articulated by Cross (1978, 1980). Cross argues that studies of self concept have focused on either (a) reference group orientation (i.e. the studies of racial attitudes and preferences) or (b) personal identity. The two clusters of studies are to be distinguished according to how, for example, group referenced variables are used. Reference group orientation (RGO) studies use race-related stimuli in the experimental conditions of the study as well as in reference to dependent variables or behavioral outcomes. Personal identity (PI) studies typically only use race-related independent vairables; no race-related stimuli are used in the experimental conditions nor in reference to behavioral outcomes. Cross argues that inferences about negative Black self-concepts have primarily been made from reference group studies, rather than personal identity studies. Agreeing with Banks that about 69% of these studies conducted usually with young children show no preference, that is, no pro-Black or pro-white bias, Cross prefers to interpret these date from the perspective of the Afro-American's cultural history. He argues that these reference group orientation studies have tapped the early emergence of the sense of dual consciousness that DuBois (1903) once attributed to Black folk. The studies document the impact of the thrust toward Americanism, what I would have termed Assimilationism, rather than self-rejection. In fact, as Cross observes, of approxi-

mately 100 studies of the self-esteem or personal identity of Black children and youth, 72% reveal Blacks to be either equivalent (51%) or superior (21%) to whites on this dimension. About 92% of these personal identity studies were conducted between 1967-1978.

Notably, only 47% of all reference group oriented studies were conducted during this period. It is these studies that have the potential, according to Cross, of demonstrating the impact of the civil rights movement and the thrust toward Black power in the late sixties, early seventies. From 1939-60, 100% of the 17 RGO studies identified by Cross document negative identity, while from 1968-1977, only 27% (6) of 22 identified studies reveal such a pattern. Fifteen, or 68%, reveal a pro-Black bias on the part of the children involved.

The central question, of course, is what RGO results predict. Of what use is it to behave as if one has a pro-Black orientation? Cross argues that such an orientation predicts individual potential for collective, networking, communal action. Thus, reference group orientation is essentially a precursor to the political socialization of Black people. However, it is to be remembered that most of these studies were conducted with younger children. Commenting on the results of the 1971 Porter study, I stated in 1973:

> While much has been made of the racial misidentification of some Black children at the preschool level, the incipient racial attitudes of Black and white children have not been found to relate to their actual behaviors. Porter, in an exploratory study with some of the Black and white children in her sample who attended integrated preschools, found no relation between their racial attitudes and their sense of personal competence...or their play patterns (underlining mine)...On the other hand we do know...that feelings of personal competence at this age level vary directly with social class position,

> and that children's behavior patterns in the primary grades are influenced by socioeconomic status...(pp. 471-472)

I do believe, however, that the issue should not be summarily foreclosed. At least one team of researchers (Gurin and Epps, 1975) found a relationship between indices of militancy, system-blame, and a belief in collective action. This latter variable sounds a good deal like what Cross has distinguished as RGO or reference group orientation as it pertains to racial attitudes. Though not referencing the Gurin and Epps study, Cross himself calls for increased study of the reference group orientation of Black youth and young adults.

I think, however, it is most important to reemphasize that recent research clearly indicates that personal esteem and identity is virtually independent of reference group orientation. Of 13 studies conducted since 1971 that use independent measures of each of these dimensions, 12 show no relationship between the two dimensions, and the obtained association in the thirteenth instance is not supported when data are closely scrutinized. High self-esteem is not necessarily associated with a strong pro-Black attitude or the converse. As Cross (1980) states: "The speculation about the link between doll studies and estimates of self-esteem turns out to be a myth." (p. 25)

There is one important fact implicit in Cross' review that I wish to highlight, namely that 47%, 92%, and 92% of reference group orientation, personal identity, and reference group orientation in association with personal identity studies, respectively, were conducted after 1967. Not only do the reported reference group orientation findings differ before and after 1967, that is, just after the Carmichael-

Hamilton assertion (1967) of Black Power on behalf of those who had come to find civil rights strategies and tactics wanting. If these many studies had been generated earlier, say for example, in the late fifties, it is entirely possible that similar findings would have been obtained. And what of the pre-1967 articles and theses which may have been rejected by mainstream editors and publishers because they did not fit the prevailing ideology of negative Negro identity? The important point is that the designs of the existing reference group orientation studies do not permit assertions as to the impact of the Black movement, though naturally we would all like to believe that the sixties were not in vain.

Nevertheless, we may simply be witnessing the outgrowth of tolerance of particular form of belief system, that is, positive Black identity, rather than any real change in the internal personality dynamics of Black people. Lloyd Brown, for example, made a sterling critique of the theory and methods used in the book Mark of oppression by Kardiner and Ovesey in 1951 when it was issued. The book has been often cited and repeatedly used in university graduate courses on culture and personality as a classic documentation of negative Negro identity. However, Brown's critique as published in Masses and mainstream has been virtually ignored. In 1951, Brown stated:

> ...the discovery of a 'basic personality' of the Negro people is a self-evident absurdity...These scholars blithely speak of 'every Negro,' 'all Negroes,' etc., despite the fact that the only true thing that can be said of every individual Negro in our country is that he or she is oppressed. In fact, it is from this historic truth that the common features of the Negro people as a group emerge. These common features are national characteristics--not common personality. As a nation-within-

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> a-nation, an oppressed nation, the Negro people have important characteristics in common: history, territory, language, economic life, culture and--of special interest here--a common psychological makeup...Not self hatred, but hatred of oppression and resistence to it--liberation struggle, that is the dominant theme of Negro history, culture, and psychology...an unceasing and invincible drive toward freedom...(pp. 22-23)

Still a third position on Black self concept is exemplified in the recent research of Semaj (1980a, 1980b). Semaj offers an "extended identity model" in which Black no preference behavior is interpreted as reflecting increasing identity diffusion due to the advancing chronological age of the Black child and his or her increased contact with a foreign or alien white culture. As the Black child becomes less Afro-centric, and therefore possessing less of a collective and communal orientation, including less of a revolutionary potential, that child is more likely to become apathetic or even traitorous to the Black community and culture. Semaj believes that identification with African beliefs and values is the essence of a pro-Black racial attitude. To possess a pro-white, or even neutral, attitude is to have assimilated unto oneself an alien set of beliefs and values. A diffused self identity (no preference responding) results from accomodation to the imperatives of the alien culture.

Importantly, Semaj's research data do indicate that early on, between ages 4-7, when Black youngsters clearly achieve racial constancy, that is when they begin to discover that being Black is a social/biological category and not something subject to their own perceptual observations (according to, for example, skin color or hair texture) or others' manipulations, this is associated with an

increasingly pro-Black bias on three different standard measures of racial preference. However, between ages 8-11 racial constancy comes to be increasingly associated with a reduction in pro-Black preference and an increase in neutral or no-preference responses. Semaj believes that such data support the notion of increasing Eurocentricity on the part of our children--a fate to be lamented.

Since he believes reference group orientation to be much more important to the overall self concept than personal identity, Semaj is perhaps the most pessimistic of the researchers discussed thus far. Importantly, however, Semaj's measures of racial evaluative preference do not incorporate the essential developmental elements to substantiate his very important theoretical or ideological position. The developmentally based researches of Alejandro-Wright, in particular, offer the kind of critical developmental perspective needed here.

Alejandro-Wright set out to determine how children learn the concept of race, that is what does the label race mean, in operational terms, to children ages 3 to 10 years? One assumption of previous researchers, for example, has been that the best index of the identificatory posture of young Black children has been how they respond to a doll's skin color. Alejandro-Wright, however, poses the critical questions: (a) do children spontaneously use skin color as a classificatory device when they have the opportunity to "put the dolls together that belong together," and (b) even if they do, how do their criteria for racial classification change with advancing chronological age? In effect, when does the child possess an "adult-like" concept of race?

Data indicate that though children can make racial discriminations as early as ages 3-4, they do not begin to have an adultlike concept of race until around age 10. What does this mean? It means that our Black children may offer the pro-Black behavioral responses we desire at earlier ages, but they do not <u>think about race</u> as a social or biological category as we do as adults until much later in life. Therefore, they are likely to demonstrate highly inconsistent racial attitudes and preferences. Most importantly, there is no strong support for an underlying consistent positive <u>or</u> negative racial identity prior to early adolescence. Children do not have a coherent enough view of the concept of race period to reflexively apply it to themselves, before this time. At best, we can argue that the child's emergent attitudes about race reflect increased cognizance of social experiences with the external, real world. This is precisely the view held by another developmental researcher, and I might add, former student of mine, Margaret Spencer.

Spencer (1981) has recently conducted research with 384 Atlanta Afro-American children, ages 3,5,7, and 9, of both sexes and middle and working class backgrounds. Measures of social cognition or social perspective-taking, self-esteem, and cultural cognition (i.e. race awareness, racial attitudes and racial preferences) were included in the study. There are many findings to this important and complex study, but here I wish to mention four of special relevance to this discussion. Spencer found essentially a zero-order relationship between measures of esteem and of cultural cognition; however, measures

of social cognition were significantly and positively associated with measures of cultural cognition. Further, across chronological age, measures of both variables tended to show similar patterns of increment. Most importantly, middle income children, by age 9 more often demonstrated a pro-Black bias than lower income children. This was so for both racial attitudes (positive/negative evaluations) as well as preferences (preferred choices for self). Initially, both social class groups have a pro-white bias, but by age 9 lower income children are more often responding in the "no-preference" category. These data suggest class differences in children's social knowledge or understanding of Black culture, differences which are accentuated as the two groups of children continue to develop and accumulate new social experiences. I think that possibly Atlanta is a particularly positive, pro-Black environment for a middle income Black child, given the highly visible middle class Black presence in that city. Conversely, lower income Black children have constructed a different Black social reality by the time they reach that same age.

The more developmentally oriented studies of Semaj, Alexandro-Wright, and Spencer suggest how complex the processes of self concept development and identity formation must be for Black children. Children spontaneously define or understand the concept of race differently at different ages or developmental stages. Furthermore, depending upon the child's age, a stable concept of race may be associated with positive or negative racial evaluations and preferences. Finally, social class differences in the direction of developmental changes in

racial evaluations and preferences are evident. In short, the child's material and social invironment may differentially affect how the child comes to appraise its larger subculture or culture.

The question before us is whether we know what we need to know to significantly impact the self concept development of Black children and youth. The answer is no. We do know, as a result of these recent studies, that Black children and youth (a) do not have excessively low personal esteems, and (b) do have a greater tendency to show "no preference" behavior in studies of racial attitudes and preferences as contrasted with a strong pro-Black bias. At least three different theoretical interpretations of this "no-preference" behavior have been advanced, and data mounted in support of them. Newer, more developmentally-based paradigms, have been advanced to replace the social learning paradigm implicit in the Clarks' researches. If, as many now believe, indices of racial attitudes and preferences reflect underlying cultural understandings, then Brown's 1951 position has, in effect, been vindicated by these researches. Importantly, we also know that significant changes in the children's social environments must occur before they are likely to construe their social worlds differently. In the meantime, however, they probably do not as a group, and hopefully never will, hate themselves.

III. Black Parent-Child Relations and Language Behavior of Children

In my opinion, how the "no preference" behavior of Black children is characterized has much to do with one's view of the families in which the children receive their primary care. If, for example, you

perceive Black families as deficient and pathology-ridden, then "no preference" behavior is further indication of the obvious behavioral outcome: self-hatred. If, on the other hand, you perceive Black families as primarily African in structure, function, and process then "no preference" behavior is indicative of the extent to which alien, assimilationist values have been appropriated by the children. If you perceive Black families as essentially African American, then "no preference" behavior is reflective of an inevitable internal dualism. Finally, if as I do, you prefer to emphasize the essentially developmental character of Black families within the sociocultural context of African-Americanism, then the "no preference" behavior reflects how children think about, or understand, the concept of race at that particular point in their lives. Importantly, both the children and their families are continually changing. The essential scientific question is the ascertainment of the laws governing those changes, both at the macro-level of family-social system interaction, as well as at the micro-level of, for example, parent-child relations. I believe, on the basis of some of my own researches that these "laws" must be complementary.

In 1974, for example, I conducted a two year field study of early intervention within three lower income Black communities. Earlier researches (Day and Parker, 1977) had indicated that such studies "work." That is, it is possible to obtain other than developmentally expected behavioral changes in children over time by altering the attitudes and behaviors of parents toward them. At the most elementary level, for example, parents who believe "Children should

be seen and not heard" will not talk as much with them as parents who do not subscribe to this value. Developmental research clearly indicates that children talk less in adult contexts if they are not traditionally spoken with. In any event, the primary objective of my research was not to determine if changes in parents would effect changes in children, but to determine under what conditions changes would occur, and what the accompaning processes would be.

I found induced changes in social networks such that parents (this instance mothers) acquired different significant others through new friendships provided the essential condition for individual change. I also found that influencing the adults was all that was required--children did not have to be directly involved in the process. Importantly, I found that when mothers <u>really</u> perceived they could and did significantly impact the natural, ongoing behaviors of their children even when specific discipline was not directly involved, they began soon after to generalize the idea of being a <u>causal agent</u> to other aspects of their lives. These included relations within their families, and conditions in their communities. Their initial commitment to a view of themselves as active and causal, rather than reactive and passive, was neither ideologically-based nor directed toward specific fulfillment as a woman "qua person." Rather, it emerged in the context of discussing relationships that were highly personally significant to them: those between themselves and their children. I had some evidence that personal benefits to themselves (increased social understanding in particular) accured when this

relationship could be joyous and playful, as well as the usual struggle, during toddlerhood.

These changes at the microscopic or individual level reflected, I believe, a response to a social alternative to that currently existing at a more macroscopic level. Urbanization had weakened the potency of the traditional extended families to which most mother-child pairs belonged. It was often not possible to practice traditional social patterns of behavior, to implement the associated values. Consider, for example, just the mere act of sending a preschooler or toddler to the grocery store. Ward (1971) reports that just after fathers leave and older children get off to school, southern Black mothers in a rural community just outside of New Orleans typically send a preschooler to the grocery, usually between 8-10 a.m. When one of our mothers did this in Chicago, her child was struck and killed by an oncoming car.

In any event, many mothers reported feelings of isolation and estrangement from their surrounding community. The friendship networks created in our most effective program offered a new communal alternative. It is hardly surprising that we could also "package" more nontraditional approaches to childrearing along with this new structural alternative. I think the model we developed can be adapted to all similar programs whose goals involve influencing parental socialization strategies.

I have asserted that our interpretations of the meaning of Black children's behaviors depends very heavily upon how we construe the

origin, structure, and function of the Black family. I have briefly illustrated how one interpretation, the cultural difference perspective, influenced me. My belief that older, more traditional (rural) child-rearing values were being inappropriately implemented in a newer, urban setting caused me to expect that young Black children's language behavior, as well as intelligence test behavior, would differentially develop and/or be displayed differently according to the "degree of traditionalism" mothers demonstrated in reference to Black life styles. At the time, I did not consider the origin, nor the original adaptive function of these styles, but I did believe them to exist and to differ fundamentally from (a) other ethnic/racial groups, and (b) the more homogenized "cultures" of the American middle classes. My research, I think, added to a developing body of literature which supported a cultural difference, rather than cultural deficit, perspective on Black American children and families.

In my field of Black child development, I think of the researches of William Hall (1975, 1979) as complementary and supportive of the cultural difference perspective in relation to these same child behaviors. Hall has clearly demonstrated that Black children's language behavior varies according to the social and situational contexts of the speech setting. Preschoolers who appear "nonverbal" in classrooms can be quite "verbal" at home, during free play, or on the way to schools, groceries, and so forth. Hall believes that the restricted school-related vocabulary of lower income children may inhibit access to their own ideas <u>in that particular setting</u>, but not at all in other settings. Thus, global views of the impact of culture/class/race

are probably not adequate any longer; rather the interface between these variables and particular situational context must be considered to predict the meaningfulness in individual behavior. I'll not take the time to mention the many other exciting researches currently developing in this area, but I do wish to mention the ongoing project of Jean Carew in the Bay Area: Black Beginnings.

From where I sit, Carew's study builds on the researches of others working in the cultural difference area, but stresses an understanding of the natural processes associated with the lower income Black child's language development, and a characterization of its natural language environment from a wholistic, ecological perspective. It is perhaps the contemporary urban version of the 1971 Ward study conducted in the town near New Orleans. Of the many findings of the important Ward study, I am reminded of one in particular--Ward's discussion of the type of linguistic home environment she observed the families create for their young children:

> The fundamental attitude...in these (mother-child) conversations is that children do not function to uphold their end of the conversation...If a child has something important to say, his mother will listen, and he had better listen when she decides to tell him something. But for conversation, per se, for the sound of a human voice, she will go visiting, make phone calls...never find herself politely trapped...by the verbal precocity of a three year old...Some of the mother-child interactions are constructed like spirituals or folksongs in which the rhythms have a hypnotic effect on the participants. (pp. 46-50)

At this time, the important subtleties in perspectives associated with the cultural difference viewpoint are occurring more at what I would characterize as the macroscopic level of study of the Black family. This perspective is not so much concerned with a two-person interactive

relationship, as with the Black family as a social group within a social order or society.

IV. The Black Extended Family - Problems and Prospects

Most of you know that the near explicit characterization of Black families as deviant, potentially pathology-ridden by the Moynihan report (Rainwater and Yancy, 1967) at the height of the civil rights movement precipitated considerable controversy. The report seemed to say that Black Americans were unemployed because they were, essentially, unemployable. Further, the then high rate of single-parent households (26%--now it is 39+% according to a recent 1980 Urban League report) indicated the source of the lack of employability: the socialization practices of Black families in general, and Black mothers in particular.

Early on, important counterassertions of Billingsley (1968), Ladner (1971), and Hill (1972) stressed the strengths and resiliencies of Black families as a group, and the lower income Black family in particular. Since then, the debates have centered around questions of: (a) the culture of Africanity versus the culture of African Americans; (b) the place of overlooked roles (e.g., father) or sectors (e.g., middle income) in any overarching analysis of the Black family; (c) the degree of "representativeness" of any particular sample of Black families studied; (d) the amount of actual strength and resiliency to be reasonably expected given the increase in certain negative impingements (e.g., unemployment) and the absence of more traditionally buttressing factors (e.g., more rural setting and life style); and (e) the role of interracial familial contacts in the Black child's development.

However, too few investigators have considered: (a) the historical and cultural evolution of the Black extended family as a kinship structure; (b) the Black family as a social system in relation to others such as, for example, the political economy or the Black church; (c) the intergenerational transfer of familial identities in general, and their particular relationship to childhood identity formation within the Black family; (d) the development and change of the Black family and its members as they move through their own individual life cycles; or (e) the role of ecological setting on Black family functioning and individual development within that family. It is my opinion that the researches conducted, and currently being conducted, in these latter areas have the most creative potential.

What, in summary, have we learned thus far about the Black extended family? First, we've learned that much more concrete anthropologically-based work in Black family history must be conducted before the issue of the "culture of Africanity" versus the "culture of African Americans" will be resolved. The researches of Blassingame (1972, 1979) and Gutman (1976), however, somehow are far more compelling to me than those which stress an increasingly distant and disappearing African past. I should underscore, though, that I do agree with anthropologist Niara Sudarkasa (Gloria Marshall), who recently stated in an eloquent December, 1980 article in the Black scholar:

> ...while it is true that the idea of a founding ancestor for an entire people was widespread in precolonial Africa and the ideology of common descent was used to mobilize some of the so-call segmentary societies, this does not mean that Africans considered everyone in their ethnic group or their nation to be members of one family...Those who were non-kin constituted the pool from which

> spouses were taken...the areas that require clarification in the study of the relationship between African and Afro-American family structure...(1)...continuities as well as discontinuities between African and Afro-American family patterns; (2)...the operation of the principles of consanguinity and conjugality in Afro American families without the...assumption that the conjugally-based nuclear family is superior...(3) the temporal and spatial aspects of the adaptation of African-derived family patterns to different American environs, defined in geographic, sociopolitical, and economic terms...(p. 51)

Secondly, we've learned that a complete perspective on the Black family requires consideration of more than one sector or one role. Black fathers can and do, for example, contribute positively to the esteems of their children (Allen, 1980; McAdoo, 1979). Older siblings in Black extended families may do much of the "didactic" oriented teaching that middle income white mothers do (Ward, 1971) and so on. Harriette McAdoo (1977) has found middle income Black families to differ from white ones in their continued fostering and support of linkages with extended kin.

Thirdly, at least one very extensive study now being conducted by James Jackson at the University of Michigan has drawn a sample of Black families in accordance with how they are represented in the American population as a whole. His research also includes drawing a subset of three-generational Black families for more intensive study. He has found that well over 50% of his originally sampled population could be so characterized (Jackson, 1980).

Fourthly, more recent studies of urban and rural extended families published by Martin and Martin (1978) reaffirm the criticality of the Black extended family. They say their definition originated with their

inductive researches, to wit:

> ...a multigenerational, interdependent kinship system which is welded together by a sense of obligation to relatives; is organized around a family base household; is generally guided by a dominant family figure...(p. 1)

Such a family spans generations, and even geographical areas to operate its mutual aid system. However, Martin and Martin sound a conservative note as far as its prospects in the urban environments where the majority of Blacks now reside:

> Extended family members in our study were in general agreement that urban life is less conducive to the maintenance of the extended family structure than is rural or small-town life... Welfare grants are given to various needy units within an extended family, not to the extended family itself, and usually such grants are in amounts insufficient either to allow family members to become independent of extended family aid or to break their chain of dependency on government assistance. (pp. 85-87)

Fifth, we have learned that Black children who are adopted transracially into middle class white homes fare better academically (Moore, 1980) than children adopted into middle class Black homes, but they do not achieve a Black reference group orientation without great difficulty under such circumstances (Ladner, 1978). I mention these five classes of research in particular, because I believe the various subparadigms, as well as the studies conducted under them (a) support the cultural difference position, but (b) reveal the complexity of the issues now confronted by behavioral scientists conducting research in this area, by comparison to, say, the approaches taken ten years ago. At that time the issue was to assert cultural difference. At this time, the issue is to explain from a systematic, theoretical perspective, how culture impacts socialization and the child who develops in the context of these social experiences. The developing cognitions of the

child are important because we now know that there is no one Black family. Ascertainment of the laws governing how and what cultural content the Black child will appropriate to self as well as what will be directed, presented to him/her is no small issue. It is one which confronts the entire scientific community in my field, but we can, I believe, take pride that it was systematically raised by Black people generally and Black scholars in particular during the sixties, that is, by one of the largest groups of people most negatively affected by assimilationist orientations in this nation.

Before closing, I do wish to mention the recent research of Kennedy (1980) who proposes that the idea of "Black family" should be changed to "Black Domestic Unit (BDU)." Kennedy's research in a small southern town in the early 70's led him to comment:

> ...It is this sharing that maintains and assures the survival of these family members as a unit...Therefore, the role that people play will be determined more by their ability to perform in those roles, rather than their biological or marital connections...(pp. 221-222)

Kennedy observes that grown children would and did oust a mother from the family because of her continued drinking and lack of responsibility. He states that daily continued interaction, group acceptance, and importantly, sensitive performance of expected duties, are the hallmarks of the criteria for membership in the Black Domestic Unit. However, I think this argument is precisely what one would expect to emerge in the absence of a developmental perspective. Families are not peer groups or interest groups. They are intergenerational groups whose obligatory character stretches across time, space, life and death. It is not important that the woman named "Mother Ludy" was ousted

from her family at a particular point in the life span or life cycle of the individuals involved. What is important is the essentially obligatory and enduring character of the relationships of all connected parties. Her ouster was justified in large part because of her detrimental effect on her grandchildren, that is, on the continuity of the Black extended family. And I would argue that is one of the few bases upon which such an action could be taken within the context of traditional African-American culture.

V. Future Research Directions

In conclusion, I'm certain that progress for Black people is in part related to a firmer understanding of them as developing, maturing, changing human beings. It is obvious that a paradigm which emphasizes class and culture as a social reality and as a part of children's known realities, is likely to be most productive. However, it is equally obvious that the work required is interdisciplinary in nature and the projected resources for research and evaluation will be scarce indeed. Black researchers will have to form significant coalitions with scholarly, intellectually compatible groups if the budding work is to continue.

Furthermore, there should be a better way to make our findings known, and useful to, Black folk. Coalitions are the route toward this end. In the end there are two justifications for studying Black people in this field at a "basic science" level: (a) to solve the universal question of the relationship between culture, socialization and development, and (b) to ascertain how the particular Black identity is

nurtured, developed, and projected such that we can achieve a higher order of unity than we now have. At the applied level, the issues are more immediately obvious because they are explicitly derived from the importance of the Black extended family to us now. I do not think it an overgeneralization to say that thus far every other social institution that serves Black people would, by comparison, receive only a mixed review despite the fact that our children, youth, and families interact with them all the time.

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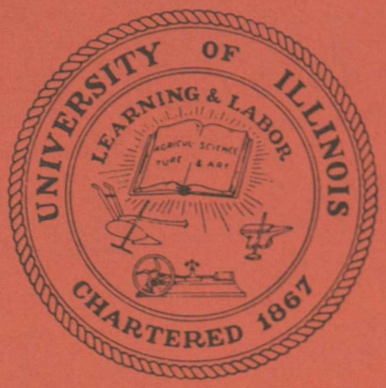

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