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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT
FORMATION AND VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG BLACK YOUTH

by 5589

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED	1
The Problem	1
Statement of the problem	1
The scope and limitations of the problem	3
The importance of the study	3
The organization of the problem	4
Definition of Terms Used	4
Self-concept	4
Vocational aspiration	5
Vocational guidance	6
Black youth	6
II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT	7
Childhood Is Important	7
"Mothering"	7
Physical care	12
Frame of reference	17
Adolescence Is Important	20
Adolescent developmental tasks	20
Adolescent interpersonal behavior	22
Adolescent peer groups	23
Reasons for adolescent awareness	25
Chapter Summary	26

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. MANIFESTATION OF SELF-CONCEPT IN VOCATIONAL CHOICE	28
The Incomplete Self-concept	28
The statement of the problem	28
A reason for the problem	29
Theoretical Contributions	30
Duehler's life stages	30
The developmental process	32
Implementation of the self-concept	33
Identification and role models	36
Chapter Summary	41
IV. SOME DETERMINANTS OF BLACK MOBILITY ASPIRATIONS	42
Society as a Limiting Factor	42
The structure of opportunities	42
The academic framework	48
The economic community	52
The Family as a Limiting Factor	55
The effects of parental training	55
The capacity to achieve	60
The importance of values	62
The effects of incomplete family structure	64
Chapter Summary	65

	iv
CHAPTER	PAGE
V. IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL COUNSELING	66
The Role of the Educational System	66
Facing the contemporary challenge	66
Providing relevant curricula	67
Reexamination of placement policies	69
Developing awareness in school personnel	72
Counseling Black Youth	73
The cultural discrepancy	73
Some effective counseling techniques	75
Chapter Summary.	79
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING STATEMENT	81
Summary	81
Concluding Statement	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Most contemporary theorists, regardless of their orientation and the specific factors which they consider important in vocational choice determination, endorse the proposition that the selection of an occupation is a function of a number of variables.

Education has appeared as a common thread in suggestions for combating many of the biggest domestic problems of the United States in the 1970's. In an age of increasing scientific and technological advancement, more emphasis than ever before is being placed on the importance of education in the development of the necessary talent to fill the many new jobs that are being created. Many are often not able to take advantage of opportunities for advancement because of a lack of education.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was to part of this general problem of educational deficiency that the present study addressed itself. It was the purpose of this investigation to discover and to interrelate some of the factors which determine the black youth's self-concept and his vocational aspirations. Further, it was the intent to investigate the contention that many black youths form an adequate (positive) self-concept, although their vocational choice (aspirations) do not appear to be those of one with a positive self-concept.

There is a mounting concern with the educational and vocational problems of black students in America. A manifestation of this problem is the high drop out rate before high school graduation. Such evidence has negative implications for personal and vocational adjustment as well as for the national economy. For these individuals, school successes are infrequent and frustrations a daily experience, with equally negative implications for optimal functioning in academic, emotional, and social areas. However, what is to become of the black youth who do not drop out of high school, and who, as a matter of fact have high academic achievement and high vocational aspirations?

Traditionally, occupational opportunities have been different for black peoples and for white peoples. Although much of the data gathered through research regarding lower class white peoples can be generalized to lower class black peoples, traditionally, the "family life patterns" have been different. Therefore, the formation and implementation of the self-concept necessarily differed between the two groups. Moreover, it seemed logical to hypothesize that the formation and implementation of the self-concept necessarily differed among black youths.

As a result, the responsibility of vocational counseling to the black youths and to the white youths must be seen as recognizing and dealing effectively with this difference. Also, vocational counseling must have an additional responsibility in dealing with black youths --- the recognition of the difference among black youths.

The scope and limitations of the problem. The problem was approached by attempting to trace the development of the black youth's self-concept, and to find some logical, working relationships between that self-concept and the development of vocational aspirations.

Theorital contributions to the concept of vocational choice as a concrete attempt to implement one's self-concept, were of great value in investigating vocational aspirations; however it was anticipated that these theories would not necessarily be applicable to black youth because of the limiting factors imposed by society.

The importance of the study. The wastage of black human resources has been identified as a national concern. Of course, this has not just been a problem for the individual directly affected. Their improverishment, their idleness, and their estrangement from the dominant success oriented culture of society has been a problem for everyone. The cost in disease, urban blight, crime and delinquency, and public welfare payments have been noted many times. Moreover, this wastage of human resources violated some of America's most basic values, that everyone develop his talents fully and should make a full contribution to the total betterment of society.

Work has held an important place in human behavior, and consequently the varieties of work and the ways in which men have chosen their work in America has attracted the interest of many peoples. Therefore, contributions which have yielded insight into the

black youth's vocational aspirations will have benefited society at large.

The organization of the problem. The problem of the formation of self-concept and the development of vocational aspirations of the black youth was approached in the following sequence: (1) the presentation of the process of self-concept development; (2) the presentation of self-concept as a manifestation in vocational aspirations; (3) the presentation of some determinants of black mobility aspirations; (4) the presentation of some implications which are applicable to vocational counseling practice; (5) a summary and a concluding statement.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Self-concept. The psychological construct, the self-concept, has been used to connote the area of essentially private experience and self-evaluation even though it is in part translated into action by most of the things peoples say and do, by the attitudes held, and by the beliefs expressed.

From the learning point of view, the self-concept has been the culmination of all the social and personal experiences the child has had.¹ In addition, the self-concept has been thought of as a set of

¹B. R. McCandless, Children and Adolescents, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), p. 173.

expectancies, plus evaluations of behaviors with reference to which these expectancies are held.²

Super has defined self-concept in terms of experiences:

As the child's range of interpersonal experiences and relations widen so his identifications become more varied and more diverse, finding that he is both like and unlike objects of his identifications, he begins to develop a concept of himself as a distinct person, as self rather than other.³

Accordingly, one's self-concept is directly related to one's store-of experiences. This statement has followed the developmental approach assuming that the older an individual the more experiences he has had, and with more and varied experiences one's concept of self changes. Again, two themes have recurred: The self-concept is a continuing process and it is related to one's experiences, that is, actions, interactions, and reactions to the environment. In short, one's self-concept is what an individual thinks he is at a particular time in his life, plus what others think he is, minus those concepts which conflict with the individual's.

Vocational aspiration. An encapsulated definition of the term vocational aspiration has not been posulated. However, it is commonly held that to aspire to something is to desire it; and the object of this desire represents upward movement. One's vocational aspirations

²Ibid., p. 174.

³Donald Super, Psychology of Careers, (New York: Harper and Brothers, Co., 1957), p. 87.

determine one's vocational choice. As a result, the definition of vocational choice can be applied to understanding the nature of vocational aspiration. According to Super, vocational choice

denotes a whole series of choices generally resulting in the elimination of some alternatives and the retention of others, until in due course the narrowing down process results in what might perhaps be called an occupational choice.⁴

Vocational guidance. The National Guidance Association states that the aim of vocational guidance is to assist the individual to choose, prepare for, enter upon, and progress in an occupation.⁵ Accordingly, vocational guidance counseling is the process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept, and to convert it into a reality, with satisfaction to himself and benefit to society.

Black youth. Black youth in the present context referred to American Negroes of varying ages, although the references were more generally to the period of adolescence. However, the use of black as a reference point implied a psychological state of mind in which the Negro American has a sense of pride in himself and in his race.⁶

⁴Ibid., p. 180.

⁵Ibid., p. 197.

⁶William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, Black Rage, (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 161.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT

If vocational choice is an expression of one's self-concept, then it is of the utmost importance to understand the meaning of self-concept. The development of self-concept is a component of a process, therefore, it is essential to investigate the process as it contributes to the development of self-concept.

It was the purpose of this chapter to provide the necessary background information to present a clearer picture of youth. The chapter sought to examine the processes involved in the development of self-concept.

The following areas were explored in the chapter: (1) "mothering", (2) physical care, (3) frame of reference, (4) adolescent developmental tasks, (5) adolescent interpersonal behavior, (5) adolescent peer groups, (6) reasons for adolescent awareness, and (7) chapter summary.

I. CHILDHOOD IS IMPORTANT

"Mothering". The process of maturation starts at birth. Human beings are then independent only in a crude biological sense as a separate organism. At birth the infant's capacities are very limited and he is entirely dependent upon others for survival. How

successfully each individual reaches a mature independence is fundamentally determined by one's earliest experiences in the crucial first years of life.¹

The process of growing more mature is largely a matter of adapting one's instinctual drives and desires to fit in with the needs of other people.² One drive is the desire to explore our surroundings.³ Without it one could never learn about the world we live in. An individual cannot find his way through childhood, needless to say, establish adult standards on hearsay evidence about his surroundings.

This vital process of exploring starts almost from birth.⁴ The infant learns to find the nipple, he gets the feel of his own limbs, his toes, his fingers, the sound of his rattle, the feel of his teething ring, the water in his bath, and his mother's cheeks, nose, hair, and the sound of her voice.

As soon as he begins to crawl, his horizon widens and there is more to be explored. Adults cannot expect him to know that his drive to explore will sometimes bring him into contact with what is dangerous or forbidden. When he encounters something new he will want

¹W. Goldfarb, "Effects of Psychological Deprivation in Infancy and Subsequent Stimulation," Amer. J. of Orthopsychiat., 15:247, 1945.

²Gordon Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), p. 118.

³Allport, op. cit., p. 113.

⁴Ibid.

to explore its feel. Quite inevitably some of his efforts must be frustrated. He cannot yet know that he is being protected for his own sake, to save him from getting hurt or from actual danger.

Although the infant cannot understand, adults can see that to be frustrated and to learn how to adapt himself is an essential part of learning how to cope with life and therefore of character and personality development.⁵ How else can a child learn to come to terms with his instinctual drives on the one hand and the demands of his surroundings on the other? How else can he learn that sometimes in his own interest and sometimes in the interest of other people, his own urges must be frustrated?

The key influence in guiding personality development is the child's relationship with his parents. The effects of any type of parent-child relationship vary considerably with the constitutional make up of the child, his self-structure, and other factors in his total life situation.⁶ One child may become aggressive and destructive because he has been rejected; another may become anxious and withdrawn.

Research has shown that the early months of life are tremendously important in starting the infant on the pathway of healthy or unhealthy development. Particularly significant during this period is

⁵Allport, op. cit., p. 119.

⁶Goldfarb, op. cit., p. 258.

"mothering" -- the subtle factor of maternal love and stimulation.⁷ How far this factor is biological and how far psychological is not yet certain, but it is known that if the mother or mother substitute is responsive to the infant when he is hungry or cries, protects him from excessive cold and light, and provides him with ample love and stimulation, the infant normally gets off to a good start. The infant who is rejected, treated harshly, or simply ignored, on the other hand tends to show symptoms of developmental difficulties almost at once.⁸

The effects of inadequate mothering are often seen among infants brought up in orphanages. The long-range effects of early deprivation of maternal love and stimulation are suggested by much of the research. Coleman describes a study of thirty-eight adolescents who had been institutionalized from approximately three weeks of age until they were three years old. At the time of the study, sixteen to eighteen years after discharge from the orphanage, four were diagnosed as psychotic, twenty-one as having a character disorder, four as mentally retarded, and two as psychoneurotic.⁹ Only seven had achieved satisfactory

⁷Bernard Bernstein, "Some Sociological Determinants of Perception: An Inquiry in Sub-cultural Differences," British J. of Sociology, 9:161, 1958.

⁸Ibid.

⁹James Coleman, Personality Dynamics and Effective Behavior, (Chicago: Scott, Foreman, and Co., 1960), p. 100.

personality development. It has been suggested that the stimulation an infant receives from its mother may be even more important than her "love".¹⁰

A child's need for love and acceptance as a condition for healthy development has been demonstrated in studies of children with both healthy and unhealthy personality traits. In an intensive study of 261 well-adjusted children reviewed by Coleman, it was concluded that the most important single factor in their good adjustment was satisfaction of the child's need for love and acceptance.¹¹ The children came from various socioeconomic levels, from different sized families and, from widely differing kinds of discipline. The one factor they shared was that they were accepted and loved and made to feel that they were wanted.

As in the case of proper physical care, parental love and acceptance can pay many subtle dividends in personality development. A child who is loved by others has little difficulty in accepting himself. Many conditions that might seriously impair healthy development: a physical handicap, poverty, unusual strictness on the part of parents are neutralized for the child who feels loved and accepted.¹²

¹⁰Goldfarb, op. cit., p. 259.

¹¹Coleman, op. cit., p. 101.

¹²Allport, op. cit., p. 77.

If, on the other hand, a child feels that nobody really cares about him, he is deprived of his major source of security and will find it hard to regard himself as adequate or lovable.¹³ This may result in a variety of behavior problems. One study found that coldness on the part of the mother was positively correlated with feeding problems and bedwetting; that punishment given by a cold parent tended to make the child angry and retaliatory rather than to improve his behavior; and that a cold parent trying to discourage a child's dependency tended instead to increase it.¹⁴

"Mothering" is of the utmost importance for the child to develop feelings of confidence and adequacy early in his life, for once his self-concept begins to take form, it tends to resist change.

Physical care. The nature of one's body and its functioning probably has much significance in the development of a pattern of interests, and possibly in selecting a vocation, although there is no conclusive evidence about this relationship. It is obvious that the weak and awkward boy will not, for example, become a professional athlete. His sturdy and graceful age mate has before him a wider range of available interests, hobbies, and occupations. Bodies and faces that are markedly unattractive by cultural standards handicap

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴R. Sears, E. Maccoby, and H. Levin, Patterns of Child Rearing, Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, and Co., 1957), p. 61.

their possessor in his social and heterosexual life, and create additional problems to be solved in an existence that, for most people is already sufficiently complex.

The importance of adequate nutrition, exercise, rest, and other conditions essential to maintaining physical health and vigor should hardly need mention. Yet many parents seem to think that adequate physical care consists only of securing medical care in case of illness or some obvious physical defect. As a result of poor physical hygiene, many children suffer unnecessarily from chronic colds, irritability, loss of energy, and other symptoms.¹⁵

Such symptoms may interfere with development in a variety of ways. A child who is continually tired may retreat from learning situations that require sustained effort and may tend to give up before completing a task. Frequent colds may lower a child's energy level and make him highly irritable. Such reactions are likely, in turn, to complicate his relationships with his parents, teachers, and peers. The child, on the other hand, who has a healthy body and can operate at a high level of physical efficiency has an automatic advantage in dealing with other people and in coping with his problems.

Although a child needs a great deal of guidance from his parents and their unconditional support, he should not be protected from the ordinary hazards of learning by doing. In growing toward maturity, he

¹⁵Norman Freeberg and Donald Payne, "Parental Influence on Cognitive Development in Early Childhood: A Review," Child Development, 38:68, 1967.

needs practice in self-direction, with opportunities to direct his own activities in areas where he is capable.¹⁶ To protect a child from every danger he might encounter in exploring his world and testing abilities is to deny him opportunity for developing the initiative and the competencies he will need, and for learning how to cope with failure. A child who accepts his parents' conviction that he is unable to fend for himself may be passive and dependent for the rest of his life. Or he may become rebellious and aggressive. If the pattern of mother love includes overindulgence as it often does, the child may also become selfish and egocentric, and inconsiderate of the needs and feelings of others.¹⁷

One of the first decisions the mother must make about her baby is shall the infant be breast-fed or should an artificial method be used? It seems logical that the decision to breast-feed may be linked with other decisions about intimacy with the baby. It may be that women who desire both to breast-feed and to be in intimate contact with their new baby are more "motherly" than those who do not.¹⁸

It is often popularly suggested that mothers of Southern European national origins and black mothers are more "motherly" than women of United States families or than mothers whose national origins

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Freeberg and Payne, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁸B. R. McCandless, *Children and Adolescents*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), p. 70.

are British or Northwest European. In a study, reviewed by McCandless, there was a tendency, although it was not statistically significant, in the opposite direction.¹⁹ More of the latter group preferred intimate contact, and mothers who were black or could trace their origins to Southern Europe preferred less contact with their new baby.

A number of significant differences appeared between the groups cited above. Mothers choosing to use the bottle were, as a group, more dependent, more rejecting of the child, and more dissatisfied with their own sex role. They seemed more maladjusted in areas concerned with eating, sucking, and elimination; manifested more sibling rivalry and guilt feelings; and were more preoccupied with themselves.²⁰

The general emotional climate of the feeding situation may be more important than whether the child is breast-fed or bottle-fed, weaned early or late, or allowed to nurse for a long time. The best conclusion about the specifics of feeding seems to be that mothers who are well meaning and who try relaxedly to do what they sincerely believe is best for their children, particularly when this is in harmony with the cultural ways of the community with which they are most closely associated, obtain the best results with their children.

As a group the mothers surveyed by Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, who were rated high in anxiety about sex, started bowel training

¹⁹McCandless, op. cit., p. 71.

²⁰Ibid., p. 72.

earlier than mothers more relaxed about sex.²¹ Mothers who trained severely also put relatively great pressure on their children to use good table manners, be neat, be careful around the house and with the furniture, keep quiet and do well in school. They were more likely than lenient mothers to use physical punishment and deprivation of privileges; and reasoned less with their children. They strongly discouraged and punished aggression toward themselves and their husbands, and expected strict obedience. They laid heavy emphasis on modesty, and were more concerned about masturbation and social sex play than the lenient mothers. They were also anxious about their child rearing capabilities and seemed, relatively, to lack warmth and esteem for themselves and their mates.²²

It has been suggested that toilet training is not an isolated factor but is accompanied by a whole set of other child rearing practices affecting many phases of the child's social behavior.²³ It appears that whatever was discovered concerning the relation between child behavior or personality and toilet training resulted from something more general: permissiveness and restrictiveness.

Personality development is thus another example of the old analogy of the soil and the seed. Whatever the inherent qualities in

²¹Sears, et. al., op. cit. , p. 63.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

the seed, growth may be helped or hindered by the soil in which it germinates. However, in the present context one should beware of thinking of soil in purely physical or dietary terms. These are not ignored, but the vital soil for a growing personality is the emotional atmosphere, the quality of the relationships between the child and others around him and among the adults themselves, and the child rearing practices to which the child is subject especially those which are related to intimate contact with the mother and the subsequent relationship. One cannot adequately consider a child's development without taking these factors into account. He does not develop in isolation from others, indeed he cannot do so.

Frame of reference. No trait is so dependent on heredity as not to require certain minimal environmental conditions for its development. At any given moment an individual is the product of countless interactions between his genetic endowment and his physical and socio cultural environment. Physical environment is in reference to the natural world surrounding the individual: climate, terrain, food supplies, disease germs, and the like; socio cultural environment is in reference to the world of people, customs, values, and man made objects.²⁴

The degree of heterogeneity in a person's culture is a significant factor in his development, providing important opportunities or

²⁴Coleman, op. cit., p. 52.

limitations for his growth as an individual.²⁵ The benefits one reaps from having no fixed molds and standards are freedom from regimentation, almost unlimited diversity, and a degree of personal responsibility and self-direction not otherwise possible. But the penalties one often pays for these advantages are worry, bewilderment, and conflict, for while in theory heterogeneity is not inconsistent with harmony, in actual fact it usually leads to the development of conflicting values and goals.

The superior mental gifts and consequently, the superior adaptability of man has enabled him to become the unchallenged master of the animal kingdom. But man's unique gifts have also created unique problems, for man alone is faced with the responsibility of determining his own behavior: of evaluating and choosing the best course of action and of developing the competencies or skills essential for carrying it out. In short, man is faced with the necessity of self-direction, and this places a heavy demand upon him to determine the type of person he is and the basic role he should play as a human being.²⁶

Any action to meet an inner need involves some interaction with objects, animate or inanimate, surrounding the individual. Human beings are so dependent on external objects that one's motives cannot

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Allport, op. cit., p. 171.

help but incorporate them.²⁷ The most obvious way in which external factors affect motivation is by having certain goals and activities provided through which needs can be met and by not providing certain others. These provisions are both physical and cultural and vary greatly from one place to another and from one society to another. Some cultures offer opportunities for psychological satisfactions and fulfillment of potentialities. Others are limiting, repressive, and rigid.

On the basis of experiences in a particular environment, the growing individual gradually develops a coherent frame of reference which is used in evaluating new experiences and selecting appropriate modes of behavior. The key elements in a person's frame of reference are his basic assumptions about himself and his world, that is, about his personal worth, his abilities, his deficiencies, the kind of world he lives in, what is good and bad, and what can be changed. One makes such assumptions on the basis of whatever information has been gathered in the course of living, but ordinarily, one's knowledge is far from complete. One therefore, must interpret the information he does have and make inferences that go beyond it.

Thus, while one may speak meaningfully of an American culture which fosters many similarities in development, it must be realized too that individuals participate in cultures from very different vantage

²⁷Allport, op. cit., p. 169.

points; they occupy different positions, have different social rank and status, and play different roles. This factor of differential participation is highly important in understanding individual differences within cultures.

The solidification of a life style probably takes place in adolescence, and is accompanied by a heightened awareness of individual differences amongst one's peers. Adolescence as a process involves the questioning of one's self-concept and the assuming of various roles. The self-concept of adolescents exert tremendous influences on peer group interaction, and the individuals' proclivities toward trial-and-error methods of problem solving. As a result of these occurrences adolescence is a crucial factor in the development of self-concept.

II. ADOLESCENCE IS IMPORTANT

Adolescent developmental tasks. Adolescence, as a time period may be defined in several ways.

In terms of physical development, an individual's adolescent period may be said to have begun at the time that he or she shows the first signs of making the transition to sexual maturity, and to have ended when physical growth has ceased at about age 17 or 18. The period may also be defined in terms of social responses, beginning with the increase in interest in the other sex that usually accompanies sexual maturity and ending with the attainment of social and financial independence from the parents. Although the beginning of the adolescent period is not defined in legal terms, the ending of it is; a person is legally an adult in some respects at age 18, legally adult in all respects at age 21.²⁸

²⁸Gene Medinmus and Ronald Johnson, Child and Adolescent Psychology, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1969), p. 656.

The fact that adolescence is essentially an exploratory period, during which young people try themselves in a variety of educational, vocational, and social ways, is full of significance for educators, and counselors. It serves as a guiding concept in the planning of educational offerings, in the counseling of youth concerning the choice of activities and the evaluation of achievements, for it throws light on the basic goals typical of persons of the ages in question.

During adolescence the tasks of establishing a mature sense of identity and of preparing for work and marriage are of crucial importance. If these tasks are not mastered at the appropriate stage of development, the individual may be at a serious disadvantage in making subsequent adjustments.

Underlying the apparent diversity of these specific tasks we can see certain general tasks common to all stages of development. These focus around:

Achieving a realistic frame of reference, with healthy attitudes and accurate assumptions about self and environment; developing essential competencies, including physical, intellectual, emotional, and social skills; learning about problems likely to be encountered and about the preparation necessary for dealing with them successfully.²⁹

The specific tasks for the adolescent can be described as follows:

developing a clear sense of identity and self-confidence; adjusting body changes; developing new more mature relations with age mates; achieving emotional independence from parents; selecting and

²⁹Coleman, op. cit., p. 89.

preparing for an occupation; achieving mature values and social responsibility; preparing for marriage and family life; developing concern beyond self.³⁰

Adolescent interpersonal behavior. The adolescent's social life does not primarily consist of possessions; it consists of casual conversations, small talk, the easy interchange of ideas, the sharing of minor enthusiasms. The individual's self-conceptions play an important role in such interaction.

One of the outstanding feelings of adolescence is a sense of interpersonal threat. If the adolescent feels that others do not like him very much one might expect him to adopt the defensive reaction of saying that it does not matter to him what others think. On the contrary, however, he is considerably more likely to say that he is deeply concerned with others reactions to him.³¹ The adolescent's lack of confidence in his own judgment often leads him to assume that his critics are right.

One sign of an adolescent's ability to direct his own behavior is the degree to which he feels confident that his ideas and goals concerning his behavior are right and best for him. An adolescent who expresses confidence in his own values and goals is presumably more capable of self-government.³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

³¹ Medinmus and Johnson, op. cit., p. 407.

³² Ibid., p. 677.

A second dimension of autonomy pertains to the degree of self-reliance in decision making. When confronted with an important decision about himself and his future, the youth who makes up his own mind with or without the assistance of others exhibits a high degree of independence.³³

The adolescent not only tends to say that he feels threatened by other people, but he is also likely to describe his interpersonal relations accurately, however, they may be expressed in different ways.³⁴ One kind of difficulty may take the form of fighting, squabbling, or resisting other people. Another form may be manifested in awkwardness, uneasiness, or avoidance.

At times such awkwardness and tension may produce an interference with communication.³⁵ In its mild form it may be manifested in the hesitancy to express one's view; however, this interference with communication may become quite serious. Among some adolescents this low faith in people takes the form of contempt for the great mass of humanity; among others, mistrust; among still others, hostility.

Adolescent peer groups. The adolescent looks most for men and ideas to have faith in, which also means men and ideas in whose service it would seem worthwhile to prove one's self trustworthy. At the same

³³Ibid.

³⁴Medinmus and Johnson, op. cit., p. 407.

³⁵Ibid., p. 410.

time, however, the adolescent fears a foolish, all too trusting commitment, and will express his need for faith in cynical mistrust.

The adolescent looks for an opportunity to decide with free assent one of the available or unavoidable avenues of duty and service and at the same time is afraid of being forced into activities which he would feel exposed to ridicule or self-doubt. "This can lead to a paradox, namely, that the adolescent would rather act shamelessly in the eyes of his elders, out of free choice than be forced into activities which would be shameful in his own eyes or in those of his peers."³⁶ The adolescent's willingness to put his trust in those peers who will give imaginative; if not illusory, scope to his aspirations is only too obvious. However, by the same token, he objects to all limitations on his self-images.

Finally, if the desire to make something work and to make it work well, is the gain of the school age, then the choice of an occupation assumes a significance beyond the question of remuneration and status in adolescence.³⁷ Youth after youth, bewildered by the incapacity to assume a role forced on him by the standardization of American adolescence, runs away in one form or another, dropping out of school, leaving jobs, staying out all night, or withdrawal into bizarre and inaccessible moods.

³⁶ Erik Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1968), p. 129.

³⁷ Ibid.

In short, it is the inability to settle on an occupational identity which most disturbs young people. To keep themselves together they temporarily overidentify with the heroes of cliques and crowds to the point of an apparently complete loss of individuality.³⁸

Reasons for Adolescent awareness. At this stage of development, the individual tends to be keenly concerned with his self-image. What am I like? How good am I? What should I, or might I, become? On what basis shall I judge myself? Undeniably, many adolescents are consumed with questions of this sort. There are several reasons for this heightened awareness of the self-image during this period of development.

For one thing, adolescence is a time of major decision making. When an individual is faced with a serious and urgent decision, and when a major basis for this decision is his view of what he is like, then the perception of one's self is likely to move to the forefront of attention.³⁹

A second reason for a heightened awareness of the self-image is that adolescence is a period of unusual change. Gross and rapid physical changes abound. A boy grows several inches or gains a large number of pounds in a matter of months; the adolescent looking in the mirror suddenly sees a face covered with pimples; a flat-chested girl

³⁸Ibid., p. 132.

³⁹Erikson, op. cit., p. 128.

becomes a well-developed young lady. Internal physiological changes proceed apace. Sexual drives achieve an intensity which was unimaginable in the period of latency; new desires surge through the youth. Finally, psychological changes are taking place. New interests, attitudes, and values come to the fore. Whether it is now a concern with automobiles or dates, an awakened interest in philosophy or religion, a new concern for aesthetic experience or world affairs, the affect is to shake up the adolescent's picture of what he is like and to intensify his interest in this picture.

Third, adolescence is a period of unusual status ambiguity.⁴⁰ Society does not have a clear set of expectations for the adolescent. In some ways he is treated as a child, in other ways as an adult. He is thus unclear about his social duties and responsibilities just as he is unclear about his social rights and privileges. This ambiguity is accentuated by the fact that both remnants of the past and promises of the future influence the self-image.

III. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter sought to describe the development of self-concept. This was accomplished by tracing the usual occurrences in childhood and adolescence. The information related was specific, although no direct

⁴⁰ Allport, op. cit., p. 125.

reference was made to the formation of self-concept in black youth, it was assumed the information was to be generalized to black peoples.

CHAPTER III

MANIFESTATION OF SELF-CONCEPT IN VOCATIONAL CHOICE

The self-concept is manifested in a wide variety of an individual's tasks. The particular emphasis of this chapter was on the manifestation of self-concept in vocational choice. A clearer understanding of the dynamics underlying the manifestation of self-concept would prove beneficial.

Theories pertinent to the topic were reviewed. In accomplishing this, the chapter considered the following areas: (1) the incomplete self-concept; (2) theorital contributions; and (3) chapter summary.

I. THE INCOMPLETE SELF-CONCEPT

The statement of the problem. The previous chapters delineated the complexity of factors involved in the development of the self-concept. The problems were seen to be multiple and an unsatisfactory completion not uncommon. One of the major elements in the problem for the youth is evident in the process of vocational development.

The core of the identity problem for the adolescent is the selecting of an occupation or other life goal. The future, he knows, must follow a plan and in this respect his sense of selfhood takes on a dimension entirely lacking in childhood.¹ Until youth begins to plan the sense of self is not complete.

¹Gordon W. Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), p. 126.

"Adolescent exploration is a process of reality testing."² It begins in junior high school, continues throughout high school, and continues also in the various nonschool activities in which the youth engages. It is, however, when the youth begins to look for a job, it is when he must demonstrate that his abilities, skills, and knowledge are worth paying for, and that his notions as to the kind of person he is and the kinds of things he can do are well founded, that the crucial test is met. An understanding of the nature and scope of the problem of making the transition from school to work is therefore essential to educators and counselors of youth.³

A reason for the problem. One reason that difficulty may be encountered in an occupational declaration by youth is that the ego may not have been sufficiently nurtured in a positive way throughout the previous life stages, or if it was, the individual realizes the discrepancy between aspirations and achievements within the structure of society. In short, the youth learns not to value achievement because he does not have access to the avenues through which aspirations become achievements.

Moreover, the adolescent who attempts to enter the world of work finds that he is now in the minority. Not only is he a member of a minority, but he finds that the adult world has mores and attitudes

²Donald E. Super, The Psychology of Careers, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 85.

³Super, op. cit., p. 101.

with which he is not familiar, and that his past ways of achieving recognition are not as effective in this society as they were among teenagers or in the mixed adult adolescent microcosm.⁴

Viewed psychologically, it is the process of finding out what constitutes adult behavior, and it is the process of trying out various modes of adult behavior and of ascertaining which are congenial to one's self and acceptable to one's associates.⁵ As a consequence, the teenager who has relied upon loud clothes and minor annoyances as a means of getting attention finds that the pattern of behavior on which he has relied no longer bring the accustomed satisfactions when he is out of school and at work. Instead of relying on the outmoded behavior patterns, he must try other ways of winning the approval of those who surround him.

II. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Buehler's life stages. The basic life stages of infancy, childhood, adulthood, and old age have been known and widely used since time immemorial. The psychological life stages defined by Buehler as a result of the analysis of life histories are five in number:

The Growth Stage extends from conception to about the age of fourteen. It is followed by the Exploratory Stage which includes the period from about age fifteen to about twenty-five. The

⁴

Ibid.

⁵ Donald E. Super, "Vocational Adjustment: Implementing a Self-concept," Occupations, 30:89, 1951.

Establishment Stage comes next including the years from twenty-five to about forty-five. Then comes the Maintenance Stage which ends at about sixty-five. The final stage is that of Decline, beginning at about sixty-five.⁶

The age limits are considered by Buehler to be approximations which vary considerably from one person to another.⁷ Super's conception of career development is built upon the framework of these life stages based on the assumption that vocational tasks reflect larger life tasks.

The processes of exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline are not simply vocational, but involve all aspects of life. Adolescent exploration includes developing an understanding of the self, trying out the role of adulthood, finding a mate, finding an occupation, finding one's place in the community. Establishment similarly includes establishing a family, a home and a role in the community as well as making a place for one's self in the world of work by establishing a practice, that is by developing a work history which makes one classifiable in the world of work. Maintenance is the process of holding one's own in the family, keeping the home intact, keeping up appearances in the community and seeing that the work practices continue to flourish. Decline manifests itself not only physically in decreased energy and stamina, and vocationally in the need to taper off in the volume of working hours, but also in decline

⁶Super, Psychology of Careers, op. cit., p. 72.

⁷Ibid.

in other respects as in the lessening of family responsibilities and restriction of roles in the community.

The developmental process. People are born with certain behavior potentials, with muscular, neural, and endocrine tendencies which make easier or more difficult the development of a given type of ability or personality trait. Beginning early in life these behavior potentials are acted upon by the environment in which the infant or young child lives. Certain kinds of behavior are favored and bring gratification or are disapproved and bring punishment.

Super utilized principles from differential and phenomenological psychology to describe and explain the choice process. He placed emphasis upon vocational choice as a process and suggested that the term developmental be used rather than choice, because it comprehended the concepts of preference, choice, entry, and adjustment.⁸ He introduced the concept of vocational maturity to denote the individual's degree of development from the time of his early fantasy choices in childhood to his decisions about retirement from work in old age.⁹

As the individual matures vocationally, he passes through a series of life stages, each of which corresponds to some phase in the

⁸Donald E. Super, "A Theory of Vocational Development," American Psychologist, 8:187, 1953.

⁹Donald E. Super, "Personality Integration Through Vocational Counseling," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 2:219, 1955.

development of his self-concept.¹⁰ In adolescence, for example, the individual elaborates upon and clarifies the concept of himself he formed during childhood and he begins to translate his self-concept into vocational terms through his aspirations, preferences, and work values. To the extent he successfully copes with the developmental tasks of a life stage the individual can be considered vocationally mature.¹¹ It can easily be seen, through the aforementioned example, that vocational choice is a developmental process. It is not on an all or none, now or never continuum.

Implementation of the self-concept. The self influences vocational choice because the choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly his concept of himself, to say I am this or that kind of person.¹² Throughout his life the individual plays a variety of roles which provide him with an opportunity to discover who he is and what he wants to be. In play and work activities, he tries out his abilities and evaluates them against his accomplishments, and the reactions of others. He finds that he does some things well and gains a sense of satisfaction from them. These successes tend to develop in him a

¹⁰Super, "A Theory of Vocational Development," op. cit., p. 185.

¹¹Ibid., p. 186.

¹²Donald E. Super, "Vocational Adjustment: Implementing a Self-concept," Occupations, 30:88, 1955.

picture of himself as one who writes well or as one who is always on time and these numerous little specific of aspects of oneself begin to add up in due course to a picture of the self.¹³ As the individual grows older, he integrates the various pictures he has of himself into a consistent self-concept, which he strives to preserve and enhance through all of his activities, but particularly through his occupational activities. He attempts to select an occupation which will be compatible with his self-concept and which will allow him to make it a reality by permitting him to play the role he wants to play.

The question "Where am I going?" centers around one's goals, the means selected for achieving them, and the hazards likely to be encountered on the way. Goals focus our energy and effort, guide the competencies needed to develop, and provides one with criteria for deciding between alternate courses of actions.¹⁴ Often it is convenient to think in terms of long-range and short-range goals. Long-range goals usually require the attainment of many short-range goals or subgoals. Long-range goals may be thought of as the primary direction finders for our behavior, but short-range goals are the ones that ordinarily occupy most of our attention and effort. One must have a clear idea of where he is going if he is to choose appropriate subgoals and effective means for achieving them. Yet, many people

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1957), p. 481.

drift through life with little or no sense of direction other than that of meeting their immediate needs.¹⁵

It is readily apparent that some goals are superior to others in the satisfactions they afford and that some are more appropriate than others in relation to the individual's personal resources and environmental opportunities. The pursuit of goals that are too low in aspiration level leads to wasted opportunities and lost satisfaction; the pursuit of false goals that fail to yield satisfaction when they are attained leads to disillusionment and discouragement.

A final consideration in answering the question "Where am I going?" is trying to anticipate some of the hazards one may meet along the way. Although it is impossible to foresee all the problems a situation may present, certain types of adjustment should be made to function effectively.

The problem of vocational aspirations is intimately related to that of values.¹⁶ What kind of life is good or bad for human beings in general and for one's self as an individual? A person must have some purpose for being and a system of values in which he can really believe. The degree to which he trusts the soundness of his values will determine how much he actually relies on them in making his choices, how much satisfaction he gains from following them, how free he will be

¹⁵Allport, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁶Super, Psychology of Careers, op. cit., p. 232.

from inner conflict, how successfully he can cope with setbacks and frustrations, and how much effort he will put forth in working toward his goals.¹⁷

Identification and role models. The problem of arriving at a definition of identification is a difficult one, but a necessary hurdle to bridge because of its relationship to role models and role playing. Identification is the basis for role models and role playing. The following meanings of the term have been employed: copying or modeling; adhering to a group of which an individual feels a part; acceptance of a cause; empathy and vicarious living; sympathy; love; closeness; and loyalty.¹⁸

The definition used here stresses sex-role identification, and is essentially a learning definition. The boy who has made a male identification is the boy who has happily and thoroughly adopted maleness as his way of life. He thinks of himself as a male. He accepts and likes this state of affairs, its advantages and its disadvantages; and he assumes the responsibilities that being a male demand. His fantasy behavior is male, just as his sexual behavior, pattern of interest, and style of walking, talking, and gesturing are male. It is assumed that the boy has learned to be male for various social-personal

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Allport, op. cit., p. 123.

reasons, and that ideally his best model for this role is his father.¹⁹ In other words, it is likely that a boy must be identified with his father, or another male who plays a significant role in the child's life, and in many ways imitate his role model in order to arrive at a consistently and genuinely male identification. With respect to the girl, identification can be defined exactly as it is by using the example above, substituting girl for boy, mother for father, and feminine for masculine pronouns.

The term identification is usually employed to include sex-role identification and other important aspects of personality.²⁰ Even those who have not made an appropriate sex-role identification, however, assume many of the attitudes, values, and beliefs of their parents and other significant figures in their lives.²¹ It is commonly held that such human attributes as conscience and self-determined morality, guilt, the motive to achieve, and the like arise through identification which may be with either or both parents.²²

In the present context, identification may be defined as the method by which a person takes over the features of another person and makes them a part of his own personality.²³ He learns to reduce tension

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 171.

²¹Ibid.

²²Hall and Lindzey, op. cit., p. 46.

²³Ibid., p. 47.

by modeling his behavior after that of someone else. One chooses models who seem to be successful in gratifying their own needs. Needless to say, most of this identification takes place unconsciously and not with conscious intention. It is not necessary for a person to identify with someone else in every respect. An individual usually selects and incorporates just those features which he believes will help him achieve a desired goal.²⁴

A individual has an opportunity to observe roles other than those which are part of the home life. For example, the parents are workers outside of the home and as a result models are provided for youth which are learned through observation and hearsay. The satisfaction producing roles will be played again and again and may become part of the personality pattern.²⁵ The youth finds out about the nature of work in the home, by the kind of chores performed, he observes that men do some things and women others, he learns something about the other places in which work is performed, he finds out how well he likes a particular job, and he compares or hears his performance compared with those of others.²⁶ In short, it has been demonstrated that there is a relationship between having a suitable role model in the childhood home and making a satisfactory work adjustment in adulthood.²⁷

²⁴Allport, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁵Super, Psychology of Careers, op. cit., p. 83.

²⁶Ibid., p. 84.

²⁷Ibid.

What happens to boys and girls with inadequate fathers or mothers, or both? With poor marriages and faulty child rearing practices as common as they are in our culture how do so many children nevertheless achieve adequate sex-typing and identification and become normally functioning, reasonably happy men and women?

There are at least four factors that promote identification in the absence of adequate parental figures. The first is the transmission, through mediating processes, of favorable attitudes toward an absent or deceased spouse. There is some indirect evidence to indicate that mothers who pass on favorable opinions of their absent mates rear children with ideal father relationships, hence, presumably the youth has the opportunity for adequate identification, which is better than that of children whose mothers pass on unfavorable attitudes about the absent mate.²⁸

Second, there are parent surrogates in every culture and in the American culture, particularly for girls. A good teacher can go a long way toward providing a favorable female model for the girl whose mother is inadequate or absent. The average boy on the other hand, does not usually encounter a male teacher until he is in junior high school and often not then. But uncles, aunts, and neighborhood friends all can, and do help provide models for the child of either sex who has no parental model on which to build.

²⁸R. R. Sears, E. Maccoby, and H. Levin, Patterns of Child Rearing, (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, and Co., 1957), p. 60.

Boys can make a satisfactory identification with fathers who themselves are not particularly masculine in their patterns of interest and activity. The reason for this may be that the boys can accept themselves easily as males if they see their fathers as warm, understanding, and rewarding.²⁹ Then once this basic psychological identification has been made, the boys go ahead to copy from other males in their environment behaviors that are more suitable for them.³⁰

A third factor pushing the child toward an appropriate sex-role identification is a general force in the culture. Boys are rewarded for acting like boys and punished for acting like girls. The same process holds true for girls.

Finally, it is suggested, although there is no definite evidence that people have selective memories, that they remember the good and forget the bad. A child, even when his parents have preponderantly neglected, rejected, and punished him, forgets the bad times and remembers the good ones. He thus creates for himself a model for identification, however flawed the original may have been.³¹ In short, the child is provided with or provides for himself a model with whom he can identify.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

III. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The manifestation of self-concept in vocational choice was presented by reviewing the theories pertinent to the topic. It was seen that the manifestation of self-concept in vocational choice was a common occurrence, and that vocational choice was an attempt to implement the self-concept. Also, the effects of an incomplete self-concept were reviewed as related to vocational choice.

CHAPTER IV

SOME DETERMINANTS OF BLACK MOBILITY ASPIRATIONS

Although the expression of one's vocational choice was seen as a manifestation of the self-concept, there are other factors which affect vocational aspirations, especially for the black youth. In an effort to present these factors, the chapter was organized as follows:

(1) society as a limiting factor, and (2) the family as a limiting factor.

I. SOCIETY AS A LIMITING FACTOR

The structure of opportunities. Social mobility, considered as a process of upward or downward movement between social classes, has been shown to be a highly ubiquitous phenomenon in countries which are divergent in culture and social order. The process is a complex multi-dimensional one which includes such aspects as intergenerational and intragenerational mobility as well as objective and subjective dimensions. Generally, most researchers have used occupation as a single component index of social class and have used the terms occupational mobility and social mobility interchangeably.¹ According to this formulation, a boy who aspires to an occupation, which is ranked higher than his father's occupation on such attributes as prestige would

¹Super, Psychology of Careers, op. cit., p. 27.

be considered to be upwardly mobile in his aspirations.

A youth's position in the social structure of his family, of the community, of the society as a whole exposes him to certain life experiences and to a broad set of opportunities for social advancement which may be more or less limited in comparison to those realized by adolescents in somewhat different locations in the social structure. The structure of opportunities to which the child is initially exposed is largely determined by the social class position of his parents. A youth's opportunities are also contingent, though, perhaps to a lesser extent, on his status within the family. The size of his family as well as his ordinal position may likewise significantly influence the kinds of achievement and advancement opportunities available to him.

Along with parents and friends, the child's brothers and sisters constitute an important part of his interpersonal environment. Not only do they exert a direct influence upon him as members of the same household, but their very presence necessarily affects his relationship with his parents.² That birth order or sibling structure, may have an important bearing upon personality development is strongly suggested by research. The evidence indicates that children who vary in ordinal position in the family, or in particular combinations of brothers and sisters show differences in frequency of the "affiliation motive" in

²Melvin Kohn, "Social Class and Parent-Child Relationships: An Interpretation," Mental Health for the Poor, Frank Riessman, Jerome Cohen, and Arthur Pearl, editors, (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p.160.

rates of schizophrenia, in rates of duodenal ulcers, in rates of alcoholism, and in scientific and political eminence.³

While family size is likely to determine, in part, the economic burden carried by a family, a child's position in the birth order is apt to bear upon his chances of obtaining financial support from his parents. The first child who reaches college age in a black family may be more strongly urged by his parents to go to college than a later born sibling simply because educational funds are more available; however, the first family member to "have made it" is expected, indeed psychologically obligated, to provide his younger siblings with the opportunity "to make it".⁴ A child's sex is also a potentially important determinant of opportunities for a college education because of social expectations. In the black family it is the female rather than the male who is provided with the additional opportunities for a college education because of social expectations.⁵ If a family has many children, then it need not pin its hope for advancement on any particular child but may, on the contrary, stake its aspirations on those children who seem to be more promising.

It has been shown that boys whose siblings are mostly sisters tend to have higher self-esteem than those who are mostly surrounded by

³Medinrus and Johnson, op. cit., p. 259.

⁴William Grier and Price Cobbs, Black Rage, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), p. 87.

⁵Ibid., p. 122.

brothers; however, whether the girl is surrounded mostly by brothers or by sisters appears to bear little relationship to her level of self-acceptance.⁶ But if a boy is mostly surrounded by sisters it may make a difference whether he is an older boy with younger sisters or a younger boy with older sisters.⁷ If a boy is surrounded by older sisters, he is more likely to be dependent and passive, than if his sisters are younger.

It may be noted that girls who come later in the family do not fare as well as boys.⁸ Girls are also probably more likely than boys to greet any new child in the family with interest and affection since this new object provides them with the opportunity to rehearse their mother roles. This warmth and concern girls are likely to feel for their younger sibling is not lasting, as this feeling soon turns to resentment because of sheer jealousy or the additional responsibilities which the older child must assume as a result of a new family member. There may, furthermore, be less hostility between older sisters and younger brothers because parents are less likely to make distinctions between them.

It seems evident that much of what goes under the heading of sibling rivalry actually stems from comparisons and unequal affection

⁶David A. Schulz, Coming Up Black, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 63.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 30.

and approval, of parents toward children; that these comparisons are especially likely to be made between children of the same sex; and that sibling rivalry may thus be considerably less between children of opposite sexes.

Despite the prevalence of the ideology of equal opportunity and the value Americans place on it, the bare social and economic facts of life in an industrial society are revealed in research which indicate that an ascribed position of low class status does operate in various ways as an obstacle to status betterment. For example, in a case study of the effects of social class status on the mobility aspirations of black adolescents, Schulz found a significant discrepancy between the educational aspirations and plans of these youth.⁹ This difference seems to be due to the realistic recognition by these youths that their opportunities for getting ahead are limited; thus they may aspire high, but do not expect to realize these ambitions.

The extent to which a youth is exposed to vocational counseling and other occupational and educational advice outside the family has been found to be a highly important antecedent of upward mobility as well as strongly related to the socioeconomic status of his family.¹⁰ If an adolescent comes from a black lower class family, he will typically receive little education or vocational advice. While he attends school, his job plans for the future will be vague and when he leaves

⁹Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁰Super, Psychology of Careers, op. cit., p. 28.

school he is likely to take the first available job which he can find.¹¹ Thus, the poverty, lack of education, absence of personal contacts, lack of planning, and failure to explore fully the available job opportunities that characterize the black family are handed down from generation to generation. The same cumulation of factors which in the lower class family creates a series of mounting disadvantages, works to the advantage of a child coming from a higher class family. The social status of parents and the education of their children is, therefore, closely related both to the nature of the latter's first jobs and to the pattern of their later careers.

Since educational attainment is a major avenue to upward mobility, it is noteworthy that educational opportunities are unequally distributed among the social classes.¹² The likelihood of obtaining a college education increases as one moves up the social class hierarchy. Youth of lower class families are much more likely to drop out of school than are middle class youths, regardless of color. A number of factors are in this phenomenon other than simply the social status of the youth and his family, among which have been suggested the clash between middle and lower class values in school, differences in socialization, and differences in skin color.¹³

¹¹Schulz, op. cit., p. 165.

¹²Super, Psychology of Careers, op. cit., p. 27.

¹³Thomas F. Pettigrew, A Profile of the Negro American, (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1964), p. 127.

What effects does both low social status and a large family have on the mobility chances of a young black child? Presumably the learning and mobility opportunities of a youth in a large family are considerably less than those of an only child. He is more apt to be dominated and perhaps neglected by his parents and be faced with limited economic resources.

The assertion is interesting that in order to rise, black lower-class families must be even smaller than upper-strata families.¹⁴ By applying this suggestion to the position of the black adolescent, it seems plausible that his achievement orientation and mobility aspirations might be similarly influenced by the size of his family.

The structure of opportunities for the lower class black youth is not only tied to the opportunities existing within the society, but to his family's culture, size, and in general their social status.

The academic framework. The family has been the basic institution throughout man's long history. Although it is the most fundamental unit of the modern American culture, the school system shares the responsibility of child rearing with the family. Especially as childhood merges into adolescence the school becomes an agent in transmitting cultural heritage and defining the duties of adulthood. Entertainment and sports aside, the compulsory classroom represents the

¹⁴Schulz, op. cit., p. 166.

universal vehicle to self-realization, to achievement, to jobs, and to status for black youth.

Along the path of history, this avenue of access has been contaminated. In order to cope with the obvious discrepancy between cherished Christian beliefs about the oneness of the human family slaveholders had to resort to the idea of the supposed intellectual inferiority of the black peoples, and preached in some instances that the black man was a subhuman breed of animal.¹⁵ The social system that emerged out of the need to rationalize the owning of slaves was a clear development of a caste system. Therefore, in the evolution of institutions, those provided for the black peoples of the United States had to be separate, and also unequal. The coming of the integrated school has not altered the picture a child is given of himself because differential social communication has a differential impact on the personality. As Allport asked:

what would happen to your own personality if you heard it said over and over again that you were lazy, a simple child of nature, expected to steal, and had inferior blood. Suppose this opinion were forced on you by the majority of your fellow-citizens. And suppose nothing you could do would change this opinion --- because you happen to have black skin.¹⁶

As a result of the inherent inequality of the American educational framework, the black child, whether he has cultivated a

¹⁵Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 100.

¹⁶Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice, (Reading, Mass.; Addison-Wesley Co., Inc., 1954), p. 142.

positive or negative concept of himself is affected by the school system. In the former instance, the school reverses the child's self-concept from positive to negative and in the latter instance the child's self-concept is reinforced.

The foundation of the inequality of education is the prevailing attitudes of the staff members operating within this framework. A case in point, is the story of the first grade teacher who asked her class to draw a picture of themselves. A young black child beaming with excitement raised her hand to display her drawing. The teachers response was: "You have done the wrong thing --- the picture should not be dark. I meant flesh colored."¹⁷ Imagine the confusion felt by this child: she was not accepted by her teacher and her resulting thoughts were "I guess I'm not as good as the other kids."

The hypothesis was that the chief cause of low achievement, and therefore, low aspiration levels, of children of alienated groups was the fact that too many teachers and principals honestly believe that these children are educable only to an extremely limited extent. And when teachers have a low expectation level for children's learning the children seldom exceed that expectation, which is a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹⁸

¹⁷Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁸John Hiemeyer, "Some Guidelines to Desirable Elementary School Reorganization," Programs for the Educationally Disadvantaged, (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Office of Education Bulletin, 1963), p. 18.

At present there are missing ingredients in the American public school classroom. Studies of textbooks have shown them to be lily white.¹⁹ Although the lily white concept of instructional material had changed, the change has not been great enough. What is needed for the black child is continued opportunities in which he can see himself and his racial group in a realistically positive light.

Also, the need for black children to have good role models has been proven. However, care should be exercised in selecting black staff members, because most black children come from lower class homes and they typically will demonstrate everything the middle class black teacher despises about the race from which he cannot dissociate himself. In short, these children have become the targets of all the displaced self-hatred of the professional middle class black teacher.

The story is unfolded. The black child is given a negative view of himself. The black child early becomes convinced that school experiences hold no relevancy to his immediate needs and future goals. The school experiences which are provided for the black child have not been such as to aid him.

Research has indicated that black youth are responding to their caste position and selecting lower goals and standards for themselves, even when their family's socioeconomic position, and innate capacities

¹⁹Abraham Tannenbaum, "Family Living in Textbook Town," Progressive Education, 31:133, 1954.

would indicated higher achievement motivation.²⁰ In short, many black youth have had a sufficient quantity of the necessary ingredients which formulate high achievement motivation; however in the final analysis these youth do not have high aspirations or achievements. What is suggested by this fact? The answer given to the question --- the results of the primary culture bearer, the family, are negated by the secondary culture transmitter, the educational institution.

The economic community. Black youth are seen as almost totally ignorant of the community in which they live and the vocational and educational opportunities available. They have been given a restricted view of their community because their contacts via parents and other black adults are also limited by the patterns of discrimination and selective reporting.²¹

Although the black youth has been made aware of the few black peoples in sports, entertainment, and politics, few of the middle group of black peoples working in the skilled trades, businesses, and other ordinary occupations are known. It has been eloquently stated --- persons of exceptional accomplishments may not be as

²⁰ Albert J. Lott and Vernice E. Lott, Negro and White Youth, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 163.

²¹ Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 14.

helpful a guide to the average black youngster as the knowledge that individuals not too different from him have risen one or two rungs on the ladder.²² On the other hand, when some black lower class members have achieved a more favorable class position their caste restrictions continue to be perceived and to influence their behavior, both overt and implicit.²³

This point is amply supported by the research by Lott and Lott who state that

we would predict a real change in the level of academic accomplishment among black youth would be one of the major consequences of a greater availability of black models who could illustrate that such achievement pays off and thereby increase the expectation that the black youth, too, might reap tangible benefits from his academic labors.²⁴

It has been pointed out that one of the first lessons a black child learns is that he cannot trust anyone. Of what use are models when they have the same background as the child, if the child cannot trust and respect them? The key issue here is the fact that the child sees someone from his own acquisitions background who does not feel the threat of having acquisitions taken from him. Several generations ago the idea was transmitted to black children not to aspire toward upward mobility, because there were no opportunities

²²Eli Ginzberg, James Anderson, and John Herma, The Optimistic Tradition and American Youth, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 107.

²³Lott and Lott, op. cit., p. 163.

²⁴Lott and Lott, Ibid., p. 155.

available; the idea which is being transmitted today is that the opportunities are available; but psychologically these opportunities offer no security.²⁵ In short, the value of a role model who is psychologically enslaved through the economic structure will have little value to the black child.

Employment discrimination has traditionally made it more difficult for the black male to secure steady employment than the black female.²⁶ In many areas of the nation, this is still true, with black females always able to obtain jobs as domestics if nothing else could be found. When the unskilled black male has managed to secure a job, he generally assumed an occupation that paid hardly enough to support himself, much less to support a family. Consequently, black workers must be fitted onto the lowest rungs of the occupational level and hope for economic survival in an age when automation is reducing the number of jobs for unskilled workers.²⁷ Small wonder these individuals have come to view the world as a hostile place.

²⁵Grier and Cobbs, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁶Grier and Cobbs, op. cit., p. 172.

²⁷Ibid.

II. THE FAMILY AS A LIMITING FACTOR

The effects of parental training. The major objective of this section is to investigate the effect of certain factors in family life on an adolescent's desire to achieve academically and on the success he enjoys in this regard. On the bases of the studies reviewed and the findings obtained on independence training, it is suggested that parental activity in independence training and low parental dominance in the family and in child rearing affairs would be most related to high motivation and achievement among black youth.

In the following pages these hypothesis are tested by investigating the family life and family climate on both achievement and motivation in school, because these factors directly influence a youth's aspiration level. Intelligence and achievement motivation have withstood the test as crucial determinants of an adolescent's life chances. Given an educational structure which favors contest mobility, it can be readily seen that a premium is placed on both components of a youth's achievement capacity.²⁸

It has been found that the parents of college oriented black sons indicated more persistent encouragement of upward mobility via educational attainment beginning at an early age and were more apt to

²⁸ Martin Deutsch and Bert Brown, "Social Influences in Negro and White Intelligence Differences," Journal of Social Issues, 20:312, 1964.

hold middle class occupational aspirations for their sons.²⁹ Some parents of nonmobile sons held high ambitions regarding education, however, the interesting point here seemed to be the tendency for these adolescents to show complete disinterest in further education. Data has indicated that concern and ambitions of these parents were of rather recent origin and that they did not encourage this type of goal orientation early in the youth's life, that is, they seemed to lack long range plans for their sons.³⁰

Is it the economic dimension or the educational and cultural aspects of a youth's current situation and family which most strongly affect his goal orientation? Certainly changes in the economic structure are likely to affect his parent's outlook on life in general, but does the motivational stimulus for the adolescent arise chiefly from parental values per se or from qualitative educational and cultural aspects of the family milieu? Non-mobile boys with ambitious parents were simply not motivated to go to college although their parents wanted them to go, they felt no desire for such an experience. The missing link in the effort of these parents was possibly not only the lack of early encouragement toward this goal, but also the absence of educating and intellectually stimulating

²⁹William Brazziel, "Occupational Choices of Negro Youth," Journal of Personnel and Guidance, 39:739, 1961.

³⁰Ibid.

experiences in the home.³¹ Thus, the level of parental educational attainment may exert a more determining effect upon the educational aspirations of adolescent boys than the family's socioeconomic status.³²

It has been observed that changes in the occupational structure and the extent and direction of parental mobility significantly alter the life situations and future of parents as they perceive them and in turn instigate value changes. However, large and important differences remain between the value configurations characteristic of the various social classes which is to imply that the reference orientation of many black parents is in the direction of their current status level and related life situations.³³

The process of training an adolescent for independence involves extended and intensive preparation as well as the facilitation of independent behavior itself. All too often it seems, stress is placed on the aspect of allowing children the freedom however limited or unlimited to be on their own rather than on the more critical aspect

³¹ Ibid., p. 740.

³² Edmund H. Gordon and Doxey A. Wilkerson, Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged, (Princeton, N. J.: College Examination Board, 1966), p. 17.

³³ Grier and Cobbs, op. cit., p. 13.

of adequate preparation for such freedom.³⁴ From studies, it was found that the structure during the past several years adequately measured the degree to which parents allow their adolescents freedom in self-direction and facilitate or restrict independent behavior, while the frequency of explanations, both with respect to rules and to discipline, and reasoning seem to be practices which prepare children for the responsibilities of adult life.³⁵ Similarly it has been found that parents who allow their children opportunities to gain experience in governing themselves, who have delegated more responsibility to them as they grew older and who use withdrawal of love as a disciplinary method are more likely to have children who are highly motivated.³⁶

Given parents who are active in independence training, it has been found that the likelihood of scholastic achievement is relatively similar for adolescents with each social class.³⁷ The residual social class effect may be partially explained by the differences between middle and lower class values. Although parental independence

³⁴Winterbottom, Mirian R., "The Relation of Need for Achievement to Learning Experiences in Independence and Mastery," In Ross D. Parke, (editor), Readings In Social Development, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), p. 310.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 320.

training may stimulate the desire to achieve, the objects and activities in which this motivation is invested and toward which it is directed are likely to be consonant with the values of the child and his parents.³⁸ The lower class child may as a result of his parents' training, have a need to achieve, but not in a middle class institution such as the public school.

It is expected that a child's output in school is maximized when parents encourage academic motivation and embrace values which reflect an achievement orientation and appraise school as a crucial step in upward mobility. On the other hand, low motivation and lower class values should be related to minimal output in school. Research supports these expectations.³⁹

The effects of parental training, early independence training and withdrawal of love, as been seen to create a high need for achievement in the child. Although the conclusions drawn from research were based on a survey of white subjects, the conclusions can be generalized to the black child. Indeed, the black child does have a high need for achievement as an effect of his parents' child rearing practices, however, when the black child enters school the idea is transmitted to him that he does not have access to the opportunities

³⁸ Brazziel, op. cit., p. 740.

³⁹ Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, (editors), Institutional Racism in America, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 32.

which are available to his counterpart; therefore, he learns not to value achievement.

The capacity to achieve. Insofar as the development of intelligence, skills, and motivation are concerned --- the youth's capacity to achieve, it is evident that the studies suggest that a cohesive, happy home in which the father assumes the primary leadership role and the mother as well as the father are active in independence training is antithetical to the rearing of achievement oriented, upwardly mobile adolescents.⁴⁰

It is worth noting at this point that several studies have shown an intensely concerned, pushing, and dominant mother and a more permissive father to be conducive to the generation of high achievement motivation.⁴¹ It has been found that mothers of high achievers were more authoritarian and restrictive in the handling of their children regardless of IQ level.⁴² Positive, warm, and democratic attitudes were more characteristic of mothers of children with high rather than low IQ.

⁴⁰ B. Rosen and Roy D'Andrade, "The Psychosocial Origins of Achievement Motivation," In Ross D. Parke, (Editor), Readings in Social Development, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), p. 332.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

It has been shown that a youth's IQ affects his motivation and achievement, and these factors are directly related to his occupational aspirations. In addition to having the capacity to achieve, black students high on occupational aspiration were those who would not let such factors as leaving one's family for some time stop them from accepting an occupational advancement. These respondents were more likely to report parental interest.

What a child does in the classroom may be more of a determinant of his educational and occupational future than the combined effects of sheer desire and parental pressure. There is one other factor which represents an important approach to the problematic, environment, namely, the degree to which the adolescent has acquired the habit of inquiry.⁴³ The learning process can be conceived as a series of usually related pioneering, searching, and exploratory probes into selected aspects of the world. If so defined the act of discovery itself becomes a rewarding experience and a process which is actively engaged in rather than a task to be passively endured.

The likelihood of a child's adopting this approach to problems is heavily contingent on the receptiveness of parents to his questions.⁴⁴ If parents are non responsive to their child's inquiries and moreover are punitive in their reaction to "a questioning of their

⁴³B. Bernstein, "Some Sociological Determinants of Perfection: An Inquiry into Sub-cultural Differences," British Journal of Sociology, 9:160, 1958.

⁴⁴Ibid.

authority," it is probable that these actions will effectively discourage the learning of this approach to problem solving and decision making.

The importance of values. The social status of the adolescent and his position within his family has operated to expose him to a particular array of mobility opportunities. Most notably, the basic values, and ideology which prevade the home, and related training practices of parents are likely to be influential in developing the intelligence and motivation of the child.

The values of parents are strongly related to how they rear their children, particularly with respect to the problem of independence training. For instance, black lower class parents tended to favor filial obedience and external control, whereas middle class parents seemed to prefer more the encouragement of curiosity and personal autonomy on the part of their child.⁴⁵ Along this line, it has been reported that the black lower classes seem to show less concern with traditional success goals, to show acute awareness of the lack of opportunity to achieve success and to place less emphasis upon the attainment of goals which in turn would be instrumental in the realization of upward mobility.⁴⁶

⁴⁵David A. Schulz, Coming Up Black, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 18.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Middle class parents are more committed to the ideology of "getting ahead" than parents lower in status and thus place greater stress on the importance of their children going to college.⁴⁷ These between class variations in values may be viewed as products of the differential life situations and opportunities experienced by parents. Research has shown that lower class workers who have not enjoyed upward mobility are not as likely to be strongly committed to the middle class ideology of opportunity but are rather most apt to use as their social references their peer groups.⁴⁸ If, however, they have realized some upward mobility, they tend to shift their identifications to higher prestige positions and to evaluate their lot by the standards characteristic of the higher status level. Thus changes in the occupational structure are shown as possibly leading to value changes.

These data suggested that there may be substantial value variations among parents within social strata which are largely a function of their social reference orientation. Although a majority of lower class parents may have adjusted their aspirations for their children to their present status level, some may be enculturating their values with middle class values. Studies do indicate large value variations of this nature within the social classes.⁴⁹ This of

⁴⁷Kohn, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

course, is partially implied by the number of lower class children who do enter college, and by the fact that early school departures are not simply a lower class phenomenon.

The effects of incomplete family structure. Do children from broken families differ from others in terms of self-acceptance? The importance of incomplete family structure is reviewed because many black families are not complete with a mother, father, and siblings. In most instances it is the black mother who has complete responsibility for the family.⁵⁰

The broken family has made the mother and child more dependent upon one another although this feeling is not overtly demonstrated.⁵¹ The mother must depend upon the child for emotional support and other kinds of help.

The child is dependent on the mother for encouragement, affection and guidance which a mother and a father provide. The mother's life thus comes to focus more centrally on the child. In short, the bond of mother and children is cemented by their common plight.

In the fatherless family, the child must often assume responsibility for tasks which are not required of a child his age. He may take pride in the fact that he can master tasks successfully and that

⁵⁰Grier and Cobbs, op. cit., p. 87.

⁵¹Grier and Cobbs, Ibid., p. 52.

his mother is dependent upon his efforts. Life may be made easier for him, if there is a father in the home, at the same time his feeling of worth may decrease, for he can no longer take such special pride in his accomplishment.

In short, family structure definitely has been proven to affect a child in terms of being incomplete, but also in terms of being extended beyond the mother, father, child complex.⁵²

III. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter sought to present the factors which affected the vocational aspirations of black youth. To accomplish this, the limiting factors of society were discussed such as the structure of society's opportunities, its academic frame work, and its economic community; in addition the family as a limiting factor was discussed such as the effects of parental training, parental values, and family structure.

⁵²Grier and Cobbs, op. cit., p. 52.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL COUNSELING

The institution of education has accepted many responsibilities for child rearing. If the school plays such a major role in one's self-concept formation, then it is proper that the school accept additional responsibility for guiding youth. The implications for vocational counseling were discussed by presenting the role of the educational system and specific counseling techniques.

I. THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Facing the contemporary challenge. Although the situation facing the school is exceedingly complex, and the problem is not one that is amenable to easy solutions, what is significant is that the school has not as yet been used deliberately to change the self-concept of students. As Combs and Snygg state it:

To be really effective, education will have to accept the task of dealing with the whole phenomenal field of the individual, of producing changes in perception of himself as well as in his perception of his environment.¹

Can the self-concept of the black child be changed in a positive direction by education? Experimentation does indicate that the self-concept of the learner can be affected by deliberate school

¹Arthur W. Combs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior, (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 374.

practices.² Most school programs are aimed toward giving the black child a good school environment, that is, what the average child from the majority race has been receiving. It seems evident that this is not enough. Education can make a difference; however, it is agreed from the available information regarding self-concept, that it is the self-concept of the black child which must be the focus of specific attention.

Providing relevant curricula. The development of appropriate instructional materials for children with backgrounds which differ substantially from the middle class norm is a pressing need. Considerable exploration must be done before any decisions are made regarding what kinds of materials would be most appropriate; however, it is certainly the case that these children should be exposed to this material early in life.³

Material for the primary grades is more difficult to produce; however, there are several possibilities. Booklets could be made which show integrated and non integrated real life situations with opportunities for the youngster to complete the action sequence

²J. Wayne Wrightstone, Demonstration Guidance Project in New York City," Harvard Educational Review, 30:241, 1960.

³Gordon P. Liddle, "Modifying the School Experience of Culturally Handicapped Children in the Primary Grades," Programs for the Educationally Disadvantaged, (Washington, D. C., U. S. Office of Education Bulletin, 1963), p. 59.

himself. The sequence would focus in part on normal interaction among children, but would also include the typical "race" situation in which children ask questions about differences.⁴ Comparative culture materials could provide many relevant learning experiences for the black child.

Few peoples have an accurate picture of the black American and his history. The lily white nature of text and visual aid materials does not add to the picture of the black American and his history. For example, usually when pictures of black Americans appeared in texts the pictures were of Booker T. Washington or George Washington Carver. Also, one film, for instance, showing community helpers illustrated the work of repairing the street with a black crew and a white foreman.⁵ This kind of presentation merely reinforces the many communications to children that the work of black Americans is considered inferior. When schools typically tell the story of American history, supplementary materials could be provided which show accurately the place and role of the black American during the historic period being studied.

To meet the requirements of effective education, other kinds of educational materials that capitalize on divergent thinking and the

⁴Liddle, Ibid., p. 60.

⁵Ibid.

immediate environmental experience of the child would be worthwhile.⁶ These would probably be problem centered, realistic presentations. Recordings of stories, poems, or dramatic skits could be used to convey a particular sense of immediacy. Anthologies of stories, biography, and commentary might also be useful, particularly where these focused on the perception of the black peoples in society and their ways of coping with the world.

Care must be exercised in developing special materials and procedures to use with the culturally deprived black child. He may differ in many ways, as it has been noted, but only some of these may be significant to a given child.⁷ In fact, the need to meet such individual differences is a function of education. Therefore, a multiple approach using as many media as possible is promising.

Reexamination of placement policies. Within the present educational system, black students suffer from institutionalized discrimination in many ways but particularly in regard to placement policies. The combined effect of the present policies is a progressive lessening of the child's self-esteem as he proceeds through school. The result of this process is a steady decline in academic performance, particularly in the critical skills of verbal and reading ability.

⁶Liddle, op. cit., p. 61.

⁷Ibid.

In the metropolitan Northeast negro students on the average begin the first grade with somewhat lower scores on standard achievement tests than white, are about 1.6 grades behind white students by the sixth grade and have⁸ fallen 3.3 grades behind white students by the twelfth grade.

In short, IQ scores of ghetto black children decline as they progress through school instead of increasing with age, as does a child's IQ score under normal conditions.

There is considerable agreement, among experts in the field of general aptitude testing, that environment, not innate intelligence, is responsible for performance on IQ and placement tests.⁹ Intelligence tests discriminate racially as well as socioeconomically. Differences in scores between socioeconomic classes are not as marked among black children as among whites, and in every socioeconomic group black children score lower than their white counterparts.¹⁰ This is due partly to the overall effects of institutional racism and partly to cultural differences. For instance, the white family has a greater opportunity to live in an area where children will be exposed to the kind of environment that will produce good results on test regardless of socioeconomic status of the family.

⁸U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman Report), p. 20, 1966.

⁹Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, (eds.). Institutional Racism in America, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 35.

¹⁰Ibid.

There are cultural differences between the black and the white child regardless of socioeconomic level. Tests of intellectual ability are centered around the white middle class way of life. Black people have different experiences from white people, and it seems evident that these cultural differences are not accounted for in tests written by whites.

In spite of the evidence indicating that present IQ test are economically, racially, and culturally biased, IQ scores are usually the basis for a child's placement into an ability group.¹¹ Ability groups now often serve the purpose of separating the black children from the white children, since a guise is needed as a result of new civil rights legislation. However, since test scores and achievement levels are used for placement in ability groups, black children are more often placed in the lower groups.¹² In addition, IQ scores are often the basis for a student being classified as retarded. Here, again the black student is not given the full advantages accorded his white counterpart through use of tests yielding an IQ. The placement policies of educational systems have become an instrument used to discriminate against racial minorities. "These children are channeled out of academic courses by counselors who have not one bit of training for dealing with minority group children; they are evaluated as slow

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 37.

learners and herded into slow learning groups as early as the first grade on the basis of observation by teachers who themselves may be filled with prejudice.¹³

Developing awareness in school personnel. It is an interesting commentary upon the educational lag that despite society's awareness, the role of psychological processes in human behavior, little if any psychology is to be found in the average classroom.¹⁴ The education of teachers is only minimally contaminated by psychological instruction, also the materials of instruction reflect this similar omission.¹⁵ Deliberate efforts to guide young people toward an understanding of themselves and other human beings are not typical of the American classroom.

It seems appropriate to put to work the things which are known about human behavior and learning, about conscious and unconscious motivation, and use such insights to establish new educational situations.¹⁶ Schools have to find ways of dealing with the insecurities and problems of teachers who have more frequently than not had no preservice orientation and training, and whose initial

¹³Nathaniel Hicherson, "Physical Integration is not Enough," Journal of Negro Education, 32:114, 1966.

¹⁴Jean D. Grambs, "Are We Training Prejudiced Teachers?" School and Society, 71:196, 1950.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Wrightstone, op. cit., p. 241.

attitude on being assigned to a school with a "bad" reputation may range from dismay to fear. The school should not only provide its personnel with personal awareness, but it should also provide the necessary information for one to perceive the background environment of black children.¹⁷

II. COUNSELING BLACK YOUTH

The cultural discrepancy. Of particular importance to counselors today is the role of ideology in the adolescent identity crisis. At present the most significant ideology to emerge out of the confusion of this decade is Black Power.¹⁸ Black Power converts psychological deprivation into self-affirmation and proclaims firmly the integrity of the black community.¹⁹ Young black youth who have rejected the term Black Power find refuge in its understanding of black identity. As a result, the counselor in the black community cannot expect to make middle class citizens out of young black students.

Black Power provides a model for the black man that focuses on his personal freedom and identity. If the counselor is committed to

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Marylou Kincaid, "Identity and Therapy in the Black Community," Personnel Guidance Journal, 47:884, 1969.

¹⁹Ibid.

his client's freedom, then his task must be seen as one of helping black clients understand the discrepancy between their values and those of the larger society and make choices based on their own values, free of the threat of external evaluation and condemnation by the counselor for "wrong choices".²⁰

The cultural discrepancy between the white counselor and his black client is likely to be another source of value conflict, often evident in difficulties of communication between counselor and client.²¹ Having placed emphasis on verbal facility, the white counselor is in danger of missing the nonverbal messages of black clients. Also, the white counselor may be threatened by both the verbal and nonverbal expressions of anger and aggression. The counselor may only communicate feelings of warmth and understanding when the client is viewed as being like himself in a number of significant ways, ultimately moving the client toward a self that the counselor has defined.²²

Black clients who have been denied the opportunity to acquire an inner freedom and sense of identity may be unable or unwilling to

²⁰Ibid., p. 886.

²¹C. E. Vontress, "The Negro Personality Reconsidered," Journal of Negro Education, 35:211, 1966.

²²J. E. Gochros, "Recognition and Use of Anger in Negro Clients," Journal of Social Work, 11:29, 1966.

accept alternatives suggested by a white counselor.²³ Alternatives suggested by the black counselor, who has faced similar obstacles and discrimination to those which his client may be facing may be better received.²⁴ Further investigation is needed to attain a formula for matching counselors and clients by common racial origin or social background.²⁵ One cannot assume, however, that all black counselors will be effective with black clients.

Some effective counseling techniques. Many black clients do not wish to engage in the introspective self-analysis which characterizes insight therapy; their problems are frequently more tangible, requiring the exploration and application of alternative solutions.²⁶ Counseling with black clients ought to focus on actual rather than vicarious experiences, utilizing the techniques of group guidance, guided group interaction, interfamily consultation, or sheltered work-study or social functions.²⁷ Task oriented group therapy in which the participants are required to play an active role in

²³Kincaid, op. cit., p. 885.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶H. Rosen and J. Frank, "Negroes in Psychotherapy," American Journal of Psychiatry, 119:457, 1962.

²⁷Edmund W. Gordon and Doxey A. Wilkerson, Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged, (Princeton, N. J.: College Entrance Examination Board, 1966), p. 115.

planning and conducting the therapy and in which the expressions of initiative and industry are encouraged.²⁸

Group counseling in a variety of interpersonal relationships and in relatively nonthreatening atmospheres provides an opportunity for experimentation with new modes of response. Moreover, group counseling can serve as an emotionally corrective experience for group members who have employed other less effective techniques in an effort to overcome defects in interpersonal communication.²⁹

Task oriented role playing with black youth, in which behavior is encouraged that challenges the stereotype of passivity by focusing on initiative, may foster more assertive behavior in such real life situations as job interviewing and social interaction with adults and peers.³⁰ Also, the development of leadership skills in the school and community may be fostered, enabling young people to find identities that fully express their talents. Black youth can be provided with a sense of control over their own environment that is essential to their search for identity through role playing which develops skills of verbal facility and effective interaction.³¹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Kincaid, op. cit., p. 884.

³⁰Vontress, op. cit., p. 214.

³¹Kincaid, op. cit., p. 885.

A form of therapy is provided for black clients, especially adolescents who no longer attend school or who are considering dropping out, through work experience. In these cases, counseling is focused primarily on job readiness and the clients's expectations and attitudes toward work.³²

The findings and conclusions of a recent study demonstrated that achieving disadvantaged students can be trained as peer leaders to serve as models for fellow students, and to help them to develop attitudes and behaviors that improve school performance.³³ Because the peer group has proven to be especially important to the minority group youth, ties with peer groups who value achievement are essential if optimum school performance is to be reached. In this study, the counseling group was an important medium for the development of leadership skills in aiding student participants make plans for developing new direction and behaviors.³⁴ The opportunity to work with peers in study groups and guidance activities in addition to counseling groups, and to do this on a daily basis over a period of time, proved helpful in aiding peer leaders to establish closer and more meaningful relations with the students they help. The example of

³²Ibid.

³³Thelma Vriend, "High Performing Inter-City Adolescents Assist Low Performing Peers in Counseling Groups," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 47:898, 1969.

³⁴Ibid.

achieving peers and the support and reinforcement of a group with similar goals provided the impetus for students to develop better classroom skills, higher grades, and higher levels of vocational and educational aspirations and expectations.³⁵

"Do lower class children perceive life as just one giant crap game? This question was inferred from one of the major findings of the Coleman Report (1966) - the single most critical factor in a child's school achievement is his sense of control over the environment."³⁶ Berne's (1964) Game Theory has been successfully employed in counseling lower class students in an attempt to secure added information about the lives of minority group children, and the games should be employed increasingly in the future.³⁷ For example, The Negro Peer Game can be used in counseling students. The theme of this game is "You think you are better than I am, but you are still a negro." This game is switched from the teacher to the student influence level. This critical behavior usually is seen when a student attempts to break away from the group in order to conform to the teacher's classroom performance expectations.³⁸

³⁵Ibid., p. 899.

³⁶J. Caliguri, "Games Disadvantaged Children May Play," The School Counselor, 16:390, 1969.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., p. 381.

In an attempt to generate communication among students, counselors, and teachers and to share vocational information phonograph records have successfully been employed as a group guidance activity.³⁹ For example, one counselor played "Officer Krupke" from West Side Story in which the gang, the Jets express their disapproval of Officer Krupke and the entire adult world.⁴⁰ From this point of departure the group discussed parental expectations for their children in relation to parental habits. The obvious conclusion to the discussion was that if parents have good work habits and like their jobs then their children would most likely follow the pattern set for them by their parents.

III. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In short, new resources need to be identified in relation to black youth and the self-concept. Systematic in-service education for school staffs to focus upon characteristics of failure students, the nature of prejudice, and the nature of socio-psychological dynamics of minority group life is also needed to help professional workers. Also, counselor strategies based upon psychological and social concepts of rewards and punishment may be more effective than traditional means of control and improvement of student achievement

³⁹W. Finkins, "A Different Approach to Sharing Occupational Information," The School Counselor, 16:390, 1969.

⁴⁰Ibid.

and aspirations. Moreover, less emphasis should be placed on standardized test results for placement purposes and more emphasis on individual and group behavior analysis regarding the potential for learning.

No matter what type of techniques have proved themselves successful occupational orientation must begin early in the young black child's life. Occupational informational services and activities need to be planned with the needs of the particular group in mind; they must be individualized and they must be preceded by and followed up with individual counseling.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In an attempt to trace the development of the black youth's self-concept and his subsequent vocational aspirations, the implication has been that youth, in general, were seeking an answer to the basic question: "Who am I and what is my place in the total scheme of life? This question was seen as having more severe implications for the black youth than his white counterpart.

In the previous chapters the problem of black was presented, that is, the relationship between the self-concept of black youth and his vocational aspirations.

I. SUMMARY

An investigation was made of the relationship between self-concept formation and vocational aspirations in black youth. The making of a vocational choice was seen as a direct result of one's vocational aspirations, that is, one necessarily being a function of the other. Vocational aspirations were seen as being the result of youth's concept of himself, that is, "Who am I and where am I going?" In short, the declaration of vocational decisions was viewed as an attempt to implement one's self-concept.

It was necessary to know about self-concept and its formation. This vital process was seen as starting at birth. The key influence in guiding personality development was seen as the child's

relationship with his parents, especially with his mother. The importance of the subtle factor of "mothering" was related to the healthy, well rounded development of an individual. In addition, a child's need for love and acceptance was demonstrated. The importance of physical care was not overlooked in viewing the formation of personality. In short, the parents provided a physical and psychological frame of reference for the child.

The period of adolescence was viewed with the utmost importance. Adolescence was viewed as an exploratory period. A variety of tasks were presented which are typical of adolescents, such as establishing a mature sense of identity and of preparing for work and marriage. However, the most crucial task of adolescence was answering the question: "Who am I and where am I going?" In short, the period of adolescence was viewed as a time when youth must decide upon some plan for their life. Adolescence as a result of unusual changes, physical and psychological provided a period for heightened awareness of the self-concept.

During the adolescent period the youth is called upon to make some decisions concerning his vocational future. The selection of an occupation was seen as the implementation of one's self-concept. The translation of self-concept into vocational terms was manifested in the youth's vocational aspirations. In making one's vocational declaration the importance of proper role models was emphasized. Identification was seen as the basis for role models. The role of

significant figures in the youth's life was stressed. This importance can not be overemphasized in relation to the black youth because it is often the case that he is provided with models which do not come from the society's middle class mold.

The formation of self-concept was considered a common thread which ran through the tasks of those with all skin colors. The self-concept of black youth was seen as developing positively. However, this positive picture the black youth had formed of himself was seen not to be lasting.

Black youths self-concept and their subsequent vocational aspirations were seen to be affected most by the limiting factors of society and family in the reversal of the self-concept from positive to negative. History has served to design and perpetuate a caste system which caused the society to restrict the picture black children were given. This occurred because history shaped the attitudes of the peoples, both black and white.

The black youth's family was viewed as a limiting factor in the generation of vocational aspirations. Although black families have traditionally employed child rearing practices which create a high need for achievement. This occurred because the black peoples were psychologically castrated as a result of historical events.

The fact was established that the institution of education perpetuates the cultural traditions of society. Since this function has served to be detrimental to black youth's mobility aspirations,

it has implications for vocational counseling, in addition to the total educational system.

A challenge has been presented to the educational system: to change the self-concept of black youth in a positive direction and to raise their aspiration level. This can be done within the broad framework of education by increasing the awareness of school personnel and providing materials and procedures in which the black youth can see himself positively.

On an individual counseling basis there were many techniques presented which could be employed to give the black youth a positive concept of himself. However, the most important was that counselors be aware of the discrepancy between the educational institution and black youth.

II. A CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Education is a tradition, and it is a lasting one. This institution must accept increased responsibility for black youth. Education must deal effectively with this responsibility by making a deliberate effort to aid the black child in his quest to maintain a positive self-concept; therefore increasing his vocational aspirations so that black peoples can attain a degree of success which has historically been denied to them.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT
FORMATION AND VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG BLACK YOUTH

by

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An investigation was made of the relationship between self-concept formation and vocational aspirations in black youth. The making of a vocational choice was seen as an inevitable result of one's vocational aspirations; one is necessarily a function of the other. Vocational aspirations were seen as being the result of the black youth's concept of himself, that is, "Who he is and where he is going." In short, the making of vocational decisions was viewed as an attempt to implement one's self-concept.

To aid such an understanding, the development of self-concept was traced. This vital process was seen as starting at birth. The key influence in guiding self-concept formation was seen as the child's relationship with his parents, especially with his mother. Adequate physical care was seen as essential to the healthy development of the child. Moreover, the importance of a child's need for love and acceptance was demonstrated. In this light, the importance of the subtle factor of "mothering" was related to the healthy development of the child. This factor was considered to be of such importance because "mothering" indicates the degree of intimate contact the mother has with her child in such areas as feeding and toilet training. Moreover, the concept of "mothering" was viewed as an indication of the mother's total acceptance of her child. In short parents provided a psychological and physical frame of reference for the child.

Adolescence was seen as an exploratory period. A variety of task were presented which are typical of adolescence, such as establishing a mature sense of identity and of preparing for work and marriage. However, the most crucial task of adolescence was viewed as answering the question: "Who am I and where am I going?" Adolescence as a result of unusual and rapid changes, physical and psychological, provides a period for heightened awareness of the self-concept.

During the adolescent period, the youth is called upon to make some decisions concerning his vocational future. The translation of self-concept was viewed as a manifestation in the youth's vocational aspirations. In making one's vocational declaration, the importance of proper role models was emphasized. Identification was seen as the basis of role models. The role of significant figures in the black youth's life was stressed, because it is often the case that he is provided with models which do not come from society's middle class mold.

The formation of the black child's self-concept was seen as positive as a result of parental child rearing practices, that is, early independence training and withdrawal of love as punishment. It has been demonstrated that these factors create a high need for achievement in youngsters. However, this picture the black child has formed of himself was seen not to be lasting.

A black youth's self-concept and his subsequent vocational aspirations were seen to be affected most by the limiting factors of

society and of his family. History has served to design and to perpetuate a caste system which caused the society to restrict the picture black children were given of themselves. The same structure of opportunities, education and economic, were not offered to the black child that his white counterpart received. The black youth's family was viewed as a limiting factor in generating vocational aspirations primarily because of incomplete family structure, inadequate finances, and parental values.

A black youngster was seen as having a high need for achievement; however, the schools have perpetuated the traditions of society, that is the black youngster sees that he does not have access to the avenues of success; therefore, he learns not to value success. The schools must make deliberate efforts to enhance the black youth's self-concept and to raise his vocational aspirations. This can be done within the broad framework by increasing the awareness of school personnel, and providing materials and procedures in which the black child can see himself positively. On an individual counseling basis there are many techniques, all with the underlying concept of "being honest" which can be employed to aid the black youth; however, the most important implication for vocational guidance is awareness of the cultural discrepancy between the educational institution and the black youth.