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Selecting Teachers as Role Models: Differences between White and Black Students

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SELECTING TEACHERS AS ROLE MODELS:
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHITE
AND BLACK STUDENTS

by

Bradley Everton Niles

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Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Statement of the Problem

It is a popular assumption that white students in the United States of America are more apt than black students to select teachers as role models. This paper investigates this assumption, and in so doing, addresses itself to several problems of relevance. These problems can perhaps be expressed in terms of their implications for educational and national goals, as well as for sociology.

The first problem concerns the importance of teacher influence which cannot be over-estimated. Educators care to know about those factors which are determining their abilities to influence their charges. Educators as well as psychiatrists are concerned with the importance of being "significant others." They want to know what determines their influences. If racial identity is associated with influence, then this leads immediately to questions of cause and of modifications of school organizations.

The implications of this study for national goals are also apparent. The constitution of the United States of America asserts
that all citizens have the right to equal opportunities in education, employment and other aspects of social life, regardless of color, race or creed. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a significant step in the epochal struggle to sustain the fundamental rights of each citizen to the pursuit of happiness, in freedom and dignity. The question may be raised, however, of whether the school, teachers, or classroom structure might hinder the achievement of these national goals.

For sociology, the problem is one of developing a rationale for specifying the conditions which shape negative and positive reactions of the role occupants toward one another. There are several perspectives which can be brought to bear. In this study, the main conceptions and propositions are taken from theoretical traditions, referred to under the rubric of "role theory" as elaborated by Nadel\(^1\) and DeBlaeys.\(^2\)

Theoretical Background and Review of Literature

This section is organized into two parts. The first briefly


focuses on that literature of a popular or strictly empirical sort which is relevant to student role models and why black and white students may differ in their perception of teachers. The second part presents a more elaborate background literature on theories of role models from selected sociological perspectives.

The popular and empirical literature

Today, the concept of role models for self (what is sometimes referred to as student heroes) is under great discussion. Lieber recently asserted that hero hunger is a 20th century hunger--no one thinks of giving children real-life heroes to nourish their ambition. He further refers to Montague, who proclaimed that all celebrities automatically become heroes--no matter the reason for which they are celebrated. An anti-hero millenium is said to have taken root in which "convicted assassin Sirhan Sirhan," "two blood-soaked cut-throats" Bonnie and Clyde, "creepy late-night misanthropes led by such peerless insulters as (the late) Joe Pyne and Alan Burke amused their large and faithful following by calling their guests "jerks" and "meatheads" and telling them to "go gargle with razor blades!" and a number of others indicate an

1Lieber, Leslie, "The Age of the Anti-Everything Man," This Week Magazine (July 13, 1969), pp. 4-5.

2ibid.
"almost diabolical fascination with the anti-everything man."

Lieber,\(^1\) in conducting a street-corner poll, asked 100 people if they remembered who stole the star of India sapphire from New York's Museum of Natural History five years before the first manned space flight and if they remembered the names of the astronauts. The results were Murph the Surf, 92; astronauts, 4. In his discussion, Lieber touches upon the point brought out by Cleaver\(^2\) that myth-making essential to hero-making has become much more difficult. Leaders are exposed to relentless scrutiny. With no mass communications, Alexander the Great was able to have the town criers in the Macedonian market places proclaim only his victories.

According to Cleaver,\(^3\) the white race has suddenly lost its greatest heroes as they have become arch-villains. He believes that the panoply of white heroes who assisted in erecting the inglorious edifice of white supremacy and the manifest destiny of the white race is being rejected. He maintains that white youth "recoil in shame from the spectacle of cowboys" and their heroic pioneer forefathers "whose exploits filled earlier generations with pride as 

\(^1\)ibid.


\(^3\)loc. cit., p. 68.
they galloped across a movie screen shooting down Indians like Coke bottles."

According to Cleaver, James Bond, the "paper tiger" hero, offers whites a "triumphant image of themselves" when he says that many whites want to hear reaffirmed: "'I am still the White Man, Lord of the land, licensed to kill, and the world is still an empire at my feet.'" The white youth of today, it is hypothesized, are turning away from this fantasy world.

In arguing that the initiative rests with people of color in the current world revolution, Cleaver advances the hypothesis that growing numbers of white youth are repudiating their heritage of blood and are taking people of color as their heroes and models: Castro, Che Guevara, Mao Tse-tung, Nasser, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., DuBois, Carmichael, James Foreman, etc.

Cleaver also indicates that among youth, there is a shift in emphasis to local participation. On the other hand, White, discussing black psychology, says that the dominant white culture is steeped in the tradition of a hero who is infallible, scores his triumphs with God-like skill, follows all the rules and finally

\(^1\) loc. cit., p. 82.

retrires undefeated.

The whole psychology of the hero in black and white cultures is different. In the black culture, the hero is by and large the "brother" who messes with the system and gets away with it. Black people on the whole couldn't care less about a few political figures partying it up in the West Indies, at the Man's expense. They can dig it and identify with it. Whereas, this same hero, in the eyes of the white psychologists is interpreted as the villain.

He adds that in literature the two hero themes come together in John O. Killens' novel, And Then We Heard The Thunder. Solly Saunders as the noble savage is a black college graduate serving as an officer in the army during World War II. He runs into a black man in his outfit who, as the villain, talks back to the officers, ignores the rules and follows his own self-determination-oriented mind. Because of this bad black man, Solly goes through some changes and at the end of the book the "bad nigger" emerges as the hero. White continues to say that nowadays the "bad nigger" is very much in vogue as the hero in the black community, and yet white people continue to perceive this person as the villain and cannot understand why black folks are currently rejecting white people's favorite "Uncle Toms." As a people, blacks have to trust their own kind of perception and not absorb white expectations of super heroes and villains.

1 loc. cit., p. 52.
Black people have a genuine understanding of brothers like Eldridge Cleaver. Eldridge became kind of a cultural hero in the United States. A lot of white people, including white radicals, were disappointed because he didn't stand trial. They said that he had let down his responsibility to his people and wasn't a "credit to his race." But anybody who heard Eldridge read his books or knew anything about his life and where he had been, knew that he was not going to go back there again.

Albert and Bernice Lott\(^1\) conducted a study in Kentucky to explore the values and goals of black and white youth in areas most relevant to their educational and vocational choices and plans. To accomplish this they planned (1) to test by means of questionnaires and interviews the senior classes of four community high schools, including two from the city and two from the country, two predominantly black and two predominantly white; and (2) to interview at length a group of student leaders from each school, judged to possess potentialities for becoming behavior models and community leaders. One assumption made by Lott and Lott was that black and white youth represent two distinguishable culture sub-groups, or in other words, that particular patterns of behaving and modes of thinking can be identified with each.

They discovered that white and black leaders are far more similar in background than are the total black and white groups.

The leaders did not differ in (1) geographical background, (2) in number of persons residing in the home, (3) in mother's education, (4) father's education, nor (5) in frequency of movie attendance or television viewing. However, the total black and white groups were found to differ reliably on all but the last two of these variables. As within the total student sample, significant black-white differences did exist between the leaders with respect to (1) presence of both natural parents at home (2) proportion of working mothers and (3) occupational status of the major family provider. When comparing black and other students living with both natural parents, students with mothers working outside the home, and with family income derived from a low status occupation, it was noted that black leaders differ reliably from the rest of the black students in two aspects: their fathers are better educated and their family income is derived from a higher level occupation. The white leaders tend also to differ from the other white students in coming from higher status homes as reflected by the occupation of the bread winner. Lott and Lott further contend that "the leaders and role models of black and white students are of middle class status educationally and economically."

\[\footnote{ibid.}\]
Vittenson\textsuperscript{1} used 681 freshmen and senior students in her study to determine whether similarities or differences existed among white and non-white college freshmen and seniors regarding their tendency to identify with or choose a role model from a secondary source, especially from reading materials. Vittenson claims that marked differences were found between non-white female freshmen and other groups in the tendency to identify with certain characters in their texts and library books; the non-white female freshmen tended to identify with rebellious females, whereas all other groups signified that they identified with characters who were good, kind, gentle, generous, hardy and sentimental or thoughtful. Of particular relevance to this study is her statement that the majority of freshmen and non-white students named teachers first and parents second as personalities who had made the greatest impression on them. This order was reversed for white students.

In briefly recapitulating some of the contradictions in the literature, the author notes that Cleaver\textsuperscript{2} maintains that white students have rejected white middle class elite heroes for black


\textsuperscript{2}Cleaver, op. cit., p. 68.
lower class heroes, while White\(^1\) contends that black students have rejected middle class heroes both black and white. On the other hand, Lott and Lott\(^2\) found that both black and white student leaders (or models) are middle class. Vitterson\(^3\) also agrees that for black students role models are middle class teachers, but that among white students greater importance is attached to parents than to teachers. In summary, there is considerable confusion in the literature as to how black and white youth differ, if in fact they do, in their orientation toward teachers and others as role models.

Following this line of inquiry, the research also focuses upon the choice of teachers as role models by black and white students. As will be developed from selected sociological perspectives, it is contended that in the United States of America and in similar societies where blacks are placed in a subjugated position, black and white students will differ in their perception of teachers as role models, and that white students will tend to identify with teachers while black students will not.

\(^1\)White, op. cit., p. 1.

\(^2\)Lott and Lott, op. cit., p. 85.

\(^3\)Vitterson, op. cit., p. 2.
Sociological perspectives

Nadel, a role theorist, presents some important theoretical constructs which support the general hypothesis of this study. In order to make this more explicit, Nadel's concepts which are relevant to this study are briefly presented:

(1) Role concept is basically a type of class concept. In any class concept referring to human beings the properties underlying the classification may broadly be of two kinds. First, they may be physiological characteristics (sex, age, semantic feelings), qualities of descent and extraction, personality or character traits, or qualities resulting from some extraneous turn of events (as when we speak of a "veteran" or a "widow." Secondly, the "properties" may represent proficiencies, interest or attitudes. This is not a systematic list of possibilities but the two-fold distinction is pertinent in that it separates attributes over which the individual has no control, being either inevitable or in some degree fortuitous (which is called contingent properties) from others which he is free to assume and aim at (achievement properties).

(2) Sociologically relevant behavior is always behavior towards or in regards to others. In the simplest way it conforms to the interaction model - "A behaves in a certain way towards B so that B responds in a certain way."

(3) Role concept refers essentially to a lawful or normative conformity, in a sense that the shared attributes exhibited by individuals are understood to follow from the rules of the society or to involve in some manner.

(4) Sociologically relevant behavior is always purposive; equally, it is repetitive, recurrent, having--as we have put it--some degree of "constancy." A given role, therefore, being made up of such behavior exhibited in interaction settings, represents for other actors in their roles a set of data with which they can reckon and on which they can orient their own purposive actions.

(5) While class concept requires the respective individuals

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to share only one property or attribute, the role concept requires the presence of a series of interconnected characteristics. In role concept "priest" or "teachers" indicate not just fact or officiating in religious ceremonies, or teaching in a classroom, but these names indicate that further behavior characteristics (in this thesis termed secondary characteristics) go with the differentia, and go with it "normally" in consequence of the obtaining social rules.¹

Nadel² further proposes that role is composed of a series of "attributes" or characteristics but not all "characteristics" in the series are equal. Rather, the characteristics make up a hierarchy ranging from the essential to those optional in the role. The general society can be viewed as a complex arrangement of positions in which some expectations of behavior and attributes or characteristics are attached. Thus in the case of the junior high school teacher, for example, besides certain normative expectations, the incumbent may also be expected by particular audiences to be white, Protestant and middle class (contingent status attributes); to be intelligent, honest, and sincere (social psychological characteristics); and to be married and certified to teach (achievement status attributes).

In most of the role and role conflict literature the emphasis has been on behavioral or normative expectations making up the

¹Nadel, op. cit., p. 23.
²ibid.
role. Concerning only the normative content of role, the abstract statements of internal role structure have been ignored when a specific use of role is to be made. The addition of Nadel's concept of attributes to the concept of role allows a more detailed internal structure of role to be developed. DeBlaey, in elaborating upon Nadel's model, asserts that "roles are most usefully conceived as having major categories of expectations, which are normative status attributes and social psychological."

The problem researched in this study involves the nature of the internal structure of the roles of school teachers as elaborated by Nadel and DeBlaey and of lower class black and white students. In this investigation, both are of low socio-economic status and dwell in environments of their ethnic/racial sub-cultures, e.g. black ghettos. These students range in age from 11 to 15 and they are in junior high and middle schools. This relatively high degree of homogeneity in terms of social class, age and type of school might lead one to conclude that these black and white students would not differ in their perception of teachers as role models. Differences in black and white students may occur, however, in the normative status and social psychological attributes attached to their roles as students. In discussing these differences in

1DeBlaey, op. cit., p. 3.
regard to students' perceptions of teachers, one must constantly bear in mind that the occupational model of teachers in the United States is middle class white outside of the south.  

Based on Nadel's theory and the empirical literature, it is contended that secondary characteristics are responsible for and do influence children's choices of teachers as role models. It is assumed that the first and most important role attributes black students in the United States hold for teachers are status characteristics, specifically those symbolizing social psychological attributes. Karen VanWagner\(^2\) (1970) illustrated this position on the basis of working with black "behavior-problem" children. The children had been defined by their teachers, both black and white, as having little chance for eventual "success" in their adult life. In observing the children's reactions to the teachers, she observed that they evaluated them not on their role of teaching ability but rather on a complex of other social attributes.

The social attributes most mentioned by teachers were race, sex and social status. The children in turn reacted to their teachers in a way indicating that they had trouble identifying


with their teachers. Rather, the result was that they considered their teachers to be for the most part irrelevant to their way of life and had little respect for them.

In this study, racial identity is assumed to be a very important attribute by which teachers are assessed by black students in inner city schools. The author was a substitute teacher for the past year (in both predominantly white and predominantly black schools) and it was not at all rare for him to hear most vigorously expressed by black students when he entered the classroom, "Here comes a soul brother," or "We have soul today."

Rapport was immediately established. Furthermore, on discovering a slightly different accent, many students did not hesitate to inquire if the author identified with the black man's cause in the United States.

Wagenschien\(^1\) (1950) mentions many reports she received from white teachers about their reception by their students. She reports:

A young white teacher walked into her new classroom and was greeted with the comment, "Another damn white one."

Another was rushed at her desk by the entire class, when she tried to be extremely strict on them. Teachers report having been bitten, tripped, and pushed on the stairs. Another gave an account of a second grade student throwing a mud bottle at the teacher, and of a first grader having such a tantrum that it took the principal and two policemen to get him out of the room.

Those illustrations are supportive of a basic guiding assumption of this study—that racial identity is an important social psychological role attribute for black students in their relationships with their teachers.

An assumed relationship between teachers' race and the selection of the teaching role as an appropriate model for self immediately raises the question of the magnitude of that relationship. To what extent does racial identity of teachers affect students? A second question is under what conditions is race a factor? Would, for example, a white teacher who is known to identify with black students be a model for black students? These questions also guide this study. From a differing perspective we can gain support for these questions. Clark,¹ in his book, Dark Ghetto, contends that the middle class of which teachers are a part holds various views concerning the lower class. He says:

The symptoms of lower-class society affect the dark ghettos of America today—low aspiration, poor education, family instability, illegitimacy, unemployment, crime, drug addiction, alcoholism, frequent illness and early death... But because blacks begin with the primary affliction of inferior social status, the burden of despair and hatred are more pervasive.

Stereotypes create different value systems. The lower class

way of life is based on the immediate future. Bernard\(^1\) comments that their past efforts have been to no avail and they see little prospect for betterment. "These are the people in whom there has been developed little capacity for delayed gratification of impulses." Remote goals and optimistic views of careers and high incomes belong to the middle class. The lower class child also tends to have a lower self-image than the middle class child. Again, in the school he resorts to physical prowess or aggression to confront the frustration resulting from opposition to his impulses or the conflict of his social background and the school's middle class social demands.

It is interesting to note that these differences in values may not occur only between middle class youngsters and those of the lower class, but between teachers and lower class students. The teacher may relate to the class through her middle class standards while the child may view everything through the norms of his lower class. His personal orientation may differ remarkably from his middle class teacher. Conflict may result, especially with the conservative middle class teacher. A strict, conservative white teacher in an inner city school remarked in the presence of the

\(^1\)Bernard, op. cit., p. 367.
author, "I have been a college student for six years, I hold a Master's degree, I have taken courses in sociology, psychology, and human relations, but nothing has better prepared me for dealing with these people than the military. I just can't understand them." With this attitude and the class value differences exhibited by him, the teacher is not likely to be a significant model for the child who does not understand him either.

Cleaver\(^1\) contends that social functions differentiate lower class blacks and the white middle class. He believes the images of blacks and whites being conceived as mutually different types were based upon the work they performed, or social functions.

The ideal white man was one who knew how to use his head, who knew how to manage and control things and get things done. Those whites who were not in a position to perform these functions, never the less, aspired to them. The ideal black man was one who did exactly as he was told and did it efficiently and cheerfully.

In personal communications with the author, a black teacher recently reported that she had lost contact with the black students, who said they disliked her dress, speech and music. On inquiring, the author discovered that the teacher, who was a resident of the community all of her life and had just received her first degree, no longer appreciated the students "soul" music, and was now a

\(^{1}\)Cleaver, op. cit., p. 78.
great admirer of the works of Mozart and Beethoven. Her manner of speech had also changed. It appeared that she was now more in accord with the white, American teacher model exhibiting white middle class values. Silberman¹ points out some of the difficulties of black teachers who have just risen from the lower class. He shows how this mobility affects their relationship with their black students. He states:

The problem involves prejudices of class as well as color. For example, teachers who have just moved up into the middle-class feel threatened by contact with lower-class children, the youngsters remind them too much of their own origin. Thus, using Negro teachers for Negro children frequently backfires; the Negro teacher--having pulled himself out of the slum by his own boot straps--may be more contemptuous of his slum charges than any white.

If the above reasoning is correct then the social class or class image of teachers will influence the black student's perception of teachers as role models. How much? In what ways? This should be investigated.

This author fails to find fault with the contention that American public education, including the language of the classroom, is geared to and from the white middle class. "Text books are middle-class in orientation and content."² It is alleged that


teachers are middle class in origin or aspiration. ¹ Brookover and Gottlieb ² hold:

Children from other sub-societies (lower-class) may have had little or no interaction with people who use the formal language of the school. Rather, these children acquire the language of the sub-society of which they are a part.

Again this middle class situation is especially crucial when considering black and white students in their relationships with their teachers. The middle class life of the school may penalize black children from lower socio-economic groups who fail to conform to the middle class standards of the teachers. The race of the poor white child in the United States may not be a hindrance to his academic achievement, and given current social stereotypes of inferiority and superiority attached to race, he may even receive some advantages.

Bodner and Cavalli ³ refer to Jensen's recent expositions of a long-held thesis of white society: that black people are innately inferior to whites in terms of intellect. Jensen argues that the average American black scores 15 points lower on I.Q. tests than

³ Bodner, Walter and Luigi Cavalli, "Intelligence and Race." Scientific American, CCXXIII (October 1970), 24-29.
does the average white. Since, according to Jansen's 'findings,' heredity accounts for 80 percent of intelligence and environment for only 20 percent, this L Q. gap must stem from the fact that black people draw their genes from a pool that is inferior—at least where the ability to reason and to solve problems in concerned. He strongly contends that average L Q. differences between blacks and whites are entirely genetic and states that because the gene pools of whites and blacks are known to differ and

... these genetic differences were manifested in virtually every anatomical, physiological and biochemical comparison one can make between representative samples of identifiable racial groups—there is no reason to suppose that the brain should be exempt from this generation.¹

Two geneticists, Bodner and Cavalli,² do not exclude the possibility that there could be a genetic component in the main differences in L Q. between races, but maintain that currently available data are inadequate to solve this question. The only approach applicable to the study of the L Q. differences between the races is that of working with black children adopted in white homes and vice versa. Bodner and Cavalli,³ in defining the

¹loc. cit., p. 28.
²loc. cit., p. 29.
³loc. cit., pp. 28-29.
major role of environment, mention five environmental effects related to I.Q.:

(1) There is a difference of as much as five I.Q. points between twins and non-twins, irrespective of socio-economic and other variables, (2) It has been reported that the I.Q. of blacks tested by blacks was two to three points higher than when they were tested by whites, (3) Studies of the effects of protein-deficient diets administered to female rats before and during pregnancy... show a substantial reduction in total brain DNA content of the offspring... There can be no doubt that in many areas the poor socio-economic conditions of blacks are correlated with dietary deficiency.... (4) The very early home environment has long been thought to be of substantial importance for intellectual development... There can be little doubt both the lower socio-economic status of U.S. blacks and a cultural inheritance dating back to slavery must on the average result in a less satisfactory home environment. (5) Expectancy of failure usually leads to failure.

Many ideas have come to light to blacks, for a recently published issue of Ebony stated:

Headlines screamed, "Can Negroes learn the way whites do?" "Born dumb?" "Intelligence; is there a racial difference?" "I.Q. God given or Man-made?" "Niggers are"... has started a billion sentences by white people during those 350 years. With the opening words followed by "shiftless," "oversexed," "rhythmic," "shuffling," "smelly," "lazy," "servile," "uppity," "destitute of courage," "untrustworthy," "childlike in devotion," and a host of stereotypes generally derogatory.

Some teachers do believe that black students are inferior.

Silberman states:


\[2\] Silberman, op. cit., p. 261.
Why, then, do Negro youngsters perform so poorly in school? One answer, suggested by a good many Negroes, is that their youngsters do not learn because they are not taught. They have a point. Teachers are no more free from prejudice than is any other group in American society. It seems clear that all too many teachers of Negro children believe in their hearts (even if they do not admit in their minds) that their students are intellectually inferior, that they are incapable of benefiting from a normal curriculum. Even when this attitude is unconscious, the teacher cannot avoid communicating it to the children in some way or other. And the attitude is not always unconscious.

VanWagner\(^1\) (1970) quoted the story of a black child Stephen, to whom art was the only subject, it seemed to his teacher, that he was able to grasp in school. The only problem was that he was creative and when given a drawing assignment, he would make his own interpretation of what was desired. This deviance from the prescribed assignment was viewed by the teacher as an indication of inferior learning ability and she often termed his work "junk" and "garbage" before the students. As a result Stephen would sit silently at his desk while the art teacher was performing, and with a pencil, frequently stubby, and the end bitten, he would scribble and fiddle and cock his head and whisper to himself throughout the art lesson. This further reinforced her belief that he was of inferior status intellectually. The teacher's relationship with that black student was undesirable at best. Perhaps other students also perceived this teacher's behavior. Perhaps this teacher's

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\(^1\)VanWagner, op. cit., p. 10.
behavior was not atypical.

It is interesting to observe that at most desegregated schools, the blacks are over-represented in the special education classes. White children are sometimes hard to find in these classes for children thought to be retarded. If there are no blacks in the system just as many retarded children may still be found, but now they are white.\(^1\) Other definitive research further supports the position that racial prejudice and discrimination occur in America's schools.\(^2\) In addition, students are likely to discover, at an early age, their teacher's expectations, feelings and prejudices.\(^3\)

One could argue, perhaps, that teacher prejudices are not so much based on race as on social class level. This leads to the question: Are white lower socio-economic status students likely to be considered "inferior" intellectually by their teachers? One could contend that white lower socio-economic status children are not being pressured by society's institutions to think of themselves as intellectually or racially inferior, and that they attach prestige

\(^1\)Brookover and Erickson, op. cit., pp. 132-134.


to their teachers. One could further contend that the economically poor black child, with opposite experiences, would not be likely to perceive teachers as fair or approachable. Peter Schrag, however, contends that lower class whites are the victims of the same teacher prejudices, and may have the same self-concept as poor black students. He states:

It is impossible to think of those adolescents without a strange mixture of affection, apprehension, and fear. To imagine them all, it becomes necessary to shoulder aside the black/white cliches of youth—talk about middle class revolt and ghetto rebellion—and to perceive a grayer reality. I am not writing here of affluent suburbs or what others have called blacktown, but about the children of those whom Americans once celebrated as workingmen. Again sociology fails us; there are no definitions or statistics. If there were, the matter would be better understood.

They exist everywhere, but convention has almost wiped them from sight. They are not supposed to be there, are perhaps not really supposed to believe even in their own existence. Thus they function not for themselves but to define and affirm the position of others: those who are affluent, those who go to college. In visiting the schools they attend, one must constantly define them not by what they are, but by what they are not, and sometimes, in talking to teachers and administrators, one begins to doubt whether they exist at all.

But they represent a minority. It is possible to leave Mechanic Street through school achievement—to community and state colleges, to technical schools, to better jobs—yet it is hardly universal. Fewer than half actually go. What kids do in school tends, as always, to be predetermined. The honors class is filled with the children of professionals, kids whose parents have gone to college. The general course (meaning the dead end) and the vocational track are composed of the sons and daughters of blue-collar workers. The more

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1 Schrag, Peter, "You Don't Have to Leave School to Drop Out," Saturday Review (March 21, 1970), pp. 59-60.
"opportunity," the more justified the destiny of those who are tagged for failure. The world accepts the legitimacy of their position. And so do they. Their tragedy and the accompanying threats led precisely in their acceptance of the low esteem in which school, society, and often their parents regard them, and in their inability to learn a language to express what they feel but dare not trust.

In the light of this statement one may conclude that teachers are not likely to be the role models of either black or white lower class students.

However, from the perspective of Nadel\textsuperscript{1} and DeBláey\textsuperscript{2} another contention can be made on the basis of black and white subcultural differences. From this perspective the normative expectation commonly seen in making up the teacher role is more important to white sub-culture students than black students. The teacher is expected by blacks and whites to behave in certain ways. Whites are likely to believe that teachers maintain their authority justly and impartially. The norms are those stressed in the middle class with whom the white lower class can identify. Most black students in the United States, it is assumed here, differ in norms which are linked to their racial background and environment. As contrasted with whites it is assumed that black students are less likely to see their teachers as fair, as approachable, as concerned about them, or

\begin{itemize}
  \item[1] Nadel, op. cit.
  \item[2] DeBláey, op. cit.
\end{itemize}
to be happy themselves at school. Of course, the question of whether black students differ in such perceptions of their teachers as compared to white students is an empirical question and the subject of this study.

Theoretical propositions

The above discussions, primarily the work of Nadel and DeBlaeys, provide the basis for the following model for conceptualizing black and white students' differences in their orientation towards teachers. Black students, it is assumed, differ from white students in their perception of their teachers as role models due to differences in their sub-cultures. The expected differences in the internal structure of the role of black students and white students can be summarized in order of importance as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLACK SUB-CULTURE</th>
<th>WHITE SUB-CULTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Status attributes: specifically those symbolizing social psychological attributes such as racial identity.</td>
<td>1) Normative expectations of how roles should be enacted: specifically, teacher classroom behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Social psychological attributes: specifically beliefs about racial equality and poverty.</td>
<td>2) Social psychological attributes: specifically beliefs about current educational, social, athletic, and political issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BLA CK  SUB-CULTURE

3) Normative expectations of how roles should be enacted: specifically teacher classroom behavior.

WHITE  SUB-CULTURE

3) Status attributes: specifically those symbolizing social psychological attributes such as racial identity.

Hypotheses

In accordance with the above theoretical background and descriptive literature, the following hypotheses guide this study:

General Hypothesis

(1) A larger proportion (P) of white students (W) will choose teachers as role models than will black students (B).

The hypothesis may be presented as follows:

\[ H_{R1} : P_W > P_B \]

Derived Research Hypothesis

\[ H_{R2} : P_M = P_F \]

(3) When controlling for age there will be no significant proportional differences (P) between students, age 10-12 (Y) and students, age 13-15 (O) in their selection of teachers as role models.

\[ H_{R3} : P_Y = P_O \]
(4) When controlling for social class, there will be no significant proportional differences (P) between students from the lower socio-economic status (L) and students from the middle and upper socio-economic status (M). The hypothesis may be stated:

\[ H_{R_4} : P_L = P_M \]

Overview of the Problem

There is much popular and theoretical literature which claims that white students in the United States are more likely than black students to look to their teachers for assistance, to view their teachers as concerned about them and to use their teachers as role models. These assumptions are examined in this study.

However, before they are answered, such questions raise other fundamental questions. For instance, if there are differences, do the differences remain when other variables known to be related to teacher influence (sex, age, individual's socio-economic status) are controlled? These are questions of elaboration which also guide this study.

It is also an aim of this study to go beyond a sociological mapping of differences by setting a theoretical stage for explaining whatever differences are occurring or will occur. As a contribution to this objective, this study presents a theoretical rationale from which hypotheses are drawn and tested. These hypotheses
about the direction of differences between black and white students in the United States in reference to certain of their perceptions of their teachers, constitute the original thesis of this study. However, as every researcher recognizes, the thesis that begins an investigation is seldom identical to that with which the researcher ends his work. This is the case with this study. Much of the conjecture, the conclusions and the suggestions for further research offered at the end of this report are the consequences of doing the research. Therefore, these conclusions and suggestions are to be tentatively accepted as hypotheses themselves, rather than as findings of fact.

The reader should also note one other caution. Not every manner of analysis which might seem relevant to the data is conducted in this study. The analyses are generally limited to the basic objectives, questions and hypotheses of this thesis. No definitive attempt is made to assess whether one condition causes another. The primary task of this study is to adequately assess whether there are differences among students' perceptions of their teachers, and if such differences may be a statistical function of their racial identity, controlling for sex, age and socio-economic status.
CHAPTER II

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter is a description of the population, operational definitions of concepts and a description of the data collection techniques and methods of analysis in the study.

Description of the Population

The data for this study were collected in a midwestern city with a population of approximately 500,000. The population studied consists of seventh and eighth grade students from a middle school with a population of 1,500, and a junior high school with an approximate population of 1,200 students. In the school population used for this research there were 95 white and 8 black teachers.

In the middle school, 171 students responded to the questionnaire, of which 140 were white and 21 black. One hundred and ninety-three responded to the questionnaire at the junior high school of which 124 were white and 55 black. The other 23 students were of other racial or ethnic categories, i.e., Mexican American and Phillipinos. The distribution of the students by race is shown in Table 1.
TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN ORDER OF RACE AND SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White N</th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>Black N</th>
<th>Black %</th>
<th>Others* N</th>
<th>Others* %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Because of limited numbers and a lack of specific theoretical concern, these students are excluded from this beginning study.

Operational Definitions of Variables

Independent variable: students' racial identity

Racial identity, the independent variable in this study, refers to an ethnic division of mankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a human category. There are two racial classifications used in this study:

(a) White students who refer to themselves as white or Caucasian.

(b) Black students who refer to themselves as black or Negro.

Both classifications were obtained by questionnaire data, i.e., race in this study is a matter of the subjects self-designation.
Dependent variable: student orientation towards teachers

From the chapter on theoretical background and review of literature, it can be seen that the term role model is a global concept. In this study, however, we assume that role model is heavily dependent on and can be defined as the orientation persons have towards others. Further discussion can give other definitions but this study focuses on four components in determining the selection of teachers as role models. The focus is not on role models per se, but on determinants or conditions leading to the selection of role models. The literature supports the view that among the many important conditions determining one's influence on another is one's belief that (1) others care about self (2) one's perception of the other's dignity and uprightness in dealing with others (3) the rapport, cordiality or easy interaction one has with the other and (4) one's happiness in the environment of the other.

In this study these components were operationalized by asking the following questions:

1. "There are many people who are concerned about how well young people do in school. In the spaces below, list the NAMES of the people you feel are concerned about how well you do in school. Please indicate who each person is."
2. "If you had a problem with one of your daily assignments for a class at school, who is the first person you would go to see about it?"
   a. A close friend
   b. A classmate who is good in that class
   c. My parents
   d. The teacher who has that class
e. My favorite teacher
   f. A counselor
   g. No one
   h. Someone else (please tell who it is____________________)

3. "Would you say that your teachers have always been fair with you in this school?"
   a. Yes, definitely
   b. Yes, for the most part
c. Not sure, either way
d. No, not for the most part
e. Definitely not

4. "Now we would like to ask you a few questions about how you feel about your school. Would you say that you are happy about being in this school?"
   a. Yes, I am definitely happy with this school.
   b. I am happy with this school more often than not.
c. I am unsure about how happy I am about this school.
d. I am unhappy with this school more often than not.
e. No, I am definitely unhappy with this school.

These instruments were adapted from a study of Ressentiment
on student experience in secondary schools by Friedenberg.¹

Control variable

1. Students' sex - students categorized as male or female.
2. Students' socio-economic background - socio-economic background determined by father's occupation.
3. Students' age.

Collection of Data

Questionnaires (appendix) were administered to a random sample of middle school students in the winter of 1970. The classes of students who made responses to the questionnaire were randomly selected. The same form of questionnaire was administered to a randomly selected group of junior high students about the same time. The purpose of this was carefully explained to the students by the research investigator. The teachers were asked to leave the classroom to allow the students to freely respond as they wished. Students placed their names on the front cover. They were then asked to remove the covers and hand them in before answering the questions; the explanation given for this was to allow a check for absenteeism. This gave them a

feeling of anonymity. All questions and responses were carefully read to the students. After the questionnaires were administered, student identity was established by code numbers which had previously been put on both the recovered front cover and a page in the questionnaire booklet. In this way it was possible to collect other information from the student files.

Data Analysis

The responses were coded and punched on I.B.M. cards. The \( t \) statistic for two-sample test: difference of means and proportions has been employed in analyzing the data. Since two groups are being compared our general research hypothesis is in the form of \( P_W > P_B \).

The hypothesis of difference, alpha = .05, is tested. As a test and elaboration to determine whether sex, age and social class account for differences among white and black students in their choice of teachers as role models, individual tests with each component variable controlling for sex, age, and social class were also conducted. The \( t \) test for differences in proportions \(^1\) was used in analyzing each component variable. The hypothesis

of no difference, alpha = .05 is again tested. Two groups are again compared and the research hypotheses are in the form of:

\[ P_M = P_F \]
\[ P_Y = P_O \]
\[ P_L = P_M \]
CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

As discussed in the previous chapters, this study is concerned with differences between black and white students in their perception of teachers as role models. The questions center on teachers' concern for students, teachers' fairness, students' willingness to approach teachers for assistance and students' satisfaction with their school.

Initial Research Hypothesis

The general research hypothesis for which the data were collected is as follows:

\[ H_{R_1} : \text{A larger proportion (P) of white students (W) will choose teachers as role models than will black students (B).} \]

Operational Hypothesis: \( H_{R_1} : P_W > P_B \)

Statistics: \( t \) test for differences in proportions

Alpha: .05 level of significance

The component variables used in this study to assess students' role models are:

38
(1) students' perception of their teachers' concern for their scholarship.
(2) students' perception of their teachers' fairness in dealing with them.
(3) the students' willingness to approach teachers for assistance.
(4) students' happiness with their school.

As a test and elaboration to determine whether sex, age and social class account for differences among white and black students in their choice of teachers as role models, individual tests by each component variable controlling for sex, age and social class were also conducted.

In controlling for socio-economic status, students whose fathers were technical and kindred workers, business managers, officials, proprietors and craftsmen were classified as upper class; students whose parents were armed forces men, policemen, unskilled service and domestic workers, and housewives were classified as lower class. It is hypothesized that:

When controlling for sex there will be no significant proportional (P) differences between male (M) and females (F) students in their choice of teachers as role models.

$$H_{R2} : P_M = P_F$$

When controlling for age there will be no significant proportional (P) differences between students age 10-12 (Y), and students age 13-15 (O) in their choice of teachers as role models.

$$H_{R3} : P_Y = P_O$$
When controlling for social class, there will be no significant proportional (P) differences between students from the lower socio-economic class (L) and students from the middle and upper socio-economic class (M).

\[ H_{R_4} : P_L = P_M \]

The test differences in proportions\(^1\) was used in analyzing each component variable controlling for sex, age, and social class.

Students' perception of teacher's concern, teacher's fairness, student's willingness to approach teacher and student's happiness with school were as hypothesized, as shown in Table 2. White students have a more favorable perception of teachers as being concerned about them, and as being fair. They are also more willing to approach teachers for assistance and appear to be happier with their school than are black students. These data are thereby supportive of the general position that a larger proportion of white students choose teachers as role models than do black students.

**Controlling for sex**

The findings reported in Table 3 reveal that there are no significant proportional differences between white male and

\(^1\)Peatman, op. cit., p. 404.
TABLE 2
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Rank</th>
<th>RACE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rank of %</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rank of %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₁</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₂</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₁</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₂</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teachers' assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₁</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₂</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness with school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₁</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R₂</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 2.43 \]

\[ H_{R₁} : P_W, P_B, \alpha = .05 \]

R₁ and R₂ : Random assignments of students

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TABLE 3
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS,
CONTROLLING FOR SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed Rank</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rank of %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>(32.)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(10.)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>(58.)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(32.)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teacher's assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>(40.)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(22.)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness with school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>(49.)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(27.)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$H_{R^2} : P_M = P_F$

accepted

NS = not statistically significant

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female students in the areas of teachers' concern, teachers' fairness, willingness to approach teacher, and happiness with their school. There are no significant differences between black males and black females in the areas of teachers' fairness and happiness with school but there are significant differences between the two in the areas of teacher concern and willingness to approach teachers for assistance; black male students have higher perceptions of teachers' concern for them than black female students and black females appear to be more willing to approach teachers for assistance than black males. However, out of eight different tests, sex made a difference only twice. This is hardly justification for the importance of sex as a possible explanation of differences between black and white students. Furthermore, even in the two out of eight cases when differences by sex occurred, these were not consistent differences. Therefore, the findings are not supportive of sex as being a factor in influencing students' perception of teachers as role models on any of the four variables.

Controlling for age

The findings reported in Table 4 are similar to findings reported in Table 3. When controlling for age differences, no significant proportional differences were found between younger
### TABLE 4
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS, CONTROLLING FOR AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>11 - 12</td>
<td>13 - 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(15.)</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>(11.)</td>
<td>.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(10.)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(9.)</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(64.)</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>(63.)</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(37.)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(38.)</td>
<td>1.11</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(44.)</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>(41.)</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(21.)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(38.)</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness with school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(50.)</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>(50.)</td>
<td>.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(33.)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(16.)</td>
<td>1.574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$H_3$ : $P_Y = P_O$

accepted

NS = not statistically significant

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students (age 10-12) and older students (age 13-15) in their perception of teachers as role models. It is also noted that no significant differences were found between the younger white students and older white students in the perception of teachers' concern about them, teachers' fairness, happiness with their school and students' willingness to approach teachers. In addition, no significant differences were found between younger black students and older black students in their perception of teachers' concern about them, teachers' fairness, willingness to approach teacher and happiness with their school.

In summary, these findings support the position that age differences do not account for the differences between black and white students in the way they orient toward their teachers.

Controlling for socio-economic status

The findings reported in Table 5 reveal that there are no significant proportional differences between lower socio-economic status and upper socio-economic status students in their choice of teachers as role models. No significant proportional differences were found between white lower and upper class students in the area of teachers' concern, teachers' fairness, and students' willingness to approach teachers, but white upper class students indicate that they are happier with their school than white lower class
### TABLE 5

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS, CONTROLLING FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS</th>
<th>Lower Class</th>
<th>Upper Class</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about students</td>
<td></td>
<td>154 (11.)</td>
<td>108 (14.)</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>154 (11.)</td>
<td>108 (14.)</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>56 (5.)</td>
<td>19 (7.)</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td>154 (63.)</td>
<td>108 (64.)</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>154 (63.)</td>
<td>108 (64.)</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>56 (41.)</td>
<td>19 (26.)</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teachers' assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>154 (45.)</td>
<td>108 (38.)</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>154 (45.)</td>
<td>108 (38.)</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>56 (36.)</td>
<td>19 (26.)</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness with school</td>
<td></td>
<td>154 (44.)</td>
<td>108 (58.)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>154 (44.)</td>
<td>108 (58.)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>56 (17.)</td>
<td>19 (31.)</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ R_4^H : P_L = P_M \]

accepted

NS = not statistically significant
Black lower class and upper class students do not differ significantly in their perception of teachers' concern about them, teachers' fairness, willingness to approach teachers for assistance or happiness with their school.

Significant proportional differences occurred only once out of eight different tests when controlling for social class. Therefore, these findings support the view that socio-economic status levels do not account for the differences in the way black and white students perceive their teachers.

Summary of Findings

The hypothesis that a larger proportion of white students will choose teachers as role models than will black students was supported. Furthermore, these findings of difference between white and black students continue to hold when controlling for sex, age and socio-economic status level.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to examine whether students' choice of teachers as role models is a function of the student's racial identity on the basis of Nadel's\(^1\) proposition that role is composed of a series of attributes, which are not all equal, and DeBlaey's\(^2\) elaboration that roles are most usually conceived as having three major categories of expectation: normative, status, and social psychological. In this study a model is presented that certain attributes depending on race, influence children's choices of teachers as role models. Among the more important class of attributes influencing the black child's perception of teachers are those symbolizing racial identity. This is followed by other social psychological attributes, chief of which are beliefs about racial equality and poverty. Least important are normative expectations of how roles should be enacted: specifically teacher classroom behavior.

\(^{1}\)Nadel, op. cit.

\(^{2}\)DeBlaey, op. cit.

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For the white student it was assumed that the most important secondary attribute influencing his orientation toward teachers is his normative expectations of how teacher roles should be performed, especially teacher classroom behavior. This is followed by social psychological attributes, specifically beliefs about current educational, social and political issues. Least important are the status variables of teachers' racial identity.

The vast majority of black and white students tested in this research are of lower economic status dwelling in the area of their ethnic sub-culture; i.e., the ghettos. The author questioned whether supposed similarities in socio-economic status would produce similar perceptions of teachers as role models. On the other hand, difference in race is the theoretical basis of distinction between the students' choice of teachers as role models. Therefore, the general hypothesis for which four component variables were tested was that a larger proportion of white students will choose teachers as role models than will black students. The variables of students' age, sex, and socio-economic status were controlled to test for distortion. The variations in students' sex, age, and social class did not produce any significant difference in their choice of teachers as role models; a few differences were noted, however. Black female students in this study indicated
they were more likely to approach teachers for assistance than black males, and more black males than females indicated that their teachers were concerned for their scholarship. Testing for social class, the relationship observed from the data indicates that differences in students' socio-economic status produce no statistically significant differences in their perception of teachers as role models on most of the component variables. Only on one was there a significant proportional difference: a larger proportion of upper SES white students indicated that they are happy with their school than did lower SES white students.

Horton and Hunt,1 commenting on the influence of social class on ethnocentrism state:

Members of one class cannot help judging members of other classes in terms of their own class expectations and values. The middle class scorns upper-class snobbishness, but strives desperately to raise its own children in a "good" neighborhood. People at every class level tend to see those above themselves as effete, snobbish, and pretentious and those beneath as either disgusting or pathetic, as either good-for-nothing or "awfully pushy." At all intermediate status levels one tends to attribute one's own status to personal achievement, the status of those above to luck, and that of those beneath to inability and laziness... Of all forms of ethnocentrism, class ethnocentrism is one of the most difficult to restrain.

Could the middle class values of the teachers be responsible

---

for the white low socio-economic students' unhappiness with their school?

The variable of race, according to this study, is the important variable influencing students' perception of teachers as role models. This lends support to the theories of Nadel and DeBlaey that role is composed of a series of secondary attributes (status, normative and social psychological) and that not all of these attributes are equal.

It must be borne in mind that the occupational role model of teachers in the United States is white and middle class. As a matter of fact, in the school population from which this research was drawn, there were 95 white teachers and 8 black teachers. This may account for black students not naming teachers as role models. White students then are more likely to identify with teachers.

The hypothesis that white students are more likely than black and other students to select teachers as role models was confirmed at the .05 level. The variables of sex and age and socio-economic status did not produce any significant difference in students' choice of teachers as role models.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study may be due to the limitations of the methodology. This study was a cross-sectional investigation and
the findings would be less tentative and temporarily accepted if replicated in other parts of the nation. Had the study been conducted in parochial schools where the religious orientation of students may play an important part in shaping their attitudes and way of life, the results may have been significantly different. Again, marked differences may have been effected in larger educational institutions where there is a greater conglomeration of ethnic groups. On the university level, students more mature than those in the middle school and possibly more broadminded, may also have presented noticeable differences in the findings.

As previously mentioned, the data were gathered from black and white students taught primarily by white teachers (95 white and 8 black). The study would be of greater utility were there more black teachers so as to assess the effects of white students with black and with white teachers, and more so, black students with black teachers. Again, the ratio of white students far exceeded the number of black students. There were 263 as compared to only 75 blacks. Were there a greater numerical balance, the results may have been different.

In this study the component variables were (1) students' perception of teachers' concern for them, (2) students' perceptions of teachers' fairness, (3) students' willingness to approach teachers for assistance, and (4) students' happiness with school.
Other more pertinent questions may have centered on (1) students' desire to be teachers, (2) students' interaction with teachers outside of school, (3) appreciation for teachers' conduct, behavior or mannerisms, (4) parents' attitude towards teachers, and (5) peers' attitudes toward teachers.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the major hypothesis of this study was supported. A larger proportion of white students did indicate a more positive orientation toward teachers than did black students. At this time and in the schools studied, it is concluded that race of student is an important variable in influencing students responses to their teachers. Further consideration of the role of race in teacher-student relationships has certainly been justified by this study.

Implications for Education and Sociology

The results of this study hold implications for the influence of the family and community on the pre-school and school-age child, for the mass media, for teacher training programs, for school administrations, and for educational organizations. Ira T. Gordon in his text discusses the growing child's emergence from home. He concludes:

Just as self-concepts are based upon cultural experiences, so are concepts of others . . . the self of the child is to a
great extent a product of the experience that his culture provides for him . . . . It brings him into contact or prevents him from having relationships with certain people, it teaches him the value he should hold as "good" and the attitudes he should hold towards self and others.¹

Gordon further points out that even pre-school children seem to be affected by their awareness of being Negro and faced with a white teacher. This apparent awareness of racial differences and loss of rapport has serious implications. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to research siblings', peers' and parents' attitudes towards those of other races and their influence on the attitudes of children toward teachers of other ethnic groups, in nursery schools, in churches and in recreational settings and to trace the stages of the formation of the child's concept and attitude towards those of another race.

Should the child have been for the most part isolated from the white community, as is the case with many black children of low economic status, he may then bring to school a cultural orientation not in harmony with education, which, when combined with a rejection of him by white students and teachers, leads to an even greater estrangement from school.

Perhaps when the middle class teacher can understand and

relate to the child's sub-cultural background, he can thereby come to gain acceptance from the child. Gordon\(^1\) further concludes:

... generally teachers tend to encourage and favor those children whom they "understand," those children whose homes are like theirs, whose "manners" are "good" and whose parents value what the teachers value. These biases show in their behavior.

Black children seem far more sensitive to certain of the language and behavior of teachers than do white children. They seem aware of both the overt means by which their self-esteem is threatened and the covert means by which the teacher may avoid them or maintain a social distance. A study comparing the sensitivity of blacks and whites to the language and behavior of teachers would be helpful in determining the reasons for non-acceptance or acceptance of teachers as role models.

Another influence on children's selection of role models may be the mass media. Teachers in several predominantly black schools have discovered that black students are far more aware and appreciative of black athletes and entertainers than of black community leaders, educators and political figures. Black youth very often hail James Brown as their hero. Hence, they may refute any encouragement to continue their education with the fact that this entertainer, although a junior high school drop out, is

\(^1\)loc. cit., p. 152.
one of the most financially successful blacks in the century.

Eldridge Cleaver\(^1\) in *Soul on Ice* refers to the mass media's channelling and controlling the aspirations and goals of black people by "crushing black leaders" and inflating images of celebrities from a world of sport and play. The author suggests that the mass media should make a desperate effort in presenting to the black community and the general public a more positive view of black educators.

Finally, this study has implications for the teacher and for the teacher-training curricula. With the current move to desegregate schools across the nation, a more sub-culturally relevant teacher curriculum is imperative. If there had been more specialized education courses for teachers on the specifics of culture there may have been fewer "special ed." classes for disadvantaged and "misunderstood" children. A few colleges and universities are now offering courses in teaching disadvantaged youth, but this must become more nation-wide if the effects of desegregation in schools are to be meaningful and enjoyable to black lower class children.

Other factors will affect the survival of black lower class children in the desegregated school. Busing may provide a means of desegregation for a six hour school day, but it does not solve

\(^1\)Cleaver, loc. cit., p. 89.
the problem of segregation within school or the segregated larger community. School administrators, churches and other community groups may need to include in their community education activities, human relations workshops and other programs geared at breaking down the traditional barrier between whites and blacks. Teachers and parents should be encouraged to work in and participate in such projects.
APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Introduction

This is just a questionnaire; it is not a test. Questions will be read to you, and you are asked to put a circle around the answer that best describes how you feel about different things. The answers that you give will be treated as confidential; these answers will not be shown to your teachers or anyone else other than this researcher. Since we are able to ask only a few persons to express their opinions, your personal opinion is worth much more. Won't you please help by answering the following questions:

1. "There are many people who are concerned about how well young people do in school. In the spaces below, list the NAMES of the people you feel are concerned about how well you do in school. Please indicate who each person is."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>WHO IS THIS PERSON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. "If you had a problem with one of your daily assignments for a class at school, who is the first person you would go to see about it?"

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a. A close friend  
b. A classmate who is good in that class  
c. My parents  
d. The teacher who has that class  
e. My favorite teacher  
f. A counselor  
g. No one  
h. Someone else (please tell who it is____________________)  

3. "Would you say that your teacher has always been fair with you in this school?"

a. Yes, definitely  
b. Yes, for the most part  
c. Not sure, either way  
d. No, not for the most part  
e. Definitely not  

4. "Now we would like to ask you a few questions about how you feel about your school. Would you say that you are happy about being in this school?"

a. Yes, I am definitely happy with this school.  
b. I am happy with this school more often than not.  
c. I am unsure about how happy I am about this school.  
d. I am unhappy with this school more often than not.  
e. No, I am definitely unhappy with this school.  

5. What does your father (or whoever supports your family) do for a living?  

6. Describe what your father (or whoever supports your family) do on the job.  

7. What is your race?  

a. Black  
b. White  
c. Other (Please tell what it is____________________)  

8. Are you  

a. Male  
b. Female
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