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Linda Webb-Woodard

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SELFHOOD: DISCOVERY OF SURVIVAL VALUES IN LOW INCOME BLACK FAMILIES IN HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT. TWO CASE STUDIES USING FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY.

A Dissertation Presented
By
LINDA WEBB-WOODARD

Submitted to the Graduate School of University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
May 1980
Education
SELFHOOD: DISCOVERY OF SURVIVAL VALUES IN LOW INCOME BLACK FAMILIES IN HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT.
TWO CASE STUDIES USING FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY.

A Dissertation Presented By
LINDA WEBB-WOODARD

Approved as to style and content by:

Douglas R. Forsyth, Chairperson of Committee

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Patricia Guthrie, Member

Mario D. Fantini, Dean
School of Education
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Since I hold the belief that everything is interconnected it is difficult to stop circular time and identify those persons or events which should be recognized here. Obviously the roots of this dissertation begin at the beginning. My family of origin taught me one important lesson—to think independently. There have, of course, been setbacks—plans laid aside or detoured—but as my mother says "everything happens for the best."

My political perspective can be attributed to my undergraduate program, particularly to Dr. Joseph White, Professor at U.C. Irvine. His untiring guidance, integrity, and commitment to the improvement of Black life was a major influence on my life.

As principal of Shanti School my students—Mary, Crystal, Billie, Ceci, Chuckie, Cameron, Tyrone and their families, encouraged my interest in the Black family. Without them, this dissertation might have been on another topic.

Dorothy Payne acted as my research associate. Long before she agreed to this she was a friend and the mother of one of my students. Her support and hard work throughout this process can never be repaid.

The two families' contribution of time and energy to this project strongly illustrates Black values and love.

The Wilcox family was warm and supportive. Elaine and I spent many hours talking together. Derek, Casey, and Greg gave their time and made us laugh.
The Cole family whose home was never empty showed me the love of a big family. The grief that visited them with the loss of their son and brother, Ronnie challenged their very core. They rose above it and continued on only as strong families will.

Doug Forsyth who was the Chairperson of my committee gave me timely feedback and spent hours listening to my ups and downs. Evan Coppersmith whose commitment to scholarly work and superior ability in the field of family therapy has encouraged my work and serves as a valuable model. Pat Guthrie has shared not only her knowledge in the area of Black families but, more importantly, a perspective on being Black in academia. Her presence supported my continued work and served as a reality check when I felt slightly crazy.

Last, but not least, my family of procreation has offered the ongoing support, reality check, and necessary diversion throughout this process. Brent gave important personal insights into the organization of the Southern rural Black family. He read all the drafts and commented. More than that he took care of many responsibilities that are usually mine. Kijana and Aisha who are both young, acted independently, entertained themselves when necessary and were there to talk to and play with when I needed a break.
ABSTRACT

Two Case Studies Using Family Systems Theory.
(May 1980)
Linda Webb-Woodard, B.A., University of California, M.Ed., University of Massachusetts, Ed.D., University of Massachusetts
Directed by: Professor Douglas A. Forsyth

Two low income Black families were selected for the case study which sought to identify selfhood. Selfhood is defined as the ability to survive in an openly hostile and anti-Black environment through the development of behavior patterns and coping mechanisms which address the stress and provide alternatives for effectively dealing with problems and insuring the continued ability to function. The study revealed several values which were consistent in both families and which allowed family members to explore the world and feel connected and supported. Implications were drawn for therapeutic practice and further study.

The study emerged from several issues observed by the author. Generally speaking, the Black family is characterized as disorganized and pathologic. It is cited as a major contributing factor in almost every form of so-called Black "pathology" including low self concept, school failure, crime and illegitimacy. Yet, this view fails to account
for the fact that Black people have survived despite all attempts to the contrary. Research which indicts Blacks as pathologic is termed colonized research. Colonized research is based on several assumptions. First, it uses a mythical model of white middle class family values as the standard against which all others are judged. The values of the colonized group (in this case Blacks) are denied or made to appear perverted by comparison. Finally, colonized research relies on the objectivity of science for its power. This work refutes the notion of objectivity by tracing the current and historical biases that are inherent in the research on Blacks. The assumption of this work, therefore, is that research represents either a positive or negative bias perspective vis a vis Black people. This study openly declares positive bias.

Black people are understood to have a culture and value system that reflects an African heritage and their experiences in the United States. Survival values are seen, then, not as merely reactive to racism but as consistent with the existing Black culture. Two positions serve as philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of this work. Wade Nobles (1972a, 1972b, 1976) conceptions of an African philosophical position added clarity to the view of the families. Family Systems Theory (Minuchin, 1974; Watzlawick, et al., 1967) provided the necessary understanding of interaction and context.

Ten families were randomly selected from a housing project and were interviewed using a questionnaire. From the ten, two were selected
on the basis of several criteria. Case study method was used. Several assessment tools were also utilized to determine the family's organization, rules and roles. These tools included the genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976), the structural assessment (Minuchin, 1974) and problem solving tasks (Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976). Data analysis revealed significant values of humanism, optimism and spirituality, oppression/paranoia, strong emphasis on family unity and racial loyalty. In addition each family proved to have a complex organization which extended beyond the household limits. These data were discussed in light of their implications for therapy and education. Areas for further study were also identified. Contrary to mainstream literature, these families exhibited great strength with a balance between flexibility and resilience which served as a source of support for all family members.
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childhood remembrances are always a drag
if you're Black
you always remember things like living in
Woodlawn
with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to have
your mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you got your bath
from one of those
big tubs that folk in chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meetings about
Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
and though you're poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that makes any
difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good
christmases
and I really hope no white person ever has cause to write
about me
because they never understand Black love is Black wealth
and they'll
probably talk about my hard childhood and never
understand that
all the while I was quite happy

April 1968
Nikki Giovanni
INTRODUCTION

The poem on the preceding page clearly depicts the underlying issue that will be addressed in the dissertation. Certainly there is no glory in living in hunger and poverty; it is a circumstance into which many of us are born. Yet, on a day-to-day basis we live our lives—the joys, the sorrows, the happiness, the tears—never realizing that we are viewed as living in a "tangle of pathology." It is only when we come in contact with people from "outside" that we are made to realize that we are viewed as "sick" or inferior.

This dissertation comes about as part of a continuing process of evolving and thinking about Black people in the United States. It comes out of realizing long ago that the cultural deprivation hypothesis was not true and that the explanations of poverty and the discovery of pathology in Black people did more to provide economic incentives for the middle class, in the form of social service jobs (i.e., welfare, manpower training, poverty programs, compensatory education) than they did to alleviate the problems of the poor. The author's strong sense of commitment to the Black community comes, in part, from realizing that if Black people had not lost their lives in the streets of this country thus forcing financial aid programs to be initiated, this dissertation would probably not have been written. The commitment also comes as the result of understanding that being exceptional is not a sufficient criteria for success, if you're Black. Black people have managed to rise only to the barest minimum of their potential because
of racism, classism, and discrimination. To all sisters and brothers, a debt is owed.

It is the author's belief that researchers should state their values and understandings about the nature of problems prior to embarking upon description. The principal assumption which governs this work is that a Black culture exists which is alien to the mainstream in the United States. Consistent with these notions is an a priori rejection of most theories and research that has been done on Black life. This body of research, particularly that which characterize Blacks as pathologic, is, in the author's opinion, racist.

A Black culture exists that derives much from the African experience, slavery, and the ongoing oppression that is experienced daily. However, this is not to deny that Blacks exhibit divergent cultural manifestations as a result of geographic location, differences in African origins, differences in patterns of slavery and amount of contact with dominant cultural values. Rather, it is to state that amidst all of the possible differences, there is a myriad of similarities which have accrued.

It is this author's opinion that Blacks, in fact, possess a selfhood which is not measured by existing "tests." This view rests upon the observation that Blacks could not have existed in this country without family and community structures which protected them from the psychological violence perpetrated upon them on a daily basis. Recurrent movements for freedom throughout our history indicate that this must be so. To accept the pathology determinations as posited by
researchers would mean accepting a belief that Blacks have not developed any strategies in SELF-defense and SELF-love but have remained in a static state for the past four hundred years. This would make the picture of Black life no more than a negative of the picture of white America. Sufficient documentation exists to indicate that there is much more to the Black experience than this view would imply (Bennett, 1964; Franklin, 1967; Herskovits, 1958).

However, the position stated above is not developed to suggest that Blacks have not suffered nor been affected by the viciousness of racism/oppression. To deny that the harm has and does happen would be absurd. What is implied is that Blacks have managed to develop unique ways of dealing with the stresses of life in the United States. It is now up to Black scholars to determine and place positive and negative values on these coping behaviors. Fortunately, self definition has begun with important dialogues between Black scholars taking place. This dissertation, using a case study method will describe some pieces of Black family life that can contribute to this discourse.
CHAPTER I
THE ISSUE

The Black family has been characterized in much of the literature as disorganized and pathologic (Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1970). Studies are needed that articulate a Black perspective and which seek to focus on and document the strengths in Black family life (Billingsley, 1968; Ladner, 1971; McAdoo, 1977; Staples, 1974, 1976, 1978).

The issue to be studied is presented in six major sections (1) the statement of the issue and rationale; (2) the purpose of the study; (3) the definition of terms; (4) the method; (5) the delimitations of the study; and (6) the significance of the study.

The argument presented here is that much of the literature about Black people represents what could be termed "colonized." Colonized research, according to Lewis (1973), helps create an idea of the people which they themselves would not ordinarily construct. Realizing that the "idea" of Black people that is perpetuated in the popular literature is one of pathology, many Black researchers are currently demanding self definition (Boykin, 1977; Clark, 1972; Ladner, 1971, 1973; Parsons, 1975; Staples, 1973). In keeping with the notion of self definition, this study investigates the interactional patterns of Black families using General Systems Theory as it applies to families. General Systems Theory encourages a wider contextual view and has direct connections with African philosophy which is discussed in
Chapter II.

In order to proceed with this task, a discussion is advanced with an underlying assumption that colonized research represents an a priori negative bias against Blacks. The negative bias literature is presented and critiqued showing cause to proceed with the study of the Black family from a Black perspective. Each negative bias presentation is followed by a discussion of the literature from a positive bias perspective.

Statement of the Issue and Rationale

This study is designed to investigate the patterns of interaction which support selfhood in two Black families.

Recent literature has emerged calling for the decolonization of social science research (Blauner, 1972, 1973; Ladner, 1971, 1973; Lewis, 1973; Staples, 1976; White, 1972). The arguments presented by these authors show cause for developing a research agenda emerging from a Black perspective which more adequately represents the culture, values and world view of Black people. Lerone Bennett (1970) cogently summarizes the demand for self definition:

It is necessary for us to develop a new frame of reference which transcends the limits of white concepts. It is necessary for us to develop a total intellectual offensive against the false universality of white concepts whether they are expressed by William Styron or Daniel Patrick Moynihan. By and large, reality has been conceptualized in terms of the narrow point of view of the small minority of white men who live in Europe and North America. We must abandon the partial frame of reference of our oppressors and create new concepts which will release our reality, which is also the reality of the overwhelming majority of men and women on this globe. We must say to the white world that there are things in the
world not dreamt of in your history and your sociology and your philosophy (p. 7).

The concept of social deviance is often applied to the values and behavior of Blacks because they represent a departure from the traditional white middle class norms. A Black research agenda would challenge the continued perpetuation of the "social disorganization" model of Black life and would offer valid descriptions of a Black life-style. This research agenda is particularly needed for the study of the much maligned Black family.

The Black family is seen as the cause of the reported negative self concept in Black children (Ausubel and Ausubel, 1963; Banks and Grambs, 1965; Rainwater, 1965). The position of these researchers is that since the Black family is a disorganized, matriarchal unit, the Black child cannot help but have a negative self concept. Based on the extension of this logic, self concept measures have been developed to actually prove this. An understanding of a Black value system would yield important information regarding the appropriateness of even measuring the "self" of a Black child.

Self concept as it is currently defined construes the self as an isolated, individual unit that can be measured without context. This notion is consistent with Western, capitalist tradition (Nobles, 1972b). However, it is antithetical to a Black value system which places higher value on the group than on the individual (Foster and Dixon, 1971; Nobles, 1972a, 1972b, 1973; Staples, 1976). Wade Nobles (1972a, 1972b, 1973) advances the notion of the "extended self" with a philosophical extension lying in the belief that "I am because WE are, and because WE
are, therefore I am" (p. 20). His notion represents a position more amenable to Black life and provides the basis for proposing selfhood (rather than self concept) as a term appropriate to the Black cultural perspective.

Although the lowest animal is attributed with the ability to change/evolve in response to its environment, the Black family is not recognized or credited for this ability. Instead, the implication posited by researchers who hold the "social deviance" view (Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1965, 1970; Proshansky, 1968) is that these families have remained static and unchanging (except in pathologic ways) in almost four hundred years of oppressive contact with the Western world. The notion that these families have developed healthy ways to live in a hostile society is never advanced by these researchers. In fact, their view is most clearly summarized by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) in The Negro Family: A Case for National Action who concludes:

> At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time (p. 5).

He cites the so-called matriarchy or female headed household as the main cause of this deterioration and calls for "national action" to change this type of family structure.

Often characterization of the Black family in the manner described above stems from failure to recognize the cultural imperatives upon it (Billingsley, 1968). A Black research agenda would remove the burden of responsibility for the alleged pathology of Black people from the family and redefine the problem as being that of institutional racism.

Andrew Billingsley (1968) is perhaps the major pioneer in the movement to attribute positive elements to the Black family. His work presented a critique of the "Moynihan Report" and offered an elaborate typology for viewing the Black family structure. Robert Staples (1970) also takes the "Moynihan Report" to task and terms the myth of the matriarchy a "cruel hoax" (p. 7).

Robert Hill (1972) systematically defined and examined the strengths of the Black family using quantitative data. He discusses the following strengths: strong kinship bonds, strong work achievement, and religious orientation, and adaptability of family roles. Joyce Ladner (1971), on the other hand, used intensive case study and interview techniques as she focused on the Black adolescent female embedded in her family and peer milieu. She found these young women more healthy and successful adaptations to unhealthy conditions. These responses were based on their values, attitudes, beliefs emerging from Black culture.

These researchers recognize their work as breaking "new" ground and they consequently suggest the need for further work on the Black
family. Harriet McAdoo (1977) calls for case studies on the Black family which will aid mental health professionals in their understanding of the cultural and social networks of Black clients. She states:

Case studies and empirical studies will need to be designed to begin the process of providing data on the characteristics and patterns of Black families that document survival skills (p. 76).

For different reasons, but with the same results, the emerging field of systems theory in families posits that the concept of the Self is an out-dated notion and that it is much more appropriate to view the individual only within the matrix of their family or larger social systems (Haley, 1976; Minuchin, 1974; Watzlawick, 1974). Systems thinking in families arises out of an application of general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950) to operations of the family unit. In this view individuals are seen as simultaneously influencing and being influenced by the family system. Through observation, implicit rules that govern the behavior of family members emerge.

Family systems thinking would also suggest that the family is the appropriate place to begin an exploration of the structures and patterns of interaction which support selfhood. Much of the work in this area has been done with families in treatment, while this study will view families that have not identified themselves as in need of treatment.

Analysis of the major contributions to the literature on Black self concept and the Black family shows a preponderence of that literature focusing on the "tangle of pathology" of the Black family. The rationale for this study is to dispute that literature by presenting
the Black family from a Black cultural perspective. Specifically, it is the intent of this study to view the Black family with a systems lens and from an African philosophical position in order to identify those structures and patterns of interaction which support survival and growth.

**Significance of the Study**

Although many authors (Billingsley, 1968; Ladner, 1971; McAdoo, 1977; Staples, 1976) have called for more research to be done on the Black family, case studies (except with families in treatment) are virtually non-existent. This work represents an original contribution to the field not only because it investigates the survival processes of Black families from a Black perspective but also because it represents a combination of disciplines brought together for the purpose of understanding the context of the Black family. Since this study is multidisciplinary, this work has implications for education, sociology, anthropology and especially psychology.

Additionally and perhaps most importantly, this research provides some working hypotheses which will be meaningful to the researcher and other social scientists both on a theoretical and a practical level. Theoretically, the research provides some working hypotheses which will be of major significance to the researcher in the future. Practically, the research will influence the direction of the researcher's therapeutic work in the Black community.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate, using a case study approach, the interaction patterns in two Black families which serve as a source of support for selfhood.

Emphasis in the field study was on determining patterns of interaction which aid the family in its day-to-day survival and negotiations with a largely racist society. Family systems thinking was used as the lens which provided focus for this investigation. The two Black families participating in this study were selected on the basis of responses to a focused interview (see Appendix B), according to the criteria identified in the Design of the Study. This study was designed to identify the interactional basis of selfhood and to generate hypotheses for future study.

The following general questions served as organizers for observations: (1) What does the family do that allows them to maintain selfhood in the face of everyday stress? (2) What are the family's strengths which provide security for it's members? (3) How are Black values transmitted? (4) Do roles and functions (family organization) differ from traditionally construed roles? How? (5) How do roles and functions change under extreme stress?

An underlying assumption of this study is that the Black family has maintained strength in the face of incredible adversity (Ladner, 1971; Staples, 1978). This is particularly true of the poor Black family who has been the focus of much of the negatively connoted research.
Method

Available data that is relevant to this study on the Black family are scarce. A case study approach was used for this study because it is the most appropriate method for obtaining a true and comprehensive picture of the unit studied (Barr, et al., 1953; Sellitiz, et al., 1951). It seeks to reveal processes and the interrelationships among factors that condition these processes. Further, the case study method is used for the formulation of generalizations by accumulating and arranging in natural order, a culturally oriented record for the purpose of developing hypotheses (Glazer and Strauss, 1965; Good, 1963).

The field work portion of the study was divided into three phases: (1) selection and training of the research associate; (2) selection of the two families through a focused interview; and (3) a case study of the two selected families. The research associate assisted the researcher in the intricate procedure of contacting families for participation in the study. This associate was well known in the community and provided the researcher with initial credibility and entry into the families' personal lives.

Two families were selected to participate in the case study from a randomly selected group of ten families living in Brownstone Center* in Hartford, Connecticut. A focused interview was conducted with the ten families to identify those families who have shown originality and adaptability when encountering extraordinarily stressful situations.

*Brownstone Center is a fictitious name used to protect the families who participate.
The case study consisted of participant observation for a period of two months. Participant observation means that the researcher was known to the family as a researcher. The researcher participated in the activities of the family in order to understand their context.

Each session was audio and/or video tape recorded. Assessment of the family includes a structural assessment (Minuchin, 1974), a genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976), problem solving tasks (Minuchin, 1974; Nobles, 1976), and non-directive observation and interview. A final interview was conducted by the research associate to determine the effect that the researcher had in the family and to determine the extent to which the picture of the family presented to the researcher was a true one.

Conscious efforts were made to reduce researcher bias through the introduction of a research associate who conducted initial interviews without knowledge of the entire research project. The research associate also debriefed the two case families to insure the the researcher did not pose a disruptive influence on the family and to determine that the family system has remained unchanged in any significant way, despite the presence of the researcher.

**Delimitations of the Study**

Glazer and Strauss (1965) regard qualitative research—whether utilizing observation, intensive interviews, or any type of document—"as a strategy concerned, with the discovery of substantive theory, not feeding quantitative researches" (p. 5). The purpose of this
research is not to elicit generalizable concepts but rather to generate hypotheses for future use. Hypotheses were generated in several areas based on the assumptions outlined in Chapter II. These areas include: the nature of the Black family as a product of African heritage and a Black value system; the nature of selfhood as it aids these families and individuals to survive; behavioral/value manifestations which may conflict with mainstream behavioral/value manifestations; and implications of the study on family therapy theory and practice.

**Definition of Terms**

**Adaptability**

An element of a Black cultural perspective. This is the ability to survive on a day-to-day basis by doing that which is appropriate for the situation (Staples, 1976).

**Boundaries**

In families, generally referring to the separating line between generations of individuals. Well defined but flexible boundaries are generally equated with health, while rigid boundaries are seen as pathological. Violations of these boundaries result in cross generational alliances and/or enmeshed relationships (Minuchin, 1974).

**Disengagement**

A transactional style of families or their subsystems, which is characterized by very firm boundaries. This style is functional unless carried to the extreme in which very rigid boundaries prevent loyalty,
support, and interdependence when needed. There is a tolerance of a wide range of individual variations in behavior in its members (Minuchin, 1974).

Empathetic Understanding

An element of a Black cultural perspective. This is a non-verbal level of understanding that Blacks have a common, shared history of oppression in the United States regardless of class or individual circumstances (Foster and Dixon, 1971).

Enmeshment

A transactional style of families or their subsystems in which members tend to be undifferentiated, close and diffuse. The boundaries between members are blurred. A heightened sense of belonging gained by sacrificing or discouraging autonomy. The behavior of one member immediately affects others, and stresses in an individual member reverberates strongly across all boundaries and subsystems (Minuchin, 1974).

Family

For the purpose of this study, a family is understood to be any group of people within the same household with at least two generations. At least one child must be over the age of six to participate verbally and all family members must consider themselves Afro-American, Black, Negro, or colored. It is assumed that the family functions as an organization existing for the support, nurturance, regulation and socialization of its members (Minuchin, 1974).
Functional Family

A family which is able to adapt to stress by evoking transactional patterns to meet current demands (Minuchin, 1974).

Genogram

Described by Guerin and Pendagast (1976) as a structural diagram of three generations in a family. In using the genogram, the researcher asks for names and ages of each person with dates of marriage, births, deaths and divorces. Location of each person is acquired with frequency and type of contact established. Finally, information regarding toxic issues is gathered as well as significant events in the life of the family which have contributed to the shaping of relationships within that group. The rationale for this history taking is that it may elicit important issues that might otherwise not be brought up.

Group Identification

An element of a Black cultural perspective. A sense of the individual subordinate to the group (Staples, 1976). It is epitomized by the philosophical position, "I am because WE are, and because WE are, therefore I am" (Nobles, 1972).

Humanism

An element of a Black cultural perspective. This element is seen in an emphasis on people over things. It is the value which supports optimism in the Black community and the belief that justice will prevail ultimately (Foster and Dixon, 1971).
Mainstream

Views which represent the values, race and class interests of the predominant group in United States society (Braginsky and Braginsky, 1974). Other authors (Ladner, 1971; Staples, 1971) term this white middle class values. The two concepts will be used interchangeably in this work.

Mutual Aid

An element of a Black cultural perspective. Mutual aid is a cooperative sense often seen in the provision of shelter and food to friends and family who have recently migrated from the South or who are facing some other crisis. It can also be seen in the day-to-day exchanges of help between neighbors (Staples, 1976).

Oppression/Paranoia

An element of a Black cultural perspective. This is the healthy degree of paranoia/suspicion that Blacks have when dealing with whites, and emanates from a highly developed sensitivity to danger. Failure to recognize this element is a denial that Blacks live in an oppressive environment (Foster and Dixon, 1971).

Selfhood

The ability to survive in an openly hostile and anti-Black environment through the development of behavior patterns and coping mechanisms which address the stress and provide alternatives for effectively dealing with problems and insuring the ability to function. This ability arises from a pre-existing culture and value system which
has its roots in Africa. Key elements of this value system include: group identification, empathetic understanding, oppression paranoia, high value placed on children, maintenance of strong kinship bonds, mutual aid, adaptability, humanism, racial loyalty, spirituality, and encouragement of strength in women (Boykin, 1977; Foster and Dixon, 1971; Ladner, 1971; Nobles, 1976; Staples, 1976).

Structural Assessment

According to Minuchin (1974), a structural assessment consists of six main categories which focus on family organization and boundaries, flexibility and capacity to shift alliances, coalitions and subsystems when necessary, family developmental stage, enmeshment and disengagement, current sources of stress and support, and how symptoms are system maintaining. For the purpose of this study, the structural assessment will be used to determine the current status of the family rather than as an assessment for treatment purposes. The author will not address symptoms.

Summary

The Black family has received considerable attention in the literature focusing on so-called pathology producing qualities. The purpose of this study is to question that literature and to offer another view of the Black family's functioning. The pivotal assumption for proceeding is that there must be explanations that account for Black survival despite public policy and citizen action intended to threaten that survival. When a people face incredible adversity and survive,
the explanations of how they manage this must be positive. This view provides a framework for the exploration of the strengths needed to survive. The study addresses the positive qualities of Black families but does not intend to ignore or deny the realities of racism and economic exploitation on Black life. As this is a relatively unexplored area, case study was used to discover hypotheses which could be tested in later work. The purpose being, not to "prove" anything but rather to open up previously undiscovered areas for the development of substantive theory.

Chapter II reviews the literature which presents the author's underlying assumptions and a review of the Black family and Black self concept literature. Each of these areas is discussed from what is termed a negative bias and a positive bias perspective. General Systems Theory as it applies to families is also reviewed in Chapter II. Chapter III presents the method used to conduct the study. Chapter IV is the analysis of the data and Chapter V cites hypotheses that were generated with implications for family therapy theory and practice.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature often entails finding research in the field of interest and using that research as a "jumping off" point for the development of one's own research idea. The review is helpful so that the researcher does not re-create the wheel and to provide a context—a past, a present and some direction for the future.

This review presents this context, too, though in a somewhat different form. For this study to have meaning, the relationship of Black people to research in a white society must be discussed. Unfortunately, this discussion must be proscribed by economics—those of space and time—as this is not directly a document on the history of race in this society. What seems important, though, is that a framework be provided for understanding not only the author's initial position in approaching this work but also some of the specific grounds upon which the preponderant literature in the field will be criticized.

A review of the literature in any one area (i.e., psychology, anthropology, education, etc.) would not have provided enough of a platform to "jump-off" from in this research. As it is, this research project seems to be in an area where extremely little literature exists. Therefore, the review that follows represents the pulling together of many disciplines for the purpose of providing a context for the investigation. Also, the author believes that all disciplines overlap and are influenced by each other so that it is important to view a
subject from as many dimensions as possible.

The first section, The Underlying Perspective, is directed toward raising some of the concerns of all research, but particularly research that has been done on Black people. The need for self definition is discussed so that this groundwork can help to describe why the author would criticize the mainstream literature on Black life. Concerns with this research center around the notion that the bulk of research on Blacks can be considered colonized. The colonial model suggests that ghettos represent internal colonies in which people live whose goals, interests, values, and concerns are made subservient to those of the mainstream. The research done in these ghettos, by and large, reflects the goals, interests, values, and concerns of the mainstream rather than the people upon whom that research is conducted. The power behind colonized research is that science is seen as objective and as representing the one "true" reality. Attention will be given in this section to disputing the notion of science as objective and to discussing the evidence of negative bias on research that has been done on Blacks. After these ideas are developed, two ways for understanding how some of the bias in research occurs will be addressed, specifically from the ideas of victim-blame, a concept forwarded by Ryan (1976) and linguistic cueing, a notion proposed by Edelman (1978). Systems theory would suggest that one also inspect the systemic ways in which colonized research is supported by the larger system. This analysis is itself a

*For the purpose of this paper the term ghetto is used as the identifiable places where many Blacks reside. However, Black people constitute a colonized group regardless of where they live or work.
dissertation and is addressed only indirectly in this work.

Building from the foundation presented in the first section, the second section offers a critique of mainstream literature on the Black self concept. The self concept of Blacks is typically described as negative although within the field there is no clear definition of self concept. The third section then presents a positive bias view of self concept based upon the author's own formulation, selfhood. Selfhood is in the early formulation stages of development but it attempts to more adequately describe the Black self in terms of a Black value system.

The fourth section offers the negative bias perspective on the Black family. This literature characterizes the Black family as matriarchal and disorganized and attributes the failure of Black people in this society to the irretrievable breakdown of the Black family. The fifth section presents the Black family from a positive bias perspective and presents the literature that more closely represents the author's views on the Black family. Typically this literature focuses on strengths rather than on alleged pathologies, credits Blacks with a culture that has values and goals, and recognizes the larger context in which Black people must live their lives.

Finally, General Systems Theory, as it applies to family systems is explored in the sixth section. This area is reviewed not only because it provides a useful way to understand family patterns but because it encourages a contextual and cultural view of families. Tools from various family theories are used in the conduct of this research. These are outlined in Chapter III.
The Underlying Perspective--Views of Problems and Persons

This section briefly addresses several issues beginning with a statement of the need for self definition. The basis for this call originates from distortions of Black life that can be found in the mainstream literature. Other issues that are central to this section can be expressed thusly: a power relationship exists between the researcher and the subject/object of that research. The researcher decides what will be studied and how, then interprets and assigns meaning to what is observed. All of these decisions can be distorted by the cultural distance between the researcher and the subject but they are valued by the mainstream because they rest upon the notion that science is objective and that there is, in fact, "one right way" to view and respond to the world. Negative bias, then, results from a colonialist mentality that is naturally well versed in the "one right way" and that then produces research on Black people which is a caricature and which reinforces race and class interests (Blauner, 1972, 1973; Lewis, 1973; Levi-Strauss, 1966; Memmi, 1967). Two ways of explaining how this happens and how it can be noticed in research are provided through a discussion of Ryan's work, Blaming the Victim (1976) and Edelman's work on language and categorization which he terms linguistic cueing (1975). This entire section is used as a framework for critiquing and understanding the mainstream research and a platform upon which this research effort stands.
The Need for Self Definition

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more or less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master--that's all."

(Lewis Carroll, 1947, p. 196)

He who has power to define is the master of the situation.

Imposed definitions

The United States has a history of race relations which goes back at least as far as 1619 when the first slaves were brought in chains. Throughout the course of history, one can see an evolution in public policy and concurrently in social science. In fact, it is difficult to tell whether public policy molds the social sciences or the social sciences mold public policy, or more importantly, if this is even the correct question to be asking. Nevertheless, public policy and the social sciences have evolved responding often to the economic concerns of the times (Allen, 1969). However, this evolution should not be confused with change in the strict sense. It is what Watzlawick (1974) terms a level one change with the net effect of no change. Although one can see external changes in both policy and social science, the outcome for Blacks, who have been the recipient of the so-called changes, has been painfully repetitive. More often than not social science research has found Black people to be deficient in some way or
another and more often than not this research has been used to develop public policy and to explain why Black people continue to remain at the lowest levels of the social, economic, and educational ladder. Literally hundreds of variations have been produced around two basic themes which culminate in the continual debate over heredity vs. environment as the cause of Black "maladjustment."

Genetic definitions

Early in history, use of Scriptual authority was most often sufficient proof of Black deficiency. According to Genesis, Noah cursed his son Ham for seeing him naked, dooming all descendants of Ham to be servants of servants. Slaves were identified as these descendants using this Biblical proof as unquestionable. However, science became a much more prestigious way to prove Black inferiority. The rationale leaned heavily on presumed racial differences in anatomy and physiology. Proof in science came from many quarters. In 1840, Dr. Samuel Morton used white pepper seed to measure the capacity of crania from different races. He concluded that the brain became successively smaller as one descended from the Caucasian to the Ethiopian (Thomas and Sillen, 1974). Further, the 1840 Census Report was used to prove that Blacks living under freedom were more prone to insanity. Blacks were even prone to diseases which showed their psychological incompatibility with freedom. For instance, drapetomania was an exclusively Black derangement literally meaning the flight-from-home madness. In other words, the mentally healthy slave was the one who was content with his position in society.
Later the Social Darwinists, using Darwin's Theory of Evolution, suggested that various groups exist at different stages of biological evolution. The central hypothesis, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny meant that the development of the individual summarized the history of his/her race. Since the "lower (colored) races" had less to recapitulate, their mental development terminated early. Other theories and methods were also used as testimony to genetic definitions. These included the use of Freud's work on the interpretation of dreams to show that Blacks were "child-like," instinct psychology to show that Blacks had an instinct for servility, and the misuse of statistical and census data (Thomas and Sillen, 1974). And, even though the influence of genetic definitions gradually declined in the early part of the century, there are still modern Social Darwinists, like Jensen (Thomas and Sillen, 1974) who use performance on I.Q. tests as the means of proving the genetic inferiority of Blacks.

Environmental definitions

A different form of definition was needed to replace the genetic one. These variations center around the theme of environmental factors which place responsibility on the history of oppression and the early life experiences of the individual. Among the most significant of these concepts is the "mark of oppression," "cultural deprivation," and the "pathologic family." The first two of these is discussed here while the pathologic family is reserved for the second section of this review.

In 1951, Kardiner and Ovesey published their influential book which reportedly defined the basic personality of Blacks. According to their
thesis, the stress of discrimination had caused not only an inerasable mark but a deformity on the Black person's psyche. Blacks, they conclude, universally suffer from low self esteem. If any healthy Blacks exist, they are deviants from the "basic Negro personality."

The basic Negro personality is a caricature of corresponding white personality because the Negro must adapt to the same culture, must accept the same social goals, but without the ability to achieve them (p. 371).

Further, they found three traits in Blacks that were particularly characteristic: the conviction of unlovability, the diminution of affectivity and the uncontrolled hostility. These conclusions were the result of psychiatric interviews with 25 subjects, all but one had symptoms of psychological disturbance. Twelve of the twenty-five subjects received psychotherapy in exchange for their participation. They state the experimental control for their work as "our constant control is the American White Man. We require no other control" (p. II). Despite criticisms, this book has continued to exert enormous influence and is still cited as authoritative on the "Negro personality." Their influence was so farreaching that their conclusions have permeated the educational and psychological literature on Blacks up to the present (Thomas and Sillen, 1974).

Perhaps the best known variation on environmental definitions is cultural deprivation. In the 1960's, "culturally deprived" became a code name for poor Blacks. Developed by educators and psychologists, the premise of this theory was that the language, behavior, and thought of Blacks represented deficits that could not be found in the white middle class. The way to overcome these deficits, was to provide
experiences which would get them exposed to mainstream values. The assumption is that white middle class culture represent the norms by which all other people should be evaluated.

The shift from genetic to environmental definitions had important consequences. It meant a redirection of attention from overcoming the objective circumstances of poverty to altering the attributes of the poor. Thus programs based on public policy which resulted from the cultural deprivation theory (Head Start, Upward Bound, Compensatory Education) were developed with the assumption that the more exposure Blacks had to white middle class values, the more successful and adjusted (by white middle class standards) they would become. Mills (1963) states that the notion of the adjusted man implies that "he conforms to middle class morality and motives and participates in the gradual progress of respectable institutions" (p. 551).

What is clear after all is said and done is that both genetic and environmental definitions have failed to change the relative status of Blacks in the United States. Further, it is increasingly clear how the history of scientific justifications can be matched with political and economic history illustrating how closely these disciplines are interrelated (Thomas and Sillen, 1974). Sidney Wilhelm (1973) elaborates further on this interconnection by stating:

Throughout its history, White America adjusts its expression of racism to accord with its economic imperatives and modifies its myths of racism to take into account the shifting economic circumstances (p. 154-5).

In order to cast off these unwanted, imposed definitions, some Black social scientists have chosen another path.
Self definition

Although there is an extensive history of Black struggle toward self definition which can be found in slave narratives, speeches of freemen, poetry, literature and popular movements, the current impetus is carried forth, in part, from the Black Power movement of the sixties. Some Black social scientist's (Alkalimat, 1973; Boykin, 1977; Clark, 1972; Ladner, 1973; Parsons, 1975; Staples, 1973) having squeezed through the crack in the door of higher education, have come to question the genetic and environmental definitions and their variations. Currently within the Black intellectual community is a growing movement advocating self definition heralded most convincingly by two collections: Black Psychology (Jones, 1972) and the Death of White Sociology (Ladner, 1973). The essential position of this movement is the following: self definition is a reaction to and a revolt against the biases of mainstream definitions and it is a positive step toward developing definitions, concepts and theory which recognizes the culture and values of Black people. Ladner (1973) states:

It is important to understand that Blacks are at a juncture in history that has been unprecedented for its necessity to grope with and clarify and define the status of our existence in American society (p. 417).

And this growing necessity has led these Black social scientists in the search for a body of knowledge about Black life which can be useful in the survival and development of Black people. "End-use" then, is an important consideration of self defined research. Self definition also means that Black scholars will identify Black norms and values. Findings of mental or environmental deficiency are not
acceptable to the Black community nor are comparisons of Blacks to white norms. We can even find support for this from the National Academy of Science (Brazziel, 1973) who have suggested that researchers suspend racial comparisons on tests. Other authors (Blauner, 1973; Clark, 1972; Nobles, 1972b) have joined in the call for an end to this practice and encourage a re-evaluation of the basic position that the researcher must take in order to conduct a study that adequately portrays the group to be studied. The movement is still small but continues to gain support.

The need for self definition in research comes about as a result of the history of negative bias outlined above.

It is based on the assumption that mainstream research is colonized, that it is not objective and value free and that the negative bias with which most researchers approach their work does more to reinforce stereotypes of Blacks than make any changes in their condition.

Colonized Research

The colonial analogy

The Black community has been likened to a colony by many authors (Alkalimat, 1973; Allen, 1969; Gilbert, 1974; Ladner, 1973).

Gwendolyn Gilbert (1974) explains this concept by stating:

...blacks have equal constitutional rights and all the outward trappings of democracy. The reality is that the system of capitalism exploits the Black community, keeps it politically powerless and maintains this relationship most obviously through a system of institutional racism (p. 18).

Blauner (1972) elaborates further by describing four basic components
of colonization of the Black community. First, colonization begins with forced and involuntary entry. In the case of Blacks in the United States, this action took place with slavery and was continued through the practice of institutional racism. Secondly, there is an impact on the culture and social organization of the colonized people which is more than just a result of contact and acculturation. The colonizing power carries out policies which devalue the colonized's values. Despite these efforts Black values still live on.

The act of devaluing is most evidently accomplished within the educational system. Educators, having learned important lessons regarding either genetic or environmental inferiority, set out to "cure" their ghetto students of these deficiencies. The third basic component is that the members of the colonized group are administered by the colonizer. The idea of this component is that the ghetto is not only politically controlled by the democratic principle of "majority rules" but also controlled by the police, social workers and educators whose business it is to keep colonized people contained, both physically and mentally. Finally, the fourth component is that racism is a fundament of colonialism. That is, that there must be a belief in the inherent inferiority of the colonized and the farreaching power necessary to implement the first three components.

Against this backdrop, Blauner (1973) identifies the essentially inegalitarian character of the research relationship and its specially oppressive relation to people of color and their communities. This inegalitarian character is accentuated by the value differences between
the researcher and the researched. He suggests that the relationship between the researcher and his/her subjects resembles that of oppressor and oppressed because it is the researcher/oppressor who defines the problem, the nature of the research, and the quality of the interaction between him/her and the subjects of the research. Most research in the Black community has been particularly exploitative because researchers have not only ended up characterizing Blacks as pathologic but also have failed to solve any of the problems of poverty which the research was supposed to address. These researchers have often accrued status, wealth, and recognition as a result of their "exploits" with the poor.

For example, Oscar Lewis (1967) described the "culture of poverty" which leads to the so-called cycle of poverty. According to Lewis, it is an impenetrable cycle in which generation after generation is inculcated with a culture which fails to teach delayed gratification, conscious limitation of family size and all of the other values which help one make it in the middle class. Valentine (1968) in discussing Lewis' treatment of the "culture of poverty" indicates it as being more deterministic of behavior and more resistant to change than the conditions which create the poverty. Lewis' view has been used in support of policy which sidesteps the issue of poverty and focuses rather on trying to change a nebulous "culture of poverty." The study which Lewis conducted acquired him recognition and status in his field. He was able to influence public policy with his notions while simultaneously being reinforced and reinforcing such popular ideas as, "the reasons that they are poor is that they don't know how to save for the
future," or "if they'd just stop having all of those children," or "the reason they're poor is because they want to be, anyone can make it in this country if they try."

In this way, cultural colonialism denies value to the colonized's value system and world view and attempts to impose another set of values. Lewis' work could deny or ignore the values of various groups of poor people and create an interpretation of their poverty in terms which serve race and class interests. Denial of positive acceptance of the colonized's values occurs unless or until those values become part of the dominant group's context. Then it often is used as a double standard. For example, as Staples (1974) suggests, the notorious matriarchy is women's liberation in the white community; common law marriages have been redefined as heterosexual cohabitation; premarital sex which is used to identify Blacks as immoral and promiscuous, is for whites, part of the sexual freedom movement which creates for business a multimillion dollar "windfall."

The myth of objectivity

The assumption that colonized research relies upon most heavily is the assumption that science is objective and value free. This assumption gives a quality of ultimate and unquestionable truth.

In the struggle to become a "legitimate" science, the social sciences have patterned much of their research methods after the natural sciences. Within this world, the "scientific method" reigns supreme with its essential correlate: OBJECTIVITY. Implicit in the commitment to objectivity is the notion that a researcher can operate
in a value vacuum. The social scientist (and all scientists as some would argue) operates from what Butler (1968) termed "naive realism" in which it is supposed that the researcher is somehow able to step outside of him/herself and reflect neutrally on the world.

Many authors have discussed objectivity as a myth (Blauner, 1973; Kuhn, 1962; Lewis, 1973; Memmi, 1967; Roszak, 1969) with Ginsberg (1972) commenting that "the idea of science as an objective machine leading inexorable to the truth is fallacious" (p. x). Kuhn (1962) looked carefully at the history of science and contends that the progressive accumulation of "truth" in the scientific community is something of an illusion since each generation of scientists rewrite its textbooks selecting what is considered valid and leaving out the errors and wrong turns. Polanyi (1959) argues that there is no such thing as objectivity, not even in the physical sciences. Yet objectivity, whatever its epistemological status, has become a commanding lifestyle in this society. It is what Watzlawick (1978) terms the utopia of objective reality in which there is believed to be one reality, one set of objective truths.

Braginsky and Braginsky (1974) suggest that the very heart of psychology is a moral system. Thus, the psychologist must accept the role of scientist as moralizer. They state:

To be sure, the cultural values, mores and taboos that psychologists accept are couched in scientific jargon, appearing both objective and neutral. Yet, these values function within their systems: namely to control the types of observations and the truths and facts that are acceptable (p. 10).

Taken together the conclusion that arises from the issues enumer-
ated above is that the researcher's values are introjected on the research process, a state which Myrdal (1958) comments on in the following way:

It has been a misguided endeavor in social science for a little more than a century to seek to make 'objective' our main value--loaded concepts by giving them a 'purely scientific' definition, supposedly free from any association with political valuations (p. 9).

Negative bias and the research act

It is the assumption of this work that colonized research represents an a priori negative bias against the group that is being studied. The bias of the researcher has been discussed in several works (Caplan and Nelson, 1973; Lewis, 1973; Hyrdal, 1944; Ryan, 1976; Szasz, 1970) which indicate a preponderance of blatantly value laden research which hides under the guise of "science as objective." As early as 1944, Myrdal in An American Dilemma predicted the outcome of research conducted on Blacks:

Keeping in mind the actual power situation in the American nation and observing the prevalent opinions in the dominant white group, we are led, even by superficial examination, to expect that even the scientific biases will run against the Negroes most of the time (p. 1035).

The researcher's preconceived notions about Black people--specifically deviance from the so-called norms of white North American society--dictates the outcomes of social science research. For instance, Sherwood and Nataupsky (1968) examined biographical data of eighty-two psychologists who had conducted research in the area of race and intelligence. Seven key biographical items of researchers were found that could be used to predict research conclusions. Specifically, the
researchers who found Blacks to be innately inferior to whites in intelligence were those: who were the youngest of the sample when their research was published; frequently first born, third generation North Americans with parents who had more formal education than others in the sample; raised in rural communities as children; attained the highest scholastic records as undergraduates; and, in general, came from higher socio-economic backgrounds than the other researchers. They illustrate the lack of independence or autonomy of the researcher from his/her values and experience and the inability of his/her scientific method to exclude social forces from impacting upon the research project. Similarly, Edwards (1974) comments on the notion of bias when he states:

There is a process of selective perception caused mainly by racist cultural biases which prevent investigators from seeing and emphasizing results which contradict the Black stereotype (p. 42).

While it is very difficult to substantiate a researcher's unstated motives, it is reasonable to assume, from the examples above and from others that will follow, that there is much more operating in the research act than mere objective science. The presentation of issues in this section has used the colonial analogy as it's central thesis. The ghetto and it's inhabitants are similar to other colonies in that they are economically and politically controlled from outside. Also, the values and concerns of its inhabitants are seen and responded to as deficits that need correction. The colony is maintained through institutional patterns which contain the population, minimizing opportunities. Further, research is conducted upon the colonized population
which serves the race and class interests of the mainstream and does little more than provide or reinforce stereotypes of that population. This research firmly rests upon the assumption that science is objective and value free. This assumption has been disputed in this section and it is suggested here that research can either operate for the benefit or the detriment of the people being studied.

Understanding Colonized Research

Given the issues and concerns raised in the preceding sections, the question arises: how does one understand or identify colonized influences on research efforts? Although there are many ways to identify negative bias, the author has selected two ways for understanding this bias. Ryan (1976) clarifies researcher bias in a discussion of the dimension of "exceptionalism-universalism" as the ideological underpinning of two contrasting approaches to the analysis and solution of social problems. Edelman (1975) offers an analysis of language and suggests that a single word or linguistic cue can elicit a larger belief system. Discussion of these views follows.

Blaming the victim

In his book, Blaming the Victim, Ryan (1976) identifies two approaches to problem formulation and the interpretation of results. These approaches, he terms exceptionalism and universalism:

The exceptionalistic viewpoint is reflected in arrangements that are private, voluntary, remedial, special, local, and exclusive. Such arrangements imply that problems occur to specially defined categories of persons in an unpredictable manner. The problems are unusual, even unique, they are exceptions to the rule, they occur as a result of individual
defect, accident, or unfortunate circumstance and must be remedied by means that are particular and, as it were, tailored to the individual case (p. 17).

The universalistic viewpoint, on the other hand, is reflected in arrangements that are public, legislated, promotive, or preventive, general, national, and inclusive. Inherent in such a viewpoint is the idea that social problems are a function of the social arrangements of the community or the society and that, since these social arrangements are quite imperfect and inequitable, such problems are both predictable and, more important, preventable through public action. They are not unique to the individual and the fact that they encompass individual persons does not imply that those persons are themselves defective or abnormal (p. 18).

Ryan believes that blaming the victim can only occur as the result of exceptionalist thinking and sees it as an ideology for justifying a perverse form of social action designed to change, not society, but rather society's victims. He explains that this is not a process of intentional distortion (although it serves class interests), for most victim-blamers tend to be well intentioned, humanitarians who consider themselves to be moderates or liberals. Rather, it can be seen as the way in which an individual attempts to reconcile his/her self interest with the promptings of his/her humanitarian impulses. The middle class individual, realizing the existence of poverty, wants to do something concrete to ameliorate the conditions of the poor while maintaining the social system from which s/he accrues benefits.

Victim blame becomes the sensible solution. Attention can be turned to the victim and an explanation developed which describes what is wrong with the victim in terms of experiences in the past that have left wounds, defects, paralysis, and disability. This solution blinds the blamer to the basic causes of the problems being addressed and by
implication passes a resounding "Not-Guilty" verdict on society as the source of the problem.

Caplan and Nelson (1973) surveyed the first six months of *Psychological Abstracts* (1970, 44(1-6)), and found that 82% of the research on Black Americans was exceptionalist in its approach. They suggest that the "person blame" view serves at least five functions in the society. First, it offers a convenient escape from blame for the government and primary cultural institutions. Since they are not really to blame, anything that is done about the problem is seen as being exceedingly humane at the same time they cannot be held responsible for failure to ameliorate the problem. Second, control is gained over those being helped through manipulation of problem definitions. Third, such interpretations legitimize person-change rather than system-change treatment programs. Fourth, the loyalty of large numbers of the middle and upper class is cemented to the national structure by means of involvement in "socially relevant" occupations. Finally, "person blame" interpretations reward members of the middle class by flattering their self esteem for "having made it on their own" and concurrently encourages complacency about the plight of those who "haven't made it on their own." In summary, they state:

The major conclusion that can be drawn is that person blame interpretations are in everyone's interest except those subjected to analysis (p. 210).

**Linguistic cues**

Edelman (1975) describes a way of understanding a person's cognitive structure or belief system in terms of the language that s/he
uses. He states:

...that beliefs about social issues, the meanings of pertinent events, feelings about the problems, role definitions, and self conceptions are integral parts of a single cognitive structure, each facet of it defining and reinforcing the other facets (p. 4).

He believes that there are two predominant myths through which people explain everyday life and events. A "pattern one" myth involves seeing the sufferer as being responsible for his/her own plight while authorities try to help them and protect the rest of society from them. An alternative myth, "pattern two," views the sufferer as a victim of elites who benefit from his/her status with the social structure as basically exploitative in nature. Adherence to one of these myth's creates a cognitive structure that sees and interprets the world from very different positions.

Either myth can be evoked by a term which implies the rest of the cognitive structure without expressly calling attention to it. For instance, to explicitly state that the cause of poverty is the laziness of the poor arouses questions and doubts. But a casual reference to the "welfare problem" implicitly reinforces that "pattern one" myth. According to Edelman, the predominant myth in this society is "pattern one" and from this myth, social labels are derived and social problems identified. He elaborates:

The names by which we refer to people and their problems continue with remarkable potency and durability, to keep attention of authorities, professionals, and the general public focused upon the largely fictional rehabilitation the names connote and to divert attention from the counter-productive results of established policies (p. 13).

The resiliency of "pattern one" thinking is due to the way the
individual must cling to his/her self conceptions, that is, his/her role and status, powers and responsibilities, etc. which in turn, are justified through the "pattern one" myth. Further "pattern one" myths are reinforced by the fact that usually questions that should rightfully be political in nature are turned over to professionals or experts and labelled as non-political. Hence, psychiatrists reinforce the norm that cheerful adjustment to poverty or war is healthy while anger or despondency in the face of these political pathologies is sick. This decision is labelled medical rather than political which removes it from the public arena and, more often than not, places it in the realm of uncontestable fact.

An example can be seen in the work of Grambs (1965) who cites the Black family as the cause of poor self esteem in Black children. She characterizes Black parents by asserting: "the woman is typically aggressive and hostile; the man is hostile and dependent" (p. 19). The so-called unstable home provided by Black parents becomes the linguistic cue for a larger belief system, part of which can be seen as she states:

Often neither mother nor father is able to provide the minimum of affection and attention that an infant needs to grow into a person able to like himself and others, because, of course, his parents do not like themselves (p. 18).

Edelman further suggests that how a problem is named will involve different scenarios, each with its own facts, value judgments, and emotions. It is clear, then, that the Grambs' assumptions about the Black family dictated the type of data she collected, her analysis, and her results.
Comparison of linguistic cues and blaming the victim

For the sake of comparison, cultural deprivation, described earlier in the chapter, is discussed from a linguistic cue and blaming the victim perspective.

Cultural deprivation as a linguistic cue was developed by educators and psychologists (a psycho-educational response) to explain why Blacks don't do well in school and therefore remained poor (a political question). This cue can evoke a much wider belief system which includes such cues as negative self concept, disadvantaged, disorganized family, slum housing, unemployment, father absence, and inability to learn. Some of the underlying assumptions of this belief system are that: Blacks have no cultural values specific to the group but rather live in a world that is like a negative picture of the white world; that this deprivation, like deprivation of food or water, can be cured by injecting that which is deprived, i.e., culture; that education is the answer for moving great numbers of poor Blacks out of poverty; that early exposure to middle class values, material goods, experiences and language can stem the unwelcome tide of community and parental influence on the child; and, that whites represent a significant reference group for Blacks.

The resiliency of this cue stems, in part, from the fact that all of the cue words have been studied and proven by competent and respected professionals in the field. Each cue word is connected and interrelated to the others.

Similarly, Ryan (1976) discusses cultural deprivation and suggests
that there are no culturally deprived children but only culturally depriving schools whose operations and atmosphere need to be transformed. He states:

To continue to define the difficulty as inherent in the raw material--the children--is plainly to blame the victim and to acquiesce in the continuation of educational inequality in America (p. 62).

The ideas forwarded by Edelman (1975) and Ryan (1976) are extremely similar. A "pattern one" myth is very similar to the exceptionalist definition. Edelman, of course, focuses more on language as a means of identifying the prevailing cognitive structure. Ryan emphasizes that one continuously views the system or the arrangement of social organizations as the primary source of the problem. Ryan (1976) does suggest that understanding victim-blame comes from a careful inspection of the language, in the form of conclusions of the researcher.

Linguistic cues and victim blame themes will be developed in the critiques of mainstream literature on the Black family and Black self concept. They constitute the major frame for looking at this literature although method, definition and other issues will be raised. These two explanations provide some rationale for the continued findings of Black pathology even in the face of grave contradictions and are therefore valuable as a means of building a societal context around research efforts.

Summary

The first section, The Underlying Perspective--Views of Problems and Persons, has provided a brief overview of the author's initial
position in conducting this research. The need for self definition arises out of the overwhelming negativity of mainstream research on Black life. It represents a positive step toward a description of Black life which can be useful to the purposes of the Black community and people.

Mainstream research was identified as colonized as it serves to reinforce the race and class interests of the mainstream by characterizing Blacks as pathologic and unstable. This research maintains its staying power through the myth that science is objective. This idea is discussed and objectivity is called into question. Since the assumption of this work is that social science is not objective, then it is clear that the research will either represent a negative or positive bias toward the people that are being studied. The negative bias view would suggest that Blacks come from a position of weakness brought on either as a result of genetic or environmental defects. This view has an eye toward how to improve their lot by ameliorating the defect. The positive bias view would suggest that Blacks come from a position of strength, having values and beliefs which support them in the face of adversity. Further, positive bias research would suggest that the problem is patterns of institutional racism rather than group defect.

Two ways of understanding negative bias were presented from the work of Ryan (1976) and Edelman (1975). These two views were compared and will be used as a frame to criticize mainstream literature on the Black family and Black self concept.
The Self Concept of Black Children:  
A Negative Bias Perspective

The literature presented here serves to illustrate the point that Black children are often labelled as having a negative self concept despite the fact that there is no clear definition of the term, the method used to measure self concept is often poor, there is little empirical agreement, that Black children have negative self concept and that researcher bias can be clearly identified.

This section is organized to present the evolution of definitions of self concept in order to show the lack of agreement about the definition. The Clark and Clark (1947) study is discussed in detail since it is one of the most widely cited in the field. From this, self concept measurement and method is briefly discussed to point out the wide range of empirical definitions of the term and the high correlation between the method used and the finding of negative self concept. Finally, self concept and researcher values, emphasizing linguistic cues and victim blame is explored. If past performance is an indication of future behavior then it is clear that researchers will continue to test for self concept. This section provides an explication of the important areas of concern in the field and serves to justify other ways of understanding the Black self which may be more useful to Black people.
Self Concept: Theory and Practice

Self concept defined

Ancient civilizations reflected on the self but it was the Greek thinkers who attempted a detailed definition.¹ Their discussion prompted thinkers (Hobbes, Mill, Descartes) to focus on questions such as the distinction between the self and the mind, understanding the existence of the mind, the nature of human experience and the nature of experiencing the self (Gergen, 1971).

However, self esteem did not gain central importance in the field of psychology until William James' (1890) work identified three domains of the self: the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. He defined the self as the "sum total of all that a person regards as I, the knower, and me the self that is known" (p. 292). For him, self esteem was determined to be the gap between what we do and what we aspire to do, rather than the actuality of success.

C.H. Cooley (1902) expanded James' social self view, conceptualizing the "looking glass self" which emphasized the importance of

¹According to available information, the Greeks are attributed with being the first to work out a definition of self. Two things come immediately to mind in this regard. The first is that Western academicians tend to assert that the beginning of "civilization" was with the Greeks, largely ignoring the civilization and countless unexplained, highly technical phenomena of the Egyptian period and almost completely ignoring any of the African civilizations; the second issue which is directly connected to the first is that Western scholars have not learned Arabic or other ancient languages so that most of the ancient documents are still untranslated. The information contained in these documents may show thinking about the self prior to the Greeks. Surely, any assertion that the Greeks were first is suspect in light of the overwhelming proof of numerous distortions in Western versions of history.
environmental influences. The central aspect of his work was the assumption that a fundamental unity existed between mind and society. Society and mind were considered aspects of the same whole and suggested that just as there is no society or group that is not a collective view of persons, so too, there is no individual who may not be regarded as a particular view of social groups.

In *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), George Mead further developed Cooley's social interactionist work. He suggested that the self was essentially a social process within the individual, involving two analytically distinguishable phases—the "I" and the "me." Mead felt that the definition of one's self as a specific role-player in a given relationship was accomplished by recognizing and sharing the meanings and values that others have. He saw the "me" as representing the incorporated "generalized other" within the individual. The way one perceived the "me" constituted the "I."

The phenomenological approach advanced the proposition that the way the individual perceives stimuli is the primary determinant of his/her behavior (Combs and Snygg, 1949; Rogers, 1951; Wylie, 1961). The study of the self in the phenomenal sense refers to that which is in the conscious field. Phenomenology further postulated that the self concept was a pre-established entity and as such could be explored only through introspection.

The social-psychological theorists like H.S. Sullivan (1953) believed that the self system was organized in three substructures: the "good-me," "bad-me" and "not-me." These three self conceiving
structures serve to interpret and filter experience in such a way as to minimize anxiety. He saw the "not-me" as being out of conscious awareness and believed that the self system could be traced back to infancy and the relationship between the child and his/her mother.

The above mentioned approaches and definitions are just to mention a few. There are also definitions from the existentialist viewpoint (May, 1958; Tiryakian, 1968), the behavioral viewpoint (Cartwright, 1956; Gordon and Gergen, 1968), and ego psychologists (Allport, 1955) to name a few.

What is clear from this cursory overview is the inability on the part of theoreticians to arrive at an agreed upon definition of self concept. In fact, there are just about as many definitions of self concept as there are theoreticians writing about it (Wash, 1972). And to add to the definitional confusion, there is no agreement on the term that should be used. Achievement motivation, self concept, self, self esteem, identity, self image, ego, and self perception are just a few of the terms used to talk about the phenomenon. Some authors use these terms as equivalents, while others use them to indicate a part of it.

The lack of clarity about an operating definition is characteristic of the vast majority of self concept studies. Christmas (1973) states that studies of self concept start from an uncertain theoretical base which is clearly evidenced in the investigator's poor definition of theory and issues and the use of ambiguous terms. Baughman (1971) asserts that "Sullivan, Mead, Erikson, and others are cited so often
that we have come to accept their explanations of the origin of self
esteem not as hypothesis but as established facts" (p. 55). Lowe
(1961) also raises the issue of whether or not the self concept even
exists or is merely a creation of psychology to explain behavior.

The discussion will now move to a description of the Clark and
Clark (1947) study in order to show the foundation upon which many
other Black self concept studies rest. The Clarks, whose work still
impacts upon the scene, did not clearly define what they were seeking
to study, nor did they make the necessary empirical connections between
their "test" and its relationship to self concept (nor has any re-
searcher since them).

**The Clark and Clark study**

The example which follows will serve as a reference point for dis-
cussion of the serious issues which arise when one attempts to measure
self concept. The study conducted by Kenneth B. and Mamie P. Clark was
selected for review not because it is the worst (methodologically
speaking) but because it is the most widely quoted and serves as the
base upon which most other self concept studies rest. To say that this
study has had significant impact in the field of Black self concept is
to say the very least. Of the major studies reviewed by this author,
most of them recognize the Clarks' study and cite them as having
influenced their work.

The Clark study, conducted in 1939, was published in several parts.
The most famous and widely quoted is the Dolls test. Other techniques
presented in the larger study were: (1) a coloring test; (2) a
questionnaire; and (3) a modification of the Horowitz drawing technique. Their Dolls procedure included 134 Southern Blacks who had no experience in racially mixed situations (Hot Springs, Pine Bluff, and Little Rock, Arkansas) and 119 Northern Blacks in racially mixed schools (Springfield, Massachusetts). The subjects were presented with four dolls, identical in every respect except skin color. Two dolls were brown with black hair and two were white with yellow hair. Subjects were asked to respond to the following questions by choosing one of the dolls and giving it to the experimenter: (1) Give me the doll that you like to play with the best. (2) Give me the doll that is a nice doll. (3) Give me the doll that looks bad. (4) Give me the doll that is a nice color. (5) Give me the doll that looks like a white child. (6) Give me the doll that looks like a colored child. (7) Give me the doll that looks like a Negro child. (8) Give me the doll that looks like you. Questions one through four were designed to reveal preferences; five through seven to indicate a knowledge of "racial differences; and, eight to show self identification. The results showed that 94% of children could identify the white doll; 93% could identify the brown doll; while 72% chose the brown doll when asked to identify the Negro doll indicating (in the Clark's opinion) a clearly established knowledge of "racial difference." The results of responses to question eight, designed to determine racial identification, showed 66% of the total group identified themselves with the colored doll, 33% identified themselves with the white doll. They then divided the subjects in terms of three color groups: light, medium, and dark and found that
80% of the light children (what they termed practically white) identified themselves with the white doll, 26% of the medium children (light brown to dark brown) identified with the white doll, and 19% of the dark children (dark brown to black) identified themselves with the white doll. They also found that the Northern subjects misidentified more than the Southern subjects, and that the majority of Black children preferred the white doll (questions 1-4) but that this preference decreased from age four to seven. The Clarks drew no other conclusions nor made any general statements about the results of their findings.

Some comments and questions immediately jump out from this study. For instance, since it is not stated, it must be assumed that this was not a random or a matched sample. This raises a methodological issue.

Light skinned (almost white) children picked the white doll significantly more than dark skinned children. Is it possible that it is because the white skin color more closely matched their own? The Clarks themselves raise this issue in "Skin Color as a Factor in Racial Identification of Negro Preschool Children (1940)" when they refute Horowitz's notion of "wishful activity," that is, that Black children wish they were white. They state that the choice of white is more likely a concrete reality based on actual skin color, yet they fail to mention that possibility in this work.

Still another issue might be how often any of the children had seen a black doll or for that matter how that black doll might have looked. Finally, what is interesting about the Clark's studies is that
although they work from an assumption that the beginnings of race consciousness is a function of ego development and that racial identification is indicative of particularized self consciousness, they never seem to be equating this with self concept. In fact, their studies seem to be aimed more in the direction of formation of prejudice than at self concept. It is not clear at this point, when or how their work got translated into "negative self concept" but it seems clear that it is a quantum leap from the ability to make racial identifications to an inference of negative self concept. Clearly, no empirical connections have been made in this regard.

The discussion now turns to the issue of measurement and method in order that we can understand some of the processes and procedures built into the evaluation of self concept.

Self Concept: Measurement and Method

This section concerns itself with the way Black self concept has been measured and the variety of results obtained. Several studies are listed to give the reader a sense of the wide range of areas that are subsequently attributed to self concept. Then, a brief comment is made regarding method and outcome as described by Gordon (1974). Finally, a discussion follows which serves to indicate the negative bias view in the self concept literature. Connections are made to Ryan and Edelman's work.

Empirical studies

Empirical studies are as varied as the theoretical positions
outlined earlier. The Black child has been examined to indicate his/her incomplete self image (Coles, 1965; Rainwater, 1965) and the preference for things "white" (Clark and Clark, 1947; Prochansky and Newton, 1968; Rainwater, 1965). Further, data can be subsumed under two categories: cognitive and affective status and achievement orientation. Blacks have been shown to have high anxiety level (Palermo, 1959); inability to delay gratification, which is reportedly a critical factor in criminal and neurotic behavior (Mischel, 1961a, 1961b, 1961c); confusion of sexual identity and sex role adoption (Burton, 1961; Sclare, 1953); typically low average to borderline intellectual function (Gibby and Gabler, 1967); low achievement motivation (Mussen, 1953; Rosen, 1956) or unrealistically high aspirations (Boyd, 1952).

All of these are thought to be areas that can show self concept and all of these areas have shown Blacks to have negative self concept. Taken together, it becomes a fairly strong indictment against the possibility of not only having a positive self concept but of "making it" in this society.

Method

Although it is not within the scope of this paper to critique (in the strict sense) the methodological approaches used, a brief word about method as it indicates bias is important here. Clearly it could be asked how an effective method could be generated from an unclear definition of the phenomena to be studied. Aside from that, one could easily question the validity and reliability of Q-sorts, projective tests, interpretations of play, Rorschach tests, various self concept
measures, and Thematic Apperception tests, all of which purportedly serve as measures of self concept. One could also question the interjection of the researcher's values into the testing and interpretation phases of the study and the problems of comparing the under-class to the middle class since in many studies there was no concern for this variable.

Vivian Gordon (1974) completed an excellent study of the methodological issues raised by self concept studies and questioned not only the issues suggested above but placed several (84) studies done from 1939-1973 into categories based on the type of test used to measure self concept and the result the test obtained. She found that certain types of tests (Self Concept Scales) more frequently tended to indicate positive self concept of Blacks while other types of tests (projective, forced choice, etc.) tended to indicate negative self concept. The results could then be predicted from the type of measure used. It is interesting to note that the tests which depended most upon the interpretation and observation of the researcher were the most likely to come up with a negative self concept evaluation. Her results give indication that perhaps none of these evaluations provide an adequate data base on which to draw generalizable conclusions. Certainly there is not enough evidence to categorically assert negative self concept.

**Researcher values**

The event of values being injected in the research process can be clearly described in at least two circumstances. One is in the formulation of the problem; the other is in the interpretation of the
results. As stated earlier in this chapter, the kinds of questions asked predetermine the type of answers possible (Clark, 1972). It is the scientist's philosophy or cognitive structure, then which determines the kinds of questions s/he will ask. Consider for a moment the kinds of questions that could be asked by a researcher (Bender, 1939) who states as her premises in relation to the study of behavior as it relates to the self concept of Black children:

Two features which almost anyone will concede as characteristic of the race are (1) the capacity for so-called laziness and (2) the special ability to dance (p. 215).

These statements are obviously associated with the notion of genetic inferiority. What sounds much more liberal yet essentially rings the same as Dr. Bender's comments, is David P. Ausubel and Pearl Ausubel (1963) summarizing their assumptions about Blacks as:

Hence it would be remarkable indeed if these factors did not result in significant developmental differences in self esteem in aspirations for achievement, in personality adjustment, and in character structure (p. 109).

Needless to say, their overall finding was that Blacks have negative self concept because of their inferior caste position which is:

Marked by an unstable and matriarchal family structure, by restricted opportunities for acquiring educational, vocation- al and social status, by varying degrees of segregation from the dominant white majority, and by a culturally fixed de- valuation of their dignity as human beings (p. 134).

Even though they seem to realize the nature of the social structure that impacts upon Black life and one gets a sense that you could agree with most of what they say in the quotation that immediately precedes this, they qualify their statement by going on to say:

Before we can expect any permanent improvement in the
educational performance of Negro children, we must strengthen Negro family life, combat the cultural impoverishment of the Negro home, and enlist the support and cooperation of Negro parents in accomplishing this objective (p. 135).

They recognized the problems of the social structure and yet placed the responsibility for change on the Black family, thus vindicating the larger system from any culpability.

In this series of quotes, we can see fine illustrations of the views of Ryan (1976) and Edelman (1975). Here the linguistic cue may be laziness, negative self concept, or unstable matriarchal family structure but their cognitive structure becomes clear. The victim is held responsible for his/her plight and the focus of the "cure" is on him/her. One can see how the research questions could get slanted to bear out the researcher's assumptions. It is worth mentioning that much of their cognitive structure (i.e., disorganized families, poor child rearing practices, lack of culture, undeveloped language system) does not bear out under positive bias empirical test and field observation (Billingsley, 1968; Herskovits, 1958; Labov, 1973; Williams and Stockton, 1973; Young, 1971).

Another way in which researcher bias can emerge is in the interpretation of the results. Review of the conclusions of Black self concept studies show the "double bind" in which Blacks are placed. It appears that regardless of the criteria for possessing positive self concept, if Blacks score in the positive range, the results are interpreted to declare Black overcompensation or lack of reality based decisions.

It has been noted elsewhere (Arnez, 1972; Nobles, 1973) that there
is a preponderant emphasis on the negative self concept of Blacks. Upon what data is this conclusion based?

If we take a moment and agree (for the sake of argument) with the methodological procedure used by the Clarks, we note that 33% of the Black children misidentified their race and the conclusion that was later drawn was that Black children have a negative self concept. Yet one has to wonder about the 66% (1% had no response) who identified correctly and why comment was not made of their "positive self concept." It would seem that 66% would be a sufficient number to at least consider other possibilities than simply attribute the results to negative self concept.

Other authors (Brown, 1967; Prochansky and Newton, 1968) have chosen to focus on negative result even though their overall study had yielded no such conclusion. Brown (1967), for instance, compared the self perceptions of four-year-old under-class Black and middle class children. The children were asked to look at pictures of themselves and to describe the child in the picture by choosing words from a list of bipolar adjectives (happy-sad, good-bad, etc.). Each child was also asked to respond as s/he thought her/his parents and teachers would respond. In the subjects' response to how their teacher perceived them Brown reported that the greatest difference between Black and white children was on one bipolar pair Black children believed their teacher saw them as "sad" rather than "happy." However, on several other dimensions (i.e., stupid vs. smart; like to talk vs. not like to talk; liking the way his clothes looked vs. not liking the ways his clothes
looked) Brown found no statistically significant difference. Yet, he concludes that on each of these characteristics, the Black children more often than white children tended to believe that their teacher perceived them negatively, and therefore they had negative self concept.

Another so-called measure of self concept is achievement motivation and once again we can illustrate how the researcher's biases come out in the interpretation of results. Rosen (1956) has suggested that achievement is dependent upon three factors: (1) the achievement motive which provides internal impetus to excel; (2) achievement value orientations, which involve a concern for social mobility and deferred gratification, and (3) vocational and educational aspiration. Investigation of studies on one factor, vocational and educational aspiration, reveals some interesting results. Wylie (1963) found that Black children had lower self estimates on levels of aspiration for their school work ability than did white children, therefore as the logic goes, they had a negative self concept. Boyd (1952), however, had reported very different results on a similar study when he compared Black and white children. He found that Black children self estimated higher than did white children. He concluded that Black children had

\[\text{2It should be noted too that no effort was made to control for the possible reality of the situation. There was an underlying assumption here that Black children and white children are treated equally in the desegregated classroom. There is no way to account for the circumstance of the teacher who did perceive the children negatively. In fact, few studies deal with the reality of social conditions as they impact upon the child nor do they give credit to the child for accurately reporting their environment.}\]
overcompensated because of inferiority feelings and had unrealistically high aspirations, therefore they too had negative self concept.

The Clarks, in a 1950 study of 160 Black six- and seven-year-olds, found far less evidence of identification with the white majority when using a coloring task procedure. Even at age 5 (which scored the lowest on their 1939 study), 80% identified themselves by coloring the boy or girl correctly on the basis of their own skin color; at age six, 85% identified correctly; at age seven, 97% gave the appropriate identification. Yet, despite the results, the conclusion was that the task was concrete so that the child was committing him/herself to paper and was therefore forced to contend with the reality of who s/he was. By implication this means that although the children responded correctly, they did so because they had no other option and that if the option did exist, they would have chosen to be white.

The kind of "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation that is created by these studies becomes fairly obvious. That Blacks must possess a negative self concept is borne out by the fact that no matter what the criteria for having a positive self concept at the outset of the study, if the Black child scores "positively," the researcher simply interprets this manifestation in a negative way (Nobles, 1972b).

Conclusion and Summary

Significantly there have been no conclusive results in the nearly forty years since researchers began testing Black self concept. In seven of the most recent duplications of the Clarks' Doll test, five studies either supported or somewhat supported the Clarks' results
while two studies completely rejected the Clarks' findings (Gordon, 1974). Replications of other studies have shown the extremely low test-retest reliability. The studies fall into three categories based on their findings: those who find negative Black self concept (Ausubel and Ausubel, 1963; Gibby and Gabler, 1967; Kvarceus, 1965); those who find no difference between Black and white self concept (Coleman, 1966; Greenwald and Oppenheim, 1968; Shuman, 1968); and those who find positive self concept in Black children (Hodgkins and Stakenas, 1969; Ladner, 1971; Soares and Soares, 1969, 1970). Despite this obvious discrepancy in results, there has been a concentrated focus on the so-called negative self concept of Blacks. The negative focus has been particularly influential in educational circles as it aids the institution in explaining why Black children fail in school and encourages them to institute "programs" to improve this negative self concept.

Baratz and Baratz (1970) state:

In summary the social pathology model has led social science to establish programs to prevent deficits which are simply not there. The failure of intervention reflects the ethnocentrism of methodologies and theories which do not give credence to the cognitive and intellectual skills of the child (p. 48).

Once again, it is appropriate to remind the reader of the discussion of colonized research as we attempt to make sense out of the "why" this research is the way it is. The role of victim-blame as can be identified through linguistic cues is extremely prevalent in the literature. The function that it serves remains complex and largely illusive for it seems somewhat simplistic to say that whites need Blacks to have a negative self concept so that they can have a positive
one (Clark, 1972). Surely, there are larger societal functions that it serves, but this is a question that remains to be answered.

The weaknesses in the research are manifold. They reveal a basic lack of underlying conceptualization. Generally this untheoretical basis is evidenced clearly in the investigator's poor definition of theory and issues and in the use of ambiguous terms. Self, regard, self acceptance as well as many others are used interchangeably, often indicating to one investigator a component of self concept and to another its equivalent. This lack of a clear construct level definition is a major weakness in most studies.

Further it was stated that one of the ways that researcher bias would emerge is in the way in which problems are posed and the basic position which the researcher takes regarding the group to be studied. The researcher's cognitive structure constitutes an important element when considering the kinds of questions that s/he will ask. One of the underlying assumptions upon which most self concept research is based is the notion of cultural deprivation. It was suggested that this starting point dictates a process which can usually only result in the finding of negative self concept and that the interpretation of results also show that no matter what criteria might be established a finding of negative self concept is likely.

From Self Concept to Selfhood:
A Positive Bias View

These are the "people" of my ancestors, therefore, they are my people, and will be the people of my children and their children. With members of other groups I may share political
participation, occupational relationships, common civic enterprise, perhaps even an occasional warm friendship, but in a very special way, which history has decreed, I share a sense of indissoluble and intimate identity with this group and not that group within the larger society and world (Gordon, 1964, p. 29).

The self concept of Black people has also been developed from a self defined, positive bias perspective. This section reviews that literature as a means of discussing the evolution of the concept of selfhood. Within this section four theoretical pieces are reviewed. These, once again, represent a broad range of definitions of the term self concept but they are also ways of viewing a Black individual from a different perspective.

The work of Wade Nobles (1972a, 1972b, 1973) which uses an African philosophical base to define and explain Black self concept is outlined. Then Edward Barnes (1972) and Cedric Clark's (1972) systemic view of self concept is combined and summarized, followed by the work of William Cross (1971) on the developmental stages of consciousness for Blacks. Each of these works are examined in terms of theory, implications for research, and limitations. They are then taken together and are discussed in terms of their failure to recognize the issue of multidimensionality or variable contexts as a force which impacts upon the self. Multidimensionality means the changes that occur in how one views his or her self in response to the situation.

The definition of selfhood is presented with some of the key elements of a Black value system. The definition of selfhood arises as a synthesis of the literature that is reviewed and the author's own knowledge and experience. Some of the elements are discussed in this
section using examples as illustration.

Wade Nobles

Wade Nobles (1972a, 1972b, 1973) began his work on the Black self concept using the assumption that the Africanisms which prevail in the Black culture could give indications toward how one could view the self concept. John Mbiti's (1970) work served as the major source underlying Noble's assumptions. Mbiti defines African philosophy as "the understanding, attitude of mind, logic, and perception behind the manner in which African peoples think, act, or speak in different situations of life." This philosophical definition implies what Nobles terms the ethos or common operating principle. The ethos, as Nobles describes it, is centered around two major philosophical underpinnings. They are: (1) the survival of the people, and (2) being one with nature, which can be compared with the European world view that is tempered by (1) survival of the fittest and (2) control over nature. The consequence of these two very divergent world views is, in essence, a clash of values.

For the European, the emphasis is on competition, individual rights, independence and separateness which manifests itself in psycho-behavioral modalities which overemphasize individuality, uniqueness, and difference. The African world view produces another set of values and customs which are characteristically reflective of cooperation, collective responsibility, and interdependence. Psycho-behavioral modalities consistent with the African world view emphasize commonality, groupness, and similarity.
It is Nobles' position that African psychology is rooted in the nature of Black culture. Consequently, he views the understanding of Black psychology from an African base which includes African assumptions and must incorporate African based analyses and conceptualizations. With this he proposes the notion of the "extended self" which by philosophical definition is the "we" instead of the "I." The conception of the "we" results from reflecting that one's self definition is dependent upon the definition of one's people. Nobles (1972b) states:

The people definition TRANSCENDS the individual definition of self, and the individual conception of self EXTENDS to include one's self and kind. This transcendent relationship (that between self and kind) is the "extended self" (p. 21).

The cardinal point, therefore, is the belief that "I am because We are, and because We are, therefore I am" (p. 20). Nobles believes that Black self concept will never be fully understood until the African in us is recognized.

Critique

Mathis (1978) indicates that the assumption of African cultural influences in contemporary American society is not easily demonstrated. However, Nobles' theoretical work presents interesting conceptions about studying Black self concept that need to be seriously considered. Unfortunately, this theoretical position on self concept is as far as he goes. While he recognizes the considerable methodological task of testing his hypotheses, which is only made the more difficult by the fact that Blacks in the United States are caught between two different
philosophical positions (i.e., African and Euro-American), he gives no indication about how to proceed with the testing.

Use for this study

This study is in agreement with Nobles' assumptions regarding the presence of African cultural tradition in Black America and recognizes the notion of collectivity as an essential concept in the understanding of the self concept of Blacks. This Pan-African perspective liberates the study of Black life from the domination of white referents and focuses on cultural forms. It is the intent of this study to use previously identified cultural forms as guideposts for observation.

Edward Barnes and Cedric Clark

These authors are cited in the same section as they both begin at the same starting point. Clark suggests that the core of the Black experience which is clearly differentiated from the core of white experience is slavery. For him, it is this experience which shaped the mentality of the Black American. He compares Black Studies and the Study of Black People to the wave and particle theories of light in physics. If the physicist's hypothesis is that light is a particle, s/he will ask a set of questions which also preclude acquiring answers to a different set. Similarly, another physicist hypothesizes that light is wave and poses a different set of questions which leads to a different set of answers. His work is based on the assumption that most interpretations of Black behavior have been of the "particle" variety with questions being generated around the theme of heredity vs.
environment. His view is that which differentiates Black Studies from the Study of Black people in the effort to promote the reality of "wave" theory. He suggests that it is possible to take this positive approach to Black behavior without necessarily advancing a negative approach to white behavior. However, he further suggests that this would be particularly difficult with those areas of Black-white interaction which are apparently governed by a dialectical process. Self concept is one of those areas which, at least in the mainstream literature, appears to be either/or. In order for whites to have a positive self concept, Blacks must have a negative one.

He presents General Systems Theory as a framework with which to look at self concept and draws comparisons between it and traditional African cosmology. The main connections he found are the African philosophical notions of interdependence and the Oneness of Being as compared with General Systems Theory proposition of circular and the interrelatedness of persons. In addition, the notion that the whole is more of the sum of its parts also relates to the African philosophical position of Oneness of Being. Unfortunately, he makes no suggestions regarding the method needed to study his theory.

Edward Barnes also begins by proposing the use of General Systems Theory as he posits that we must understand the extent to which human behavior is generated by social context. He sees Blacks as a "highly complex, heterogeneous, diverse people" (p. 174) and the Black community as contributing to the Black child's self concept. Thus his perspective emphasizes the interdependence of the child and family with
other levels of society. He suggests that analysis of communication is the appropriate methodological approach and he identifies three levels of communication: (1) action, which is the content of the message and the occurrence of events in a regular fashion; (2) transaction, which involves a unidirectional channel of communication. He identifies this as the level of cause-effect and indicates that most self concept investigations occur on this level; and (3) interaction, which focuses on bidirectional channels of communication.

Barnes conducted a study of self concept using the action and transaction level of communication to determine the relation between Black consciousness on the part of parents and self concept on the part of their children. He found that parental involvement in the Black community and specific beliefs and attitudes towards Blacks was associated positively with positive self concepts in children. In regards to the interaction level of communication which he describes he states that it is extremely difficult to develop an adequate method for the study of interaction but that this should not "prevent our moving toward a new methodological perspective which stresses open ended, naturalistic, observational strategies" (p. 183).

Critique

Clark's work presents only a theoretical conception suggesting General System Theory as a starting point to formulate questions. Barnes offers a somewhat more elaborated notion of how to pursue a study. Although he recognizes and operates initially from system's thinking, the study he conducted was one based on trying to measure the
internal processes of the individual rather viewing self concept as part of the process of interaction. His study seems to ignore the circularity which he initially suggests and turns instead to a measure of linear cause and effect. This may be due to his stated inability to conceptualize a sound means of measuring circularity which appears to be rooted in his preference for quantitative rather than qualitative research.

Use for this study

This study will utilize General Systems Theory as it appears in the family therapy literature. The focus of this study will be on what Barnes identified as the interaction level of communication within the family. The Barnes and Clark articles suggest that other Black scholars have begun to use General Systems Theory as a means of understanding Black life. Further, Clark makes the important connections between General Systems Theory and African philosophy which, by implication, justify and make consistent its use in this study.

William Cross, Jr.

William Cross, Jr. (1971) formulated a theory of the Negro-to-Black conversion experience. Within this model the Black person goes through five stages which he characterizes as "the road to psychological liberation under conditions of oppression" (p. 267). The stages consist of:

1. Pre-encounter--a stage characterized by the person who believes that the assimilation-integration paradigm is the only model for cohesive race relations and who has attempted to incorporate the white
value system; 2. encounter--this stage is generally entered when some verbal or visual event shatters the person's current feeling of her/himself. The encounter stage has two steps: first, experiencing the encounter, and second, beginning to reinterpret the world in light of the encounter; 3. immersion-emersion--in this stage the person immerses him/herself in Blackness. Everything of value must be Black. At this stage confrontation, anger, and hostility towards whites is evident. The second half of the stage is emersion, as the person rises out of the immersion and becomes less reactive, more incorporated and more aware; 4. internalization--at this stage the person may be involved in some non-productive options--disappointment and rejection or continuation and fixation at Stage 3. However, if these do not occur, the person begins to internalize and incorporate aspects of Stage 3 into his/her self concept; 5. internalization-commitment--this stage is what Cross suggests as self actualization for Blacks. Not only has the person moved along the internalization process but has committed him/herself to a plan of action and defines change in terms of the masses of Black people rather than the advancement of a few. Her/his actions are characteristically pro-Black rather than anti-white.

Cross and his associates have done considerable research on this theory. Cross' (1977) published results show significant indicators which connect test results to the stages he describes. J. Milliones (1977) has also developed a Black consciousness instrument based on Cross' theory which can predict the stage the individual is on. Interestingly, he is beginning to look at autobiographies of Blacks to
determine how individuals went through the various stages. Cross' work combines both a theoretical position with a methodological approach for testing it.

Critique

Several issues arise from this work. While it seems logical that consciousness may be part of one's identity Cross, like the Clarks in their time, makes no empirical connections between the two. His work has been developed and tested with college students and consequently one has to wonder about its applicability to the vast numbers of Black people who have never been near a college or university. It could be argued that there are those Black people who survive with dignity without ever experiencing any of the stages that Cross describes. In some senses, it is an elitist theory similar to that of Maslow's self actualization theory (Braginsky and Braginsky, 1974), in that it is clear that only a very few people can ever really achieve Stage 5. Finally, Cross does not address the possibility of fluctuation or regression to other stages based on context.

Use for this study

Although on some level, Cross' ideas are philosophically appealing to the author, it is felt that they represent a linear categorization structure which attempts to reduce complex phenomena into understandable units. This violates the systems notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The concerns mentioned in the critique above also influenced the author's decision not to use the work of
Cross. Therefore, Cross' theory will not be used for the purposes of this study.

Overall Critique: The Multidimensional Perspective

The work of Nobles, Cross, Barnes and Clark represent a departure from the traditional approaches to self concept. This is mainly evident in their assumption of the strength of Black people. Nobles' notion focuses on the carry-overs from African culture and suggests that it is these cultural ties to Africa which mold and shape the Black concept of self. Clark and Barnes suggests the systemic view and advocate that research be done to understand phenomena rather than control it. Cross sees the person moving through several stages before clearly exhibiting the Africanisms which Nobles describes. What is clear in all of their works is the essential lines of compatibility. All feel that there is a core of experience which is exclusively Black and from that experience emanates the values and culture of Black people. Where they differ is how to view it and what experience has had the most profound effect. Nobles and Cross, it seems, would tend to look at individual persons and cultural elements while Clark and Barnes would look at systems of persons in context. What is apparent, though, is that their goal is the same--to provide understanding and information about the Black experience from a Black perspective.

What appears to be missing from all of their works is the impact of multidimensionality or variable contexts on the phenomenon of self concept. While Nobles, in a sense, addresses the cultural/historical self and Cross views the cultural/political self, Clark and Barnes look
at the systemic input. All of them seem to address their own piece of the "truth."

Perhaps as a result of the Cooley-Mead tradition in social psychology, researchers have been led to an underestimation of the complexity and subtleties in the cognitive distinctions human beings are capable of making. The multidimensional perspective would take into account the fact that people have different conceptions of their "self" based on the situation and the comparative reference group.

For example, a statement on the Tennessee Self Concept Test is "I am a bad person." In order for a Black student to respond to this, s/he must make many decisions. First, the semantic decision is "does this sentence really ask if I'm 'badd'?" Secondly, the situational decision is "does this mean at home or at school?" Thirdly, the relational decision is "does this sentence mean compared to my friends or compared to white kids or compared to who?" Clearly at any point, a decision could be made which would depict the individual in a less than adequate way. Consideration of the multidimensional perspective would lead to greater clarity in terms of identification of the situation and comparative reference group.

In addition the multidimensional perspective precludes the notion of a global self concept which remains static at all times. The notion of a global self concept, which in the case of Blacks has been related to color preference and internal/external control appears merely to be

*The semantic decision is choosing between the good-bad continuum or the Black English usage of opposites where bad means good.
the artifacts of methodology. It is therefore impossible to score a person on a scale of one-to-ten and have that number depict the person's self concept. The present study addresses the issue of multidimensionality through the use of family systems theory which indicates the primacy of the context as the determinant of behavior.

Selfhood Defined

The process of making sense of the discomfort with the negative Black self concept findings in light of personal observation to the contrary eventually led to the term selfhood and its definition. Several events occurred to contribute to this process. Being grounded in Black culture both academically and experientially, the author began reviewing the literature of Black self concept in light of Ryan's work (1976) on *Blaming the Victim* and then was introduced to the concepts of General Systems Theory in the writings of Clark and Barnes then later in the field of family therapy. Thus, the search began for an encompassing, expansive definition that could fit the situation.

As indicated earlier in the Chapter a considerable number of criticisms resulted from the review of Black self concept. Somehow it seemed that the notion of self concept, which implied an isolated and static construct, focusing on the individual, did not fit the Black experience. Some authors (Foster and Dixon, 1971; Hill, 1972; Nobles, 1972a, 1972b, 1973, 1974, 1976; Staples, 1976) had suggested that a Black value system emphasized the concept of groupness, the "we" that Nobles (1972b) describes. Therefore it seemed logical to search for a term that would more closely match this value.
Suggestions by other authors (Barnes, 1972; Clark, 1974) indicated that it was important to view the Black experience within the context of society using General Systems Theory. The contextual view forces a relabelling of behavior in terms of its appropriateness or functionality to the larger system. The term selfhood seemed to fit the required need. But, selfhood took on an even broader systems perspective than suggested by Clark and Barnes. Hence it recognizes the multidimensional (contextual) issue that seemed to be ignored in the earlier works. Since it is considered a circular rather than a linear construct, selfhood cannot be given a numerical value nor can it be considered positive or negative. Selfhood exists as it is supported by the Black family and community.

The author began from the assumption that Black people have a culture and values which are uniquely their own. Africa is the starting point. The experience there is carried on by the ethos (Nobles, 1972a,b) tempered and modified by slavery and oppression. The history of the race within this country led to the question of how Blacks had managed to survive at all, given systematic attempts at physical and mental annihilation. How could one explain this phenomena? It seemed evident that throughout history, survival values had to be passed down and clearly the most potent socializing force was and is the Black family. Robert Staples (1976) suggests that in recognition that the Black family has been a sanctuary which buttressed individuals from the pervasiveness of white racism and provided needed support systems that were unavailable in mainstream institutions, one should be concerned
with how the Black family promotes and maintains the emotional well-being of its members. Selfhood, then becomes an explanation or way of understanding this phenomena.

This leads us to a definition. Selfhood is the ability to survive in an openly hostile and anti-Black environment through possession of the flexibility to initiate behavior patterns and coping mechanisms which address the stress and provide alternatives for effectively dealing with it. This ability arises from a pre-existing culture and value system which has its roots in Africa. Key elements of this value system include but are not limited to: group identification, empathetic understanding, oppression paranoia, adaptability, high value placed on children, maintenance of strong kinship bonds, mutual aid, optimism, racial loyalty, and spirituality (Boykin, 1977; Foster and Dixon, 1971; Nobles, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976; Staples, 1976).

Elements of a Black value system

The reader is referred to Chapter I for a complete list of definitions of terms. However for the purposes of clarity, some of the terms are discussed in detail here. Inspection of the Black aesthetic tradition sheds light into the understanding of some of the elements of a Black value system. We will, therefore, turn to literature for this view. For instance, the term group identification (Staples, 1976) is exemplified in Black literature throughout history. James Emanuel (1971) in a poem called Negritude:

Black is the first nail I ever stepped on;
Black the hand that dried my tears.
Black the first old man I ever noticed;
Black the burden of his years.
Black is waiting in the darkness;
Black the ground where hoods have lain.
Black is the sorrow-misted story;
Black the brotherhood of pain.

Black is a quiet iron door;
Black the path that leads behind.
Black is a detour through the years;
Black the diary of the mind.

Black is Gabriel Prosser's knuckles;
Black Sojourner's naked breast.
Black is a schoolgirl's breathless mother;
Black her child who led the rest.

Black is the purring of a motor;
Black the foot when the light turns green.
Black is last year's dusty paper;
Black the headlines yet unseen.

Black is a burden bravely chanted:
Black cross of sweat for a nation's rise.
Black is a boy who knows his heroes;
Black the way a hero dies.
(p. 189-190).

Oppression/paranoia (Foster and Dixon, 1971) is a result of the sharing of experiences that occur when a Black person ventures out into the white world. It is a survival skill that is mandatory in order for the person to maintain psychological and physical integrity and reflects a health suspicion and distrust for whites. Naomi Madgett (1971) describes this value in The Race Question (For one whose fame depends on keeping The Problem a problem):

Would it please you if I strung my tears
In pearls for you to wear?
Would you like a gift of my hands endless beating
Against old bars?

This time I can forget my Otherness,
Silence my drums of discontent awhile
And listen to the stars.
Wait in the shadows if you choose.
Stand alert to catch
The thunder and first sprinkle of unrest
Your insufficiency demands,
But you will find no comfort.
I will not feed your hunger
Nor crown your nakedness
With jewels of my elegant pain.
(p. 196)

The notion of mutual aid (Nobles, 1976; Staples, 1976) is one value which immediately connects to Africa and the African concept of collectivity. Even during the slave period, slaves found creative ways to aid each other. For example, the field hollers of this period were used to convey important messages. Not only was the slave considering heaven when s/he sang "steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus" or "Another man don gon, another man don gon," but was also communicating that someone would be running North or that the Underground Railroad was coming.

Adaptability, too, is an important survival skill. It requires the ability to read a situation and play a part or behave in a manner that will keep you out of trouble. Clark (1974) suggests that this quality is one component of Black intelligence. He states:

1. Black intelligence itself in a decision to run zigzag down an alley (as opposed to straight) when a policeman pulls his gun on you. 2. The purpose of this behavioral manifestation is to increase the probability of personal survival (p. 14).

Adaptability can also be thought of as those behaviors that are appropriate with bill collectors, social workers, teachers or anyone whose intentions might be suspect. Paul Laurence Dunbar (1968) elaborates in We Wear the Mask:
We wear the mask, that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be otherwise
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but O great Christ, our cries
To Thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask.

Spirituality is, of course, evident in spirituals and gospel music.
It is within the spiritual that the Black value of optimism becomes
most apparent. Also, there are ties in the culture to other forms of
spirituality including voodoo, magic, and belief in ghosts. The popu-
larlarity of astrology in the Black community can be seen as a move toward
a spiritual cosmological level. Optimism can also be seen in many lit-
erary works. Despite the history of racism in the United States, Black
people still hold out hope for themselves and for this country. Often
this optimism is expressed in concert with the value of humanism, that
is the belief that justice will ultimately be at hand and that we, as a
people, will turn the other cheek in forgiveness. Claude McKay (1968)
writes in The White House:

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
and I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
To wear my anger proudly and unbent.
The pavement slabs burn loose beneath my feet,
A chafing savage, down the decent street;
And passion rends my vitals as I pass,
Where boldly shines your shuttered door of glass,
Oh, I must search for wisdom every hour,
Deep in my wrathful bosom sore and raw,
And find in it the superhuman power
To hold me to the letter of your law!
Oh I must keep my heart inviolate
Against the potent poison of your hate.
(p. 375)

Each example whether it can be traced directly to African values
or not is the result of a culture that has as its basic tenets flexi-
bility and resiliency. These two underpinnings account for both the
survival of the culture and the survival of the people in the United
States. The presentation of the values above was designed to give the
flavor of them through the aesthetic perspective. Selfhood has been
identified as a term which fits this value system and which represents
the person's ability to exhibit these behaviors as they are contextually
appropriate. The model of selfhood will be used as a means of de-
scribing the Black family system. Evidence of the cultural manifesta-
tions of selfhood will be identified through the various observational
techniques used.

The Black Family:
A Negative Bias Perspective

This section is written to review some of the major works on the
Black family that present a negative bias perspective. Robert Staples
(1974) suggests a four category system for understanding the research-
er's perspective on the Black family. These categories are: (1) pov-
erty acculturationists who are represented by the early writers on the
Black family. The two major writers in this period were W.E.B. DuBois
(1909) and E. Franklin Frazier (1939); (2) pathologists who are
represented by those who find the Black family as an aberrant form of white family. They indicated that it is the Black family that is the seat of pathology of the Black individual (Bernard, 1966; Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1970); (3) reactives who find that Blacks have essentially the same values as whites with no particularly positive traits (Liebow, 1966; Scanzoni, 1971; Willie, 1970, 1974); and (4) nationalists whose work has focused on the strengths and culture of Black families. In this work the nationalist perspective is termed positive bias and will appear in the next section.

In each of these subsections, the historical/political context of the period is outlined and the assumptions and findings of the writers in that category are discussed.

Poverty-Acculturationists

Early studies of Black families were done by Black researchers (DuBois, 1909; Frazier, 1939). This period was marked by several trends which impacted upon their work. Although the Reconstruction had ended and the South was returning to the status quo, many people still hoped that the emancipated slave could become a part of the American dream. Urbanization was having a significant impact on the Black community. DuBois, for instance wrote his book at the time of the Great Migration. This upheaval and transplantation of Blacks had significant impact on those early research efforts. The historical trend was a culture in the transition from agrarian to urban life.

DuBois is credited with giving birth to the systematic study of the Afro-American. In 1897, he conducted a study to determine the
social conditions of Blacks in the city. In 1909, the study was published under the title, The Negro American Family and is a study of Black family formation beginning in Africa and its transformation in the United States. He examined the mores, marriage patterns, home life and economic organization as it related to family groups of various social classes and geographical regions. Data was primarily based on U.S. Census data, literary sources and interviews. He made specific recommendations for social change based on this work. His work focused for whatever reasons, on the Black family as a disorganized unit. According to his autobiography (1968), DuBois had sought to make connections between Blacks in the United States and Africa. He began developing his notion of Pan Africanism and gave up his leanings toward integration. This author believes that his later "nationalist" stance and his eventual affiliation with the Communist Party with his subsequent exile from the United States in combination with his demand for social change encouraged writers from the pathology perspective to ignore his work.

The magnificent contributions that DuBois made to the study of Black life are not discussed here because they do not fit the negative bias perspective.

A generation later, it is E. Franklin Frazier (1939) who is most often cited as the pioneering scholar of the Black family. Frazier was a sociologist trained at the University of Chicago under Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. He presented selected historical events which he believed shaped the Black family--slavery, emancipation, reconstruc-
tion, urban migration and industrialization. He discussed the matriarchy and its downfall and delinquency of Black children as associated with mother employment, broken homes and poverty. He concludes with a description of some of the families found in various social classes in the Black community. This study was based on U.S. Census data, literary sources, and the author's personal observations.

It is important to note that two major forces influenced Frazier's work. One was his determination to refute Melville Herskovits' (1958) assertion that much of Black life could be traced back to African culture. The other was his commitment to the race relations theory of his mentor, Robert Park. Frazier's position was that African cultural patterns had been obliterated in slavery. He further viewed Blacks as an assimilation oriented minority and saw that female headed households blocked the ways for assimilation to take place fully. He believed that the stress of slavery resulted in a form of family he described as matriarchal, a pattern which was later reinforced by economics and social patterns. According to Staples (1971), Frazier revised his position on assimilation just before his death in 1962. Frazier writes:

The African intellectual recognizes what colonialism has done to the African, and he sets as his first task the mental, moral, and spiritual rehabilitation of the African.

But the American Negro intellectual, seduced by dreams of assimilation, has never regarded this as his primary task...

It is the responsibility of the Negro intellectual to provide a positive identification through history, literature, art, music and the drama.

3The Park race relation cycle involves four independent stages: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation (Mathis, 1978).
The truth of the matter is that for most Negro intellectuals, the integration of the Negro means just the opposite, the emptying of his life of meaningful content and ridding him of all Negro identification. For them, integration and eventual assimilation mean the annihilation of the Negro—physically, culturally and spiritually (p. 121).

Both DuBois and Frazier believed that the disorganization of Black families was the result of racism, slavery, and poverty. That is, they blamed poverty for family disorganization and insisted that something be done about the poverty. Frazier's work, however, was used as the basis of the next group, the pathologists.

The pathologists

The period of the pathologists was an era marked by uprisings in the nation's cities. The Supreme Court had ruled on the Brown case and the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing. In fact, it was during that time that Blacks were beginning to cite institutional racism as the cause of oppression and the Movement, in turn, was becoming more militant. The Pathologist (Bernard, 1966; Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1965, 1970) view provided evidence of the Black family qua criminal. That is, they believed that Black family instability was the heart of the problem for Blacks.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965), then Assistant Secretary of Labor, conducted a government subsidized study which forwarded the thesis that the Black family was responsible for the deterioration of the Black community. Just as it was easy to obtain funds to investigate cultural deprivation, so too, studies of Black family pathology were readily funded. Moynihan "proved" Black family disorganization with data from
Census reports. The categories in which the data fell included: illegitimacy and birth rate, female headed households or matriarchy, welfare dependence, failure on armed services tests, unemployment, delinquency and crime.

In the introduction to his work, Moynihan recognized that there were Blacks in the middle class and that this fact probably deludes the bulk of the nation into believing that the rest of the Black community was also prosperous. He suggested that this fact probably concealed the extent of the disorganization amongst the under-class. Therefore, his statements are to be taken to be at best an understatement of the severity of the problem. Although he identified the root of the problem to be with slavery and discrimination in employment, he shifted from those variables and left them to history.

Other authors have completed critiques of Moynihan's methodological approach (Billingsley, 1968; Hyman and Reed, 1971; Lewis and Herzog, 1971; Ryan, 1972; Staples, 1971; TenHouten, 1970) so that this area will not be covered in the review. Rather, Moynihan's words will speak for themselves. Based on the review which preceeded this section, his position should be evident.

A major section in his book is entitled "The Tangle of Pathology" in which he says that the Black community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which is a crushing burden on Black men and most Black women. Since according to Moynihan, the larger society is one where men are the leaders, the Black community is at a disadvantage because it cannot foster this leadership. The Black middle class wants to be like
the white middle class but because of patterns of segregation, it is
difficult for this stable group to get away from the unstable poor. He
uses this observation as the rationale for generalizing the statements
that he makes later:

They (referring to Black middle class) are therefore constant-
ly exposed to the pathology of the disturbed group and con-
stantly in danger of being drawn into it. It is for this rea-
son that the propositions put forth in this study may be
thought of as having a more or less general application. In a
word most Negro youth are in danger of being caught in the
tangle of pathology that affects their world, and probably a
majority are so entrapped (p. 5, emphasis his).

It is easy to conclude from this that most Black families are
pathologic and if by some miracle they aren't, it can only be because
they do not associate with other Blacks.

The weakness of the family structure is the matriarchy. The ma-
triarchal pattern reinforces itself over generations beginning with
education. Black women stay in school longer and attain higher levels.
The next step is, of course, in employment. Moynihan says that al-
though Black males outnumber Black females in the work force by 4 to 1,
Black women represent 3.1% of all females while Black males represent
1.2% of all males in white collar occupations. Upon presentation of
various other employment figures, Moynihan concludes that "the testi-
mony to the effects of these patterns in Negro family structure is
widespread, and hardly to be doubted" (p. 6-7).

Next Moynihan moves to "The Failure of Youth." In this section he
connects poor performance on I.Q. tests with broken homes and resulting
family disorganization:

The effect of broken families on the performance of Negro
youth has not been extensively measured, but studies that have been made show an unmistakable influence (p. 8, emphasis mine).

Further, he correlates doing well in school with father presence in the home. Since father's are not present in Black homes, Black males do not do well in school. He suggests that this is an impact on the Black youth which results in delinquency and crime. According to Moynihan juvenile crime is also related to father absence as is the inability to delay gratification. That the young Black male is alienated from society is evidenced by the unemployment rate which was 29% in 1965:

(the rate)...reflect lack of training and opportunity in the greatest measure, but it may not be doubted that they also 
reflect a certain failure of nerve (p. 12, emphasis mine).

Moynihan does not make any direct recommendations of what to do. He does suggest that the Armed Forces may be the answer. The reason Blacks were not represented in the Armed Forces was because they failed the entrance test. "It is not a question of discrimination" (p. 10). He asserts that the service is the only experience in which the Black is truly an equal but it also has other advantages:

...it is an utterly masculine world. Given the strains of the disorganized and matriarchal family life in which so many Negro youth come of age, the Armed Forces are a dramatic and desperately needed change: a world away from women, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority...(p. 11).

A key conclusion of Moynihan's is that the deterioration of the family can be evidenced by the increase on welfare dependency. However, the 1960's were a period of liberalization of welfare laws so that the increase could be accounted for in that way. Further, signs of deter-
ioration were the illegitimacy rates produced by the Census Bureau which showed whites to be at 3% while Blacks were at about 22%. As a way of explaining these data, one could cite the fact that there are racial differences in reporting illegitimate births, that premarital pregnancy more often results in marriage for whites, and that abortion is a more frequently used solution in the white group (Staples, 1971).

From all of this, Moynihan concludes "in a word: the tangle of pathology is tightening" (p. 13). He states that there is no one Black community, problem or solution and recognizes that not every instance of social pathology can be traced to the Black family. He believes, for example, that if organized crime was not controlled by whites in the Black community, there would be more capital accumulation and businesses.

Nevertheless, at the center of the tangle of pathology is the weakness of the family structure. Once or twice removed it will be found to be the principal source of most of the aberrant, inadequate or anti-social behavior that did not establish but now serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation (p. 5).

Moynihan's work was discussed in length here because it has had a major impact on public policy. Behavioral scientists, educators and others saw it as an official statement of the federal government (Staples, 1971). The only conclusion that could be drawn from this study was that the solution would focus on strengthening the Black family rather than dealing with segregation and discrimination. The Moynihan heritage is strong. It is evidenced in a wide variety of writings and even finds its place in the early writing of some family therapists (Aponte, 1976; Minuchin, 1967). For instance, Minuchin, et
al. (1967) terms the Black and Puerto Rican "delinquents" that he studied as having a "personality of poverty" which results, in part, in a confused masculine identity due to mother centered families, divorce, separation, and illegitimacy.

The family is a key mechanism for transmitting these attributes. Some of the failures of public housing for example ('old slums' vs. 'new slums'), can in part be accounted for by the fact that the 'personality of poverty' accompanies an impoverished family in its move from a rat-infested tenement into a shiny new housing project (p. 23).

Lee Rainwater (1965, 1970) sought to expand on and analyze the position Moynihan had forwarded: "we propose to explore in depth the family's role in the 'tangle of pathology' which characterizes the ghetto" (p. 116). Unlike Moynihan, Rainwater did not outrightly generalize his findings of massive family disorganization to all Black families but suggests that other literature on the Black family would lead one to believe that his findings were not limited to the families in his study.

Rainwater tried to show the relationship between cultural patterns and the failure of Blacks to take advantage of the few opportunities that arose in the ghetto. He cited promiscuous sexual behavior and illegitimacy as problematic and further suggested that if a male stopped bringing home money, the wife would withdraw her support of him. Joyce Ladner then a Black graduate student who participated in the study and wrote her dissertation from it, came up with very different results and interpretations. She later published her work which is reviewed in the Positive Bias Perspective (1971).

Rainwater also found that the Black family was responsible for
presenting Black boys with a male role model which emphasizes expressive-affectional techniques rather than the instrumental-goal oriented techniques of white males. Faulty role models along with negative self concept are the limiting factors for the Black child according to his model.

Jesse Bernard (1966) used Census data to trace the proportion of Black children born out of wedlock between 1880-1963. Through this, she attempted to give an account of the institutionalization of the family by Blacks. She indicates that Black families are a pathological form of social organization with two cultural strands. One strand is the "acculturated" strand which takes over Western norms and becomes part of the culture. This is the respectable strand with a strong connection to the Protestant Ethic. The other is known as "externally adapted." Mainstream norms are only minimally adhered to in this group who learn to manipulate and use the white culture rather than internalizing it. The matrifocal family is seen as an outgrowth of the failure of Black men to fulfill their parental role. The "externally adapted" strand is the predominant one in the Black community according to Bernard.

The pathologist perspective has also influenced underlying assumptions of much of the research on the social and psychological effects of the Black family on its members. This research has relied heavily on personality tests and clinical reports and has attempted to conceptualize the Black family according to some mythical model of the white middle class family. As previously stated, the notions forwarded by
the Pathologist group have had significant and farreaching effects on the study of the Black family. Although their work was often repudiated by other authors, the initial impact remains. The result is like that of being in a court room when a lawyer strategically says something that she knows is inadmissible. The judge states that it is out of order and orders the jury to disregard the statement but the statement has already been publicly made and therefore the "damage" has already been done.

As Staples (1970) says:

The myth of a Black matriarchy is a cruel hoax...the cultural stereotype of the domineering Black woman belies the existence of masses of Black women who constitute a defenseless group against the onslaught of white racism in its most virulent sexual and economic manifestations (p. 11).

Reactives

The reactives' or as Nobles (1978) calls them the victimization theorists' position developed in a period (1966-present) is similar to that of the Pathologists. Militancy in the Civil Rights Movement was much more evident. Black Power and Black is Beautiful were terms that were receiving considerable media, albeit negative, coverage. The Vietnam War was gaining momentum and the United States was in a wartime economy. Some authors in this period felt that they were responding to Moynihan's work and suggesting that if given a chance Blacks could be as good as any white. This group (Liebow, 1966; Scanzoni, 1971; Willie, 1974) argued that Black families were much like white families particularly when one controlled for their impoverished status and the history of slavery. Most agreed that illegitimate
children, permissive sex behavior, and female headed households were undesirable and that improved economic conditions would diminish the prevalence of these characteristics in the Black family. The reactive research depicts the Black family qua victim with no particularly positive or unique traits.

John Scanzoni (1971) looked at Black families in Indianapolis along the dimensions of urban experience, status advantages, household composition, parental functionality, identification with parents, achievement and mobility. His thesis was an extension of Frazier's (1939) thesis that economic security works to overcome Black family instability. Stability, according to Scanzoni implies a situation where husband and wife are present and, of course, this is what the majority of adults in the United States prefer. He proposes that Black men are not given opportunities while Black women have had greater chances.

Even when Blacks amply demonstrated that they have shaken stereotypes of 'laziness and indifference' and actually fulfill their part of the American dream (hard work, diligence, education), white society neglects its part, instead, denies them fullest possible access to the 'promised rewards' of the 'Dream' (p. 191).

It is the failure of the society to give Black men opportunities that results in family instability. But he believes that it is up to the Blacks of all classes to accept the value system of the white middle class. Once this occurs, it is more likely that Black marriages will be stable.

Charles Willie (1974) conducted detailed analysis of nine Black families selected from 200 case studies. The nine selected came from
three income groups: middle income ($10,000-$20,000), marginal income ($6,000-$10,000), and low income ($3,000-$6,000). He used Robert Merton's classification system to discuss the types of adaptations (conformist, innovationist, retreatist) of these three social classes. The conformist acknowledges the legitimacy of societal values and goals and also accepts the means that are sanctioned and prescribed for achieving them. This adaptation is most characteristic of the Black middle class who are hard working, materialistic, success-oriented, upwardly mobile and equalitarian. Willie states that more than any other group the Black middle class manifests the Puritan orientation toward work and success. The male-female relationship is developed out of necessity where neither partner has ultimate authority. Neither could achieve a comfortable life style on their own due to discrimination. Their income is spent on a home and education for the children with the house being their primary symbol of success.

The innovationist also believes in the socially sanctioned goals but must improvise new and different means of achieving them. Black working class families are success-oriented and upwardly mobile but their symbol of success differs from the Black middle class. The welfare of the whole family is the major measure, that is, keeping members well-fed, well-clothed and out of jail.

The cohesion of the Black working class family results not so much from understanding and tenderness shown by one for the other as from the joint and heroic effort to stave off adversity (p. 238).

He states that in order to stay out of poverty the Black working class family has migrated from the South to the North where job opportunities
are better. The family has also sacrificed doing things as a family or involving themselves in community activities because of the long hours they must work. Relationships between parents and children go well as long as there are no psychological problems in the child. Then the parents ability to understand is "limited" (p. 239).

The retreatist gives up on socially sanctioned values and goals as well as means and is therefore in a state of anomie or normlessness. The lower class is represented in this group whose status "forces them to make a number of clever, ingenious and sometimes foolish arrangements to exist" (p. 240). Men and women have a hard time understanding their children and a harder time trusting each other. Lower class Blacks are broken people who live in broken homes with broken dreams. Therefore they are fatalistic as they have no hope of fulfilling their dreams. All else is secondary to the struggle for existence. The family moves from place to place so that instability and unrootedness is constant. The parents are often uneducated so that they cannot provide positive images for their children and they cannot participate in giving appropriate guidance concerning what ought to be done. Presumably, the lower class also aspires for material comforts: "spending sprees and impulse traveling are indicative of these desires" (p. 242). Therefore their basic values are the same as the middle and working class Black although they have no hope of meeting these values. Willie states:

On the basis of this analysis one may conclude 1) that Black and white families in America share a common value system, 2) that they adapt to the society and values in different ways, largely because of racial discrimination, and 3) that
the unique adaptation by Blacks is further differentiated by variations in style by social class.

Elliot Liebow (1966) wrote *Tally's Corner* as an attempt to interpret lower class life in the terms of the lower class male. He used participatory observation of 24 street corner men who were unemployed or irregularly employed. He writes, "the job fails the man and the man fails the job" (p. 63). In general he found that the role performance of the father in the Black family is highly dependent on the man's ability to earn a living and his willingness to share that living with his family. According to Liebow, the Black male learns to resort to unstable family behavior as a response to failures imposed by society. Failure in employment and involvement in peer groups are interpreted as a threat to marital stability (Hannerz, 1969).

Liebow contends that the street corner men have internalized society's expectations for family roles, that is they share the same value set as white middle class men. The stumbling block to attaining these goals is the oppressive conditions that surround them. Were these to be removed, there would be no difference in Black and white families.

**Summary and critique**

Although each of these perspectives arrives at a somewhat different conclusion each also espouses that there is a model family to which all others must aspire. Poverty acculturationists viewed the Black family in transition with the social system being responsible for changing the conditions of poverty. Frazier (1939) suggested that the
matriarchy was the result of the conditions of slavery where families were broken up and Black men were emasculated. The slaves, in effect, had not learned to live in two parent families and then the economic conditions of post-slavery further fostered this circumstance.

The pathologists used Frazier's analysis to further the notion that the matriarchy was responsible for the continuation of poverty and crime in the Black community. They proposed the Black family qua criminal and central to that thesis was the notion of the debilitating role of the Black woman who they contend refused to give up her place of dominance in the home to the Black male. Certainly many of the underlying assumptions of the pathologists can be brought into question from the feminist perspective but more importantly to this work, a Black perspective would question their validity based on the denial of values and conduct that is unique to Black people. Moynihan's "tangle of pathology" position prompted government policy that looked to cure Black people rather than the objective circumstances of poverty. Interestingly, this proposition arrived concurrently with the cultural deprivation thesis forming a unity of self-reflexive proofs regarding Blacks. Analysis of the Moynihan position using Ryan (1976) and Edelman (1975) is self evident and nearly identical to the analysis of cultural deprivation offered in an earlier section.

The reactives moved to dilute the pathologist perspective through the use of the liberal position of color blindness (Thomas and Sillen, 1974). That is, they proposed that since we are all people under the skin we all strive for the same (and ultimately correct) goals.
Coincidentally, these goals correspond to the goals of the white middle class. While the reactives reflect a sympathetic view of Black difficulties it is their attempt to disprove that Blacks are lazy, irresponsible, and apathetic using a middle class model, that in the final analysis, denies validity to the values of Black people.

What ultimately ties the research from the negative bias perspective is the use of mainstream standards to compare Blacks and whites and the use of the mythical model of the white middle class family consisting of two parents in a heterosexual relationship, 2.4. children, house in the suburbs, white picket fence, dog, and station wagon. The measurement of family stability by this group comes not so much from rating the quality of parent-child or family relationships but from the proportion of female headed households in combination with illegitimacy rates, percentage of minor children in the household, and separation or divorce rates. The relationship between these variables, however, has not been shown.

The state of the negative bias research is so anecdotal that Jacquelyn Jackson (1974) was moved to offer this tongue-in-cheek comparison:

The present paucity of much of the literature has been generated primarily by the 'culture of investigative poverty.' That is most of its contributors have been unduly possessed by a homogeneous view of blacks; an overcompensation upon abnormality (and especially upon by-products of sexual intercourse or, indeed, upon the sexual act itself); an apathetic lack of interest in interdisciplinary research; a short attention span; an exaggerated masculinity in defense of their adolescent knowledge; and an inability to defer gratification, as evidenced by their relatively frequent utilization of inappropriate racial comparisons and insufficient data which, of course, usually produce invalid conclusions (p. 19).
The review of this research has indicated the prevalence of researcher bias and casts serious doubt of its usefulness to the Black community. That the objective conditions of poverty have worsened in the past few years would suggest that money thus far spent on the so-called remediation of Blacks has failed. This work believes that the inability to recognize the cultural imperatives and the conditions of racism and oppression in the Black community is one of the main sources of the failure.

The Black Family: A Positive Bias Perspective

There is a fabled story about a little African boy who questioned the honesty of Tarzan's ability to defeat all the animals of the jungle, particularly the ferocious lion. The child's mother explained the honesty of the tale by telling her child, 'my son, you'll get a different story when the lion learns to write' (Nobles, 1976, p. 157).

Now the lion has learned to write.

The Black family has been viewed from a positive bias perspective by a growing number of scholars. While this section only reviews a relatively small number of these works, it is important to recognize some of the other authors that have acknowledged the strengths of Black families. 4

Billingsley (1968), in many senses, pioneered this positive bias perspective. His book, which refuted Moynihan's work (1965), discusses the Black family from the perspective of a social systems approach. Staples (1971, 1974, 1978) focuses his sociological studies on many

4 The reader is encouraged to refer to these works for a more detailed description.
aspects of Black life including the Black woman, debunking the myth of
the matriarchy, dating and sexual behavior, and public policy. Stack
(1974), Aschenbrenner (1975), Hays and Mindel (1973) and others
studied kin relationships and the function of the "extended" family in
relation to the individual. Jackson (1973, 1974) conducted studies of
the Black woman and man as well as older Blacks. Lewis (1973) and Young
(1971) conducted studies of child rearing and socialization practices.
Each of these researchers approached the Black family as a viable unit
which has the ability to protect and support its members and adapt in
times of unusual stress.

The work presented in this dissertation also approaches the Black
family from this perspective. This section is organized to present
three works which are of interest. Two of these works, Hill (1972) and
Ladner (1971) are presented here because they directly refute the work
1978) offers some interesting directions that both underpin and direct-
ly relate to the conduct of this research. Each authors' work is out-
lined with the use for this study detailed.

Robert Hill

Hill (1972) was commissioned by the National Urban League to con-
duct a statistical analysis of U.S. Census data in order to refute
Moynihan's assertions regarding the disintegration of the Black family.
Based on a survey of what families perceived to be strengths, five
traits were identified to be analyzed. They were: strong kinship
bonds; strong work orientation, adaptability of family roles; strong
achievement orientation; strong religious orientation.

**Strong kinship bonds**

Hill showed the tendency of the Black family to absorb young related members into it. For instance, 13% of two parent Black families took in relations under the age of 18 compared to 3% of two parent white families. Forty-one percent of Black female headed households incorporated relatives compared to seven percent of white female headed households. In his report, Moynihan (1965) stated that so few Black children were placed for adoption because of discrimination at agencies. What he failed to point out is that there is an informal adoption network which exists in the Black community and which serves to tighten kinship and family bonds. Even when formally placed, Black children are more likely to be adopted by relatives. While two-thirds of white babies born out-of-wedlock in 1968 were adopted, placed in foster care, or institutions, seven percent of Black babies born out-of-wedlock were formally adopted or placed. Further, this means that 90% of Black babies and 7% of white babies were informally adopted or retained by already existing families. What Hill suggests from these data is that present placement policies and assumptions of adoption agencies must be overhauled. The disproportionate number of Black children waiting for placement has often been attributed to apathy on the part of Blacks, yet, Blacks are obviously informally adopting Black children to a large degree. Placement regulations would prevent most Black families from formally adopting children since these families are either "too poor," "fatherless," or "too disorganized."
Strong work orientation

Hill states that Black families have a strong value on work and ambition. He found that three-fifths of the Black poor work, even though the median income for Blacks is less than two-thirds that of whites. Blacks are three times as likely to be poor. Three-fifths of women heading Black families work, although over sixty percent are poor. He further found that two-earner Black families still have lower incomes than single-earner white families. Contrary to the popular belief that Black women have greater job stability and earning power, Hill suggests that Black women are more likely to be unemployed and that their earnings are significantly lower than those of Black men.

Contrary to the stereotypes of 'irresponsible,' 'peripheral,' and 'chronically unemployed' that abound in the literature, the husband is the main provider in the overwhelming majority of Black families, both poor and non-poor (p. 14).

Adaptability of family roles

Hill examines adaptability of family roles along the dimensions of equalitarian family patterns, one parent families, desertion and suicide rates. Many studies have been conducted which give evidence that the domineering matriarchal woman is in fact a myth. Evidence is provided to show that the typical pattern among Black families is equalitarian when it comes to decision making and performance of household tasks. In one parent families, the self reliance of Black women is exemplified. Role adaptability/flexibility is mandatory for this type of household to function well which most do. Moynihan (1965) suggests
that the typical AFDC family is one in which the father has deserted. However, Hill discovered that, in fact, use of the "separated" category on AFDC forms did not necessarily mean desertion. He therefore questioned Moynihan's findings as drawing unsubstantiated conclusions from unclear data.

One measure of alienation that is normally used is suicide rate, yet Moynihan never introduces that statistic in his study. Why? Hill believes that it is because the rate goes in the opposite direction. Black women, the group who continue to experience the greatest adversity have, the lowest suicide rate, about one-third that for white women; while Black men have less than one-half the rate of white men.

**Religious orientation**

Hill's data on religious orientation is the weakest presentation in the book. He suggests that over 60% of Black people feel that the Black church is helping in the cause for freedom but that is the extent of the data he presents.

**Use for this study**

In the opinion of the author, statistical studies based on Census data have several limitations in relation to the study of family life. This kind of study denies the richness and dimension that exists in the Black family. Further it can be used to relate in a cause-effect manner, data that is not necessarily related. For instance, father absence as related to poor performance on intelligence tests is a popular use of correlation which makes a fairly complex array of
circumstances into simplistic cause and effect.

It's usefulness is as a secondary source or backdrop, rather than as a means of describing flesh and blood people. Census analysis can be used to provide a context in which the family lives. It is quite sobering, for example, to be reminded that Black people have not made substantial gains since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In fact, circumstances of poverty and discrimination may be worse than ever before. Data from a Hartford Study (1979) substantiate Hill's findings of under- and unemployment.

Statistical data could also be used as a check against people's espoused values and actual behavior. For instance, a stated value in the Black community is the value of children. Using Hill's analysis of informal adoptions as one criteria to "prove" that value, it would appear that the content of the value is substantiated by behavior. The main significance of the Hill study is that it uses the same data sources as Moynihan (1965) but comes up with a very different interpretation. This study will use unemployment data in Hartford to provide a context in which the families live.

Joyce Ladner

In 1964 Joyce Ladner participated as a research assistant in a government financed study of an all-Black low income housing project whose Principal Investigator was Lee Rainwater. The question she studied was: "What is life like in the urban Black community for the 'average' girl?" In order to answer this question Dr. Ladner underwent many personal re-evaluations in which she sought to determined "whose
side she was on." She states:

On the one hand I wanted to conduct a study that would allow me to fulfill certain academic requirements, i.e., a doctoral dissertation. On the other hand, I was highly influenced by my Blackness--by the fact that I, on many levels, was one of them and had to deal with their problems on a personal level (p. 3-4).

It was within the framework of this dilemma that she moved away from the concept of social deviance or pathology that was so clearly advocated by the Principal Investigator (1965, 1970). In this perspective she discusses the need to decolonize social research and the need for Black people to move toward self definition.

Using this value system, Dr. Ladner spent four years collecting data. Her method was intense case study based on open ended interviews that related to life histories and attitudes and behavior that reflected approaching womanhood. The Black girl from the under-class does not usually have the "luxury" of middle class childhood. Parents cannot protect their young from the realities of poverty and hence at a young age Black children learn to care for themselves, to care for others, and to do major household chores. When the Black girl is seven or eight she is socialized into the role of womanhood. She understands herself as a sexual being. Primary socializers are the "immediate" and "extended" family network. In addition to natural parents, many people participate in the socialization of the Black child. Children in the community are taught to be strong and not to allow others to take them for granted. Self defense is taught as an appropriate posture that is tempered by hope and positiveness. Most parents try to instill in their children a dual approach to existence:
"(1) to understand his role in this society as a Black person; and (2) be able to function in the dominant society" (p. 75).

The peer group also serves a socializing role as it has many integrative functions. It is in this context that the process of redefinition of roles takes place. The peer group challenges, approves, participates in decision making and supports the Black girl in her rites of passage.

Dr. Ladner found that despite the matriarchy literature which characterized the Black woman in terms such as domineering and aggressive, Black girls had a variety of role models to emulate, rarely resembling this stereotype. She further found that these girls regardless of their homelife or dreams for the future had several issues in common, including:

...aspirations for being the hardworking backbone of the family, for children, for an education and for a kind of spiritual empathy--the ability to understand and develop the necessary resources to fight oppression and make healthy adaptations to what are sometimes overwhelming circumstances... (p. 175).

She also found that none of the girls in her study were preoccupied with confusion, rebellion or the generation gap as the white middle class teenagers was. Their preoccupation was on issues vital to survival.

Overall she found that the Black adolescent girls in her study had a pragmatic and realistic view of their lives which was a balance between their dreams and what they saw as the real limits to accomplishment in the white world.

One of the major characteristics which define the Black woman
is her stark realism as this relates to her resources. Instead of becoming resigned to her fate, she has always sought creative solutions to her problems (p. 276).

She found that the vast majority of girls had strong self images, a very small number did not speak favorably of being Black but none wished to be white. Finally she found that institutional racism had exerted the strongest impact upon all facets of the Black woman's life. It is interesting to note that when she returned to the community in 1970, she found that physical environment had deteriorated as unemployment rose. This presents a striking contradiction to the media portrayal of gains made by Blacks in the late 1960's.

Use of this study

Ladner's work is particularly important in breaking down the assumptions of pathology based on the white middle class model. Of special importance for this work are her ideas of the young Black woman as strong and creative. Her work on the significance of the peer group led the author to see it as an important socializing force and in some cases as part of the "para-kin" network. Also of interest was Dr. Ladner's personal statements in the beginning and end of her book which spoke to the struggle to resolve academic requirements with race and class interests. This was a particular encouragement to continue this research when it seemed impossible to do so.
In 1974, Dr. Nobles and his colleagues received funding to study Black families using the African philosophical position\(^5\) outlined by him in his dissertation. Underlying their position was the notion that a transubstantive error is committed when a researcher does not respect the integrity of a people's cultural perspective. For instance, the African world view emphasizes the primacy of life and that all things are endowed with a life force. Examination of artifacts reveals this emphasis on life and fertility. When these cultural elements are translated into European elements as seen and defined by Europeans, the African "life force" cultural substance is translated and defined as "sexual" cultural substance. His premise is, therefore, that trans-substantive errors have occurred increasingly in the study of Black families. He asserts that in order to conceptualize Black family systems, one must move away from the "Made in America" assumption and understand that Blacks are African in nature and American in culture (1978). The researcher must understand the African philosophical base from which Blacks operate (the nature) as well as the impact of racism and economic exploitation (the nurture) on this value system.

Within the African philosophical position, the family constitutes the center of the universe. The family, which includes the living, the dead, and the yet-to-be-born is the focal point wherein the essence is kept alive. According to Nobles the values that Black families have historically shared with their children are spirituality, moral

\(^5\)The reader is referred to the section on selfhood for a beginning discussion of Nobles philosophical position.
righteousness, and family love and unity.

The wider (white) society, by its very nature (philosophical and cultural), de-emphasizes those values. Self centeredness rather than family love, political expediency rather than moral righteousness, and materialism rather than spirituality are the key values of the wider (white) society (p. 33).

Unfortunately, the Black family is changing in the face of so-called integration and exposure to anti-Black values especially through the electronic media a state which can be considered cause for alarm by Black social scientists.

Since the Black family is African in nature, the Black family system can be thought of as one based on continuity and the union of people and elements. This unity is what Boykins (1977) terms inter-dimensional amalgamation, where intellect, emotion, and spirit are integrated and part of a fluid whole. Structurally the Black family system would not distinguish between its elements and/or components and its functions would be fluid and interchangeable. Conceptually, then, Black families can be thought of as "continual flexibility in circularity" (1974, p. 13), the nature of the system being appositional.

This conception appears to be in contradiction to the structural notions forwarded by Minuchin (1974) which would distinguish between roles, functions, components. The European based family system can be thought of as "limited flexibility in laterality" which means that the typical family is oppositional in nature based on contrarity and polarity of elements each with distinct roles and functions.

Based on these assumptions, the study was conducted to determine the dynamics of contemporary African-American family life while
simultaneously developing a conceptual framework which didn't violate the cultural integrity of Blacks. Given this, the study began by asking some fundamental questions that are often assumed in other research. First they asked participants to identify their heritage. Forty-six percent identified their heritage as African while twenty-eight percent considered their background American. When heritage identification was compared to ecological issues raised (Why is it hard for your family to make it?) and socio-economic characteristics, no correlation was found. None of the socio-economic characteristics—income, occupation, sex, education, or age usually used to explain differences in values and behavior in the Black community were found to be related to the type of ecological issues identified by participants. Economic oppression and institutional racism were the two most frequently stated ecological issues affecting the Black family. This heritage data is consistent with the findings of Cummings and Carrere (1975) who found no correlation between identifying oneself as Black, Negro or colored and the internalization of negative behavior.

Theorists seem to engage in a fairly analytical process (sympathetic introspection?) in which they project their own subjective assumptions of what being a Negro is like into the minds of Black people themselves (p. 246).

They called into question the use of any terms with the assumption that they would hold the same meaning for Blacks and whites.

Nobles also identified that heritage identification had no relationship to migratory pattern or stage of the family in the developmental life cycle. Further analysis sought to find if there was a correlation between the meaning of family (What does the term family mean to
you?) and heritage, education, or income. No relationship was found. The majority of respondents (61.8%) identified the family as a source of emotional and psychological support. Twenty-two percent referred to mutual aid and interdependence in their definition of family. In response to the question, "What is the main reason for a family?," 55.4% responded in relation to psychological and expressive elements. Thirty-eight percent stressed procreation and child rearing.

Conducting several other assessments including interpersonal, family closeness, family folklore, and values, this study found the following important characteristics. The families in their sample placed a high value on children irrespective of how they structurally defined their family. In fact, this was the primary organizational purpose of the family as children were viewed as the opportunity for continuation of the family and the race.

The families we interviewed considered their reasons for existing as a family to be centered around the destiny, presence, welfare and development of their children (p. 128). Two underlying views of children were recurrent themes in the families studied. One is the belief in the natural goodness of the child and the other is unconditional love. Love in the Black family is "given because you are, not because you do" (p. 165-166).

In addition, families provide both emotional and pragmatic support for their children as well as for adults. Their data "reflected a perspective wherein parents found it difficult seeing their children separate from themselves" (p. 177). They found that the social-psychological development of children is influenced by a range of adults
beyond the natural parents. The main values stressed by parents were respect, morality, education, cooperation, and responsibility. There were no responses which indicated values of competition or individualism. Parents also suggested that there was no difference by sex in what they taught their children in general. These parents made a clear distinction between role definition which was sex linked and role performance which was without regard to sex. That is, they felt it important the male children learn to be masculine and female children learn to be feminine but that in the performance of pragmatic tasks, all children, regardless of sex, should be equipped to support themselves and their family.

The system of marriage in the Black family is the merging of two families rather than a contract between two individuals. But marriage as a value scored very low in comparison to other items like education of children and establishing a home. They found that the "mother-in-law" (regardless of whose) plays an important or central part in the family's interpersonal relationships. If the "mother-in-law" is absent, a "sister-in-law" or other female affine occupies this apparent central position.

Based on their findings they challenge the notion of sibling rivalry since in Black families a "relationship of responsibility for" develops based on interconnectedness and strong family ties. They also found that the power to rule the family is based on humane qualities as opposed to material and/or physical attributes. Thus leadership and authority are related to the welfare of the group. Status in
the community is also most often based on how one treats people rather than on material possessions (Staples, 1976).

Lastly, they found that the elasticity of the family allowed for the expanding of it to include non-blood people in what is termed a "para-kin" network, the importance of which is almost indistinguishable from biological and/or legal relatives. The role of this 'family network' was not merely to provide pragmatic support as some researchers (Bernard, 1966; Rainwater, 1970) would suggest but also to provide emotional support and a buffer against racism and dehumanization in the larger society.

**Use for this study**

The findings support assumptions presented in the selfhood section and strongly support the course that this research takes. In fact, Nobles work is the most significant study related to this investigation. Questions used in the Nobles study were extracted and also used as part of the directive interviews and problem solving tasks that were conducted. As will be discussed in the next section, General Systems Theory has profound connections to the African philosophical position espoused by Nobles and his colleagues. Primarily though, the Nobles' study helped to provide an interpretive frame of reference for the data that was collected. It encouraged the author to challenge assumptions that had heretofore been unquestioned. The results of this inspection will appear in Chapter V. This study was a statistical interpretation which used single person interviews as a means of evaluation.

One issue constitutes the author's major objection to the Nobles'
study. That is that the single person interview would appear to be inconsistent with some of the views that are forwarded in the philosophy. A process which seems even more consistent with the African philosophical position of interconnectedness is to experience it within the context of the family and their interaction.

**General Systems Theory**

General Systems Theory (GST) as it applies to family systems is used as one of the lenses for studying selfhood in Black families. The focus of this section is on the General Systems underpinnings since it is these general ideas which are most helpful in developing a theory of Black families from a Black perspective. Other specific works on family systems have indirectly influenced this work. The reader is referred to these works for further elaboration (Guerin, 1976; Jackson, 1968; Minuchin, 1974, Watzlawick, Beavin, Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, Weakland, Fisch, 1974; Watzlawick, 1978). This section is organized to present General Systems Theory, its application to Family Therapy theory, and to discuss its use for this study.

GST was proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1950) in 1945 as a result of nearly twenty years work in the life sciences. As a biologist, von Bertalanffy sought to move beyond the mechanistic or reductionistic viewpoint that was prevalent and explain the behavior of living systems in some other way. The mechanistic approach posited that the whole could be understood through examination of it's parts. Further, it explained events by developing a linear series of
cause-effect equations. Von Bertalanffy's position suggested that the mechanistic view did not provide information regarding the inter-relationship or coordination of the parts in the whole. He therefore suggested that, in fact, in living systems the whole was greater than the sum of its parts so that inspection of parts was not helpful in understanding the whole.

Circular causality is proposed as the way to explain events in this model. The idea here is one which can best be explained in terms of punctuation. Punctuation is an arbitrary selection process where one identifies an event as the starting point (cause). Usually punctuation is connected to several interrelated characteristics including culture, values, and relative position in the system. Thus the event of the behaviorist giving the positive reinforcement of food to the laboratory rat when it presses the bar in its cage could also be punctuated from the rat's position. It's position is that, in fact, it is training the behaviorist to give it food whenever the bar is pressed. This is a matter of punctuation and as we have seen in earlier sections the right to punctuate in social issues is usually confined to a very elite group. Nevertheless, punctuation is an extremely arbitrary way to explain events and brings to the surface the realization that right and wrong in human relationships are really chicken and egg debates. To avoid these chicken and egg debates, the notion of circular causality is posited which reminds us that our punctuation of events is arbitrary and that there are always multiple realities at work. Behavior then, is understood in terms of its function to the maintenance of the
system as it currently is. The concept of blame and victim are removed as one views the function of these behaviors in keeping the system the way it is. GST was introduced as a theory that could be used across fields and which could explain the behavior of systems.

A system can be defined as (Steinglass, 1978):

A set of units or elements standing in some consistent relationship or interactional stance with each other...Consistent elements are related to each other in a consistently describable or predictable fashion (p. 305).

Living systems are open systems which possess the ability to draw upon themselves and the environment, therefore increasing their own potential for growth and development.

All living systems can be understood through the concepts of organized wholeness, structure, control, and energy as information.

**Organized wholeness**

The whole system possesses characteristics that are unique to the whole therefore no single part represents the whole. In the case of families, looking at an individual will not yield any information regarding the functioning of the family together--how the family members interact with each other or the role of the individual in that family. Understanding this context can often explain behavior which might otherwise be unexplainable. Further, within this concept is the notion that no member acts independently but rather is mutually influenced by and influencing other members.

**Structure**

An open system is also characterized by structure. The structure
is in hierarchy which is based on the idea that the universe is ordered along structured lines with different levels of complexity. An example of this notion is the increasing complexity for cell to the world (i.e. cell, tissue, organ, individual, family, community, state, region, nation, world). Each system can also be divided into subsystems in which membership may vary according to age, function, sex, interest, etc. A member can belong to more than one subsystem. Behavior in one subsystem may not be predictive of behavior in another. The system and its subsystems are divided by boundaries. The boundaries are arbitrary lines which differentiate that which is inside the system and that which is not. The skin is an obvious example of a boundary between the individual and her/his environment. The boundaries must have some degree of permeability which facilitates the passage of information from the system to its environment and vice-versa. Chaos in the system is created when the boundary is too permeable and too much information is allowed in or out. System differentiation becomes handicapped. On the other hand, too impenetrable a boundary results in distance and a lack of growth. Interdependence becomes handicapped.

Control

Two concepts, homeostasis (Steinglass, 1978) and morphogenesis (Hoffman, 1971) are important in the understanding of control. Homeostasis is a balance in acceptable behavior. It provides stability and, in effect, resists change beyond that level of stability. In a family, the rules of the system, what Jackson (1965) calls the quid pro quo or bargain that is struck between the marital pair when they begin a
relationship. With the addition of members, the rules of the relationship must change to incorporate these new members. The same is true when members leave. A negative feedback loop is that which maintains the homeostasis. This notion implies the circular fashion in which two or more events can be understood. Steinglass (1978) gives an example:

When an alcoholic husband and non-alcoholic wife engage in a repetitive sequence of behaviors that control the actual level of alcohol consumed. Each time the husband decreases his alcohol intake, behavior on the wife's part, such as stocking the liquor cabinet or becoming increasingly argumentative, increases the likelihood of her husband's drinking (p. 314).

Negative feedback is believed the contribute heavily to the maintenance of pathology.

Morphogenesis, on the other hand, is the quality of the system that promotes change. Positive feedback loops increase change in each event in circular sequence which is called deviation-amplifying (Hoffman, 1971). It is generally thought that too much positive feedback sets up a run-away situation. In the sun-away situation chaos is prevalent. The system is pushed beyond the range within which it can function and self-destruction looms. It is within this situation that one could see psychotic breaks or suicides. Therapists, however introduce small amounts of positive feedback into a family interaction in order to bring about change. Once change comes about a new homeostasis level is reached and the family stabilizes.

Information as energy

Steinglass (1978) suggests that information is a type of energy
which leads to reduction of uncertainty in the system. As the family exchanges information among itself and the outside, growth and development occurs. This growth and development leads to increased organization and diminishes randomness over time. Every "bit" of information exchanges shapes and influences the next event which, in circular fashion, influences the next.

Consider, for instance, the situation that is created when a person kicks a god. The dog, in turn, bites the person. Now the "energy" that is transmitted from the person to the dog and back to the person is most clearly information which will shape the next actions of both the person and the dog.

Application of GST to family therapy theory

GST emerges in family therapy theory as a pivotal concept to understanding the ways in which a family operates. This subsection is written to present these concepts. Of particular interest are the theories based on a Communications models of Mental Research Institute (MRI) (Watzlawick, et al., 1967) and those of Structural Family Therapy (Minuchin, 1974).

In both theories, the family is viewed as a rule governed open system. The rules which are both implicit and explicit maintain the homeostasis. Since homeostasis represents the range of acceptable behavior allowed within the family, the rules become evident upon observation. Regardless of the content, repetitive patterns emerge including who talks to whom, how much each person talks, and other sorts
of verbal and non-verbal behavior of senders and receivers. Both
theories also move away from focusing on the internal processes of the
individual (i.e., motivations, feeling states, etc.) and direct atten-
tion on what is observable in the present, on-going transactions. Both
positions recognize the primacy of context as an influence on behavior
although they have different ways of addressing context in therapeutic
practice.

Communications theory

MRI began as a "spin-off" from the Bateson Project on communica-
tion that began in 1952. For years, the group had worked together
investigating communication, particularly that of schizophrenics. Don
D. Jackson started MRI (1958) because of his specific interest in the
clinical or therapeutic issues involved in communication. He,
Watzlawick, Beavin and others worked in the area of therapeutic commun-
ication and wrote, among other things, Pragmatics of Human Communica-
tion (1967). A portion of this book is summarized here as it provides
underpinnings for this study. The reader is referred directly to the
work for their discussion of the nature of paradox and pathologic
communication.

Their underlying assumptions are taken from mathematics, cybernet-
cs and information theory. Early in the discussion, the "black box
model" is presented as a metaphor for their approach to understanding
communication. Briefly, the model is based on the problem faced by
demolition experts when they encounter a bomb. It is not possible to
look inside to disarm the bomb since removal of the lid might cause it
to explode. Instead the expert must discover the rules for its functioning by analyzing the relationships between its inputs and outputs. Through this analysis the expert discovers what s/he needs to know about how it works.

The same is true for understanding behavior in families. Rather than focusing on the internal processes of individual members, the "inputs" and "outputs" are examined as the means of discovering how the family works. Appropriate questions for this are "how?" and "what for?" rather than "why?." Observation is facilitated by the fact that the "inputs" and "outputs" are rule governed, stochastic processes which show redundancy, constraint or pattern.

In this model a symptom is seen as a pronounced communication regarding the state of the system. From this perspective, then, schizophrenia (for instance) is "viewed as the only possible reaction to an absurd or untenable communicational context (a reaction that follows and therefore perpetuates the rules of such a context)" (p. 47). Hence the importance of context becomes evident.

Several axioms of communication are introduced that are pertinent to the underpinnings of the present study. First, all behavior is communication and behavior has no opposite which means that one cannot not communicate. Even total immobile silence is a communication given meaning within the context in which it is occurring. Another axiom is that any communication implies commitment and therefore defines the relationship. Communication has two aspects which illustrate that not only does it convey information, but at the same time imposes behavior.
The report aspect of communication conveys information and can be thought of as the content of the message. The command aspect conveys how the message should be taken and therefore is suggestive of the relationship between the communicants. In addition to these two aspects of messages, there are also two types of communication: digital and analogic.

Digital communication results from convention and is equivalent to the words we speak. These are arbitrary signs manipulated according to syntax. "There is no particular reason why the three letters 'c-a-t' should denote a particular animal" (p. 61). So digital communication is the agreed upon meanings of words in our language.

Analogic communication is particularly "thing-like" as it is virtually all non-verbal communication. This includes not only body language but voice inflection, sequence, rhythm, and cadence. Analogic communication is the communication of the relationship.

If we remember that every communication has a content and a relationship aspect, we can expect to find that the two modes of communication not only exist side by side but complement each other in every message. We can further expect that the content aspect is expressed digitally whereas the relationship aspect is predominantly analogic in nature.

These notions taken together form one of the author's bases for understanding family interaction. Although the present study will not conduct an analysis of communication in the strict sense, these notions shape the view of the author in observation of the participating families.
Structural family therapy

Structural family therapy also derives much of its theory from GST. Minuchin (1974) states that structural family therapy is:

A body of theory and techniques that approaches the individual in his social context. Therapy based on this framework is directed toward changing the organization of the family. When the structure of the family group is transformed, the positions of members in that group are altered accordingly. As a result, each individual's experiences change (p. 2).

Once again significant emphasis is placed on context with the family being the primary social context. Structural family therapy focuses primarily on family organization, the patterning of transactions over time, and the system's response to stress.

Minuchin emphasizes the notion of level structure or hierarchy within family systems. Regardless of composition, families have this level structure or hierarchy. According to Minuchin the most functional hierarchy is with the parent(s) or parental figures in charge and children at lower levels of the hierarchy. Also part of the structure are the subsystems. Family members are part of many subsystems which are formed according to function, sex, age, or interest. Examples of common subsystems are the executive or parental subsystems, the spouse subsystem and the sibling subsystem. Each subsystem is demarcated by boundaries which are the rules which define who participates and how. Boundaries serve to protect the differentiation of the system. They can be clear, diffuse, or rigid and are conceptualized as lying on a continuum.

Clear boundaries are evident in a well functioning family. Subsystem members must be allowed to perform functions without too much
interference from other members. Also contact between members must not be inhibited by the boundaries of any subsystem. Diffuse boundaries occur as families turn in on themselves increasing communication and involvement among family members. In extreme cases, as distance decreases and boundaries break up, the number of available outside relationships becomes limited. Under conditions of stress the system becomes overloaded due to the overinvolvement in each other's lives. The overload results in the inability to respond and adapt to the stressful situation. The transactional style of diffuse boundaries is termed enmeshment which is defined as:

Members of enmeshed subsystems of families may be handicapped in that the heightened sense of belonging requires a major yielding of autonomy. The behavior of one member immediately affects others, and stress in an individual member reverberates strongly across boundaries (p. 55).

Rigid boundaries make communication among members difficult and handicap the families' ability to protect its members. Under conditions of stress, the system cannot respond until the conditions are extremely severe or until outside authority (courts, schools, etc.) dictates action. The transactional style of rigid boundaries is termed disengagement, defined as:

Members of disengaged subsystems or families may function autonomously but have a skewed sense of independence and lack feelings of loyalty and belonging. This style tolerates a wide range of individual variations in its members (p. 55).

The continuum of enmeshment-disengagement is presented in Figure 1 as conceptualized by Minuchin (1974, p. 54) (see Figure 1).
disengaged  clear boundaries  enmeshed
(inappropriately rigid boundaries)  (normal range)  (diffuse boundaries)

Fig. 1. Enmeshment-Disengagement Continuum

The placement of the family on the enmeshment-disengagement continuum is accomplished through observation of the family's preferred transactional patterns. A well functioning family also has these preferred transactional patterns but is able to initiate alternative patterns when needed.

Finally, observation is embedded within an understanding of the family's current context.

To focus on the family as a social system in transformation, however, highlights the transitional nature of certain family processes. It demands an exploration of the changing situation of the family and its members and of their stresses of accommodation (p. 60).

Significant information for the current context is the family's developmental stage or the inner pressures from changes in members, and the outer pressures coming from the impact of large social institutions and changing times.

The theory outlined here was used in the present study. Also the structural assessment was used as one of the tools for viewing the families in this study.

Use for this study

Upon superficial reading in the subject, it would appear that this
theory was conceptualized long ago in the African's cosmological view of the world (Clark, 1972; Nobles, 1972a, 1972b, 1976). This is somewhat troublesome as it may very well be another example of how Western scholarship, in its ignorance of anything non-Western, has essentially re-created the wheel—a wheel that has existed for centuries. However, it is not within the scope of this work to investigate African philosophical and cosmological thought. That task will be left for future work.

GST as it applies to families provides a means of describing behavior in context, and a means of addressing three concerns in the study of the Black family: (1) its philosophical or epistemological foundations; (2) its content orientation; (3) its methodological approaches.

Epistemology

As stated in an earlier section, all investigations carry an implicit conception of reality. Nature is viewed as either having an independent existence, being discovered by "Man" and therefore needing to be controlled, or something that people are connected to and can contribute to creating. Most research in the behavioral sciences takes the first view and seeks "facts" to control nature. This position can be stated succinctly as "seeing is believing" with empirical verification a logical extension. GST, on the other hand, suggests that our sense data are primarily symbols and that we create reality rather than reality existing as a separate entity. GST grants the possibility of multiple realities. An example may help to provide clarity. One can
Immediately recognize the pragmatic and theoretical implications of calling a particular phenomena as a "rebellion or revolt" as opposed to a "riot." GST also moves away from the conceptualization of people as reactive beings, rather people are seen as adaptive, evolving, and purposive.

Content orientation

GST concerns itself with relationships rather than variables. It moves away from the static view of the world proposed by mechanistic-reductionist science and from the view of things as independent units to a view of things as events that are interacting.

Methodological approaches

Emerging from the epistemology and content orientation, there are certain implications for the method used. Basic to the functioning of the system is communication. Communication is a process so that GST places special emphasis on process. Verbal description becomes the most efficient way of describing the interaction of human beings and is the method of choice for elaborating on interrelationship.

GST as it applies to family systems and family therapy has several points of convergence with a Black value system and the African philosophical position on which it is based. In family systems theory the family is viewed as the primary socializing unit of the individual. A Black value system also holds the family at the center of the universe. Emphasis in the Black family is on relationships with the individual in the background to the group (the "we"). The total, that is the family,
is the primary context and is in the foreground of the individual's conception of self and the world. Each person is intimately connected to every other person, to nature, and to the universe in what Nobles (1974) terms being one with nature. Family systems theory would also tend to de-emphasize the individual as an independent entity but rather as an interrelated member of a totality whose whole represents more than its parts. African cosmology suggests that the universe is ordered and hierarchical. This position is also reflected in GST.

Since there are these primary connections and those outlined in other sections, it makes sense and is consistent to use GST as one of the theoretical underpinnings of this work.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The review of the literature has offered the reader an understanding not only of the literature that specifically relates to the research project but also the context within which the research design was constructed. The author's operating assumptions are outlined in the first section. To sum, the history and practice of racism in this society has impacted upon research that has been conducted on Black life causing distortions to be promoted which serve the race and class interests of the mainstream. These distortions are readily observable and have been documented by other authors (Allen, 1969; Caplan and Nelson, 1973; Thomas and Sillen, 1974; Sherwood and Nataupsky, 1968) and have been termed in this work as "colonized research." It is further argued that research in the social sciences cannot be objective
or value-free, that the problem posed, the method used, and the interpretation of results are all areas that reflect bias and, in fact, even a claim to objectivity is a value. The assumption, then, is that research on Blacks comes from either a positive or negative bias perspective. Decolonized research constitutes an open declaration of positive bias. This bias is reflected in this work.

The negative bias literature on the Black self concept and Black family was presented and showed certain commonalities. The overarching assumption in both of these areas is that Black people are without a distinct culture of their own. Based on this and the idea that the middle class 'stereotype' is the ideal against which all others are compared, researchers found that Black individuals and Black families were deviant, disorganized, and pathologic. Analysis of this literature showed a preponderant tendency toward 'Blaming the Victim' for social conditions. This tendency was particularly indicated in linguistic cues such as "culturally deprived" and "matriarchal" which evoke a wide interconnecting belief system and underlying assumptions. Taken together, this research has done nothing to improve conditions for Blacks but has had significant benefit on the lives of the "helping professionals" whose jobs have been created to "cure" the pathology these researchers found.

The positive bias literature introduced the notion of cultural integrity of Black people. From this position, it was posited that institutional racism is the cause of social conditions and that the role of institutions in the oppression of Blacks cannot be denied.
Self concept was discussed from the positive bias perspective and the notion of selfhood was introduced as a means of understanding the Black self from a Black perspective. Primary to the understanding of selfhood is the notion that the "we" is more significant than the "I." The most significant "we" is the family and then the race. Selfhood is a notion which acknowledges the impact of the context on the behavior of the individual and assumes that if selfhood is to be clearly understood it is within the context of the family that this can happen. Further, selfhood is understood by the extent to which the individual exhibits survival skills which are derived from a Black value system.

The Black family was also discussed from a positive bias perspective. Many authors were mentioned but the work that most directly relates to this study is Nobles work on "Africanisms" remaining in Black family life. He found significant connections between Black family processes and African philosophy and values. Further his work and others showed significant correlations between African cosmology and General Systems Theory. These connections provide an adequate rationale for using this theory in the study of Black families. Also General Systems Theory as it applies to families suggests that systems show complexity both in the roles and functions that members can perform and in its response to outside influences. The role of the context is quite important as is the belief in multiple realities. This expansive view allows one to see the interrelationships that exist and to validate the wider range of influences that impact upon the family unit.

The design and conduction of the research project is consistent
with current notions of decolonized research as outlined in the first section of this chapter. This study represents a synthesis of many of the works and ideas cited here. The study is a positive bias perspective which seeks to document the strengths of Black families in their ability to survive.
CHAPTER III
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The procedures and methodology used to conduct this research are described in detail in the presentation that follows. A brief summary provides a useful review.

Ten families were selected at random from Brownstone Center, a housing project in Hartford, Connecticut. Initial interviews were conducted with the ten selected families to identify two families that would participate in the case study. Interview questions were selected and field tested before the actual interview took place. A research associate, who is recognized in the community, served as a liaison between the researcher and community members. The research associate aided in the formulation of interview questions, consistent with the notion of a decolonized research agenda (Blauner, 1973). Also the research associate conducted the initial interviews in order to control for researcher bias. She also conducted a final interview of the two families to debrief them.

Case study methodology was selected to gather data about the Black family's functioning and patterns of interaction, particularly in the transmission of survival values. Case study was also selected to generate hypotheses for future use. The case study consisted of intensive interviews (both focused and non-directive) of two Black families to
determine patterns of interaction which support selfhood. All interviews were audio and/or video taped. This data was organized to generate hypotheses about the Black family's functioning.

Decolonized Research--A Model

The design and implementation of this research study took into account the issues raised in Chapter II regarding the notion of colonized research. The research associate and participant families were given opportunities on a regular basis to contribute to the research design. In Phase II, each of the ten families interviewed were asked if they had additional questions that they would ask or if they had comments that would improve the interview process or respond more adequately to their particular family situation. During the case study, family members were asked to ascribe meaning to observations made by the researcher and to place value on their statements and actions.

Under ordinary research conditions, the participants should receive some sort of payment for their time and effort in order to make the research less exploitative. As this was not possible for this research project, the researcher gave the families copies of their genogram and a bound copy of the dissertation.

From the discussion in Chapter II, it is evident that this research assumed a positive bias perspective, looking for strengths and supports and focusing attention on those areas. This attitude helped establish and maintain a warm relationship with the families involved.
Further, when necessary the researcher intervened on the family's behalf. For instance, the daughter in one family wanted to go to college so the researcher helped her by getting information and applications. In this way, participants were not objectified and the relationship was more one of give and take.

**Case Study Methodology--A Description**

In the investigation of problems about which little knowledge is available, the case or exploratory study is usually most appropriate (Good, et al., 1954; Selltiz, et al., 1959). For the researcher working in relatively unformulated areas, where there is little experience to serve as a guide, case study methodology has been found to be particularly helpful in stimulating insights and suggesting hypotheses. Generally defined (Sax, 1968) the case study is "any relatively detailed description and analysis of a single person, event, institution, or community" (p. 288-9).

The essential procedure of the case study method is to recognize all the pertinent aspects of the thing or situation to be studied. Because of its comprehensive nature, the case study method includes the inspection of records, focused and non-directive interviews, observation, projective tests or any other approach. In fact, the case study has been viewed as the most complete research method, embracing assembled facts, inferences, and intuitions in a manner which makes a synthesis of data possible (Barr, et al., 1953; Glazer and Strauss, 1965). The ebb and flow of the inquiry is constantly in the process of
reformulation and redirection as new information is obtained.

The use of this method of research on the family is especially viable since intensive family case studies reveal the interrelationship between the individual and the culture. In addition, the family unit is small and manageable to study in a relatively short span of time (Lewis, 1967). The largest source of data about family study is family therapy being utilized as a research method. Family members' behaviors are observed in interaction with one another rather than studied individually (Framo, 1972).

In the present research, the case study was used to generate hypotheses regarding the patterns of interaction which support selfhood in the Black family. Both focused and non-directive interviews were used in the conduction of this research. The researcher assumed the role of participant observer in which the researcher was known as an investigator and formed relationships with the participants. The participant observer is concerned with linking patterns of interaction with meanings believed to underlie behavior so that relationships that were formed played an important part in the adequate and accurate descriptions of behavior and meaning.

Selltiz, et al. (1951) suggest that recording of case material should be done during or immediately after a session. To fulfill this requirement, all sessions were audio and/or video taped and the researcher kept a log which was recorded as soon after the sessions as possible. Every attempt was made to separate observations and interpretations so that the record could be examined once the research was
completed and accurate hypotheses could be formulated.

**Development of the Interview Questionnaire**

Adaptability in stressful situations is a useful way to judge a family's functioning (Minuchin, 1974). Using this notion, seven nodal events (see Appendix B) were identified as being likely experiences for poor Black families to encounter. Questions were generated which would adequately represent the field of possible questions for each category. The interview questionnaire was field tested to insure that ambiguous questions were eliminated. Once field tested to remove ambiguity, test interviews were conducted on volunteer families to insure precision in the questions, to work out any problems in administration and to identify the time parameters of the interview.

The interview was chosen instead of a questionnaire because it was felt that this particular population would not respond well to a questionnaire. The oral tradition in the Black community is highly valued (Gay and Abrahams, 1972) and would give the data more richness and dimensionality. Further, it was determined that the information needed called for participation from many family members in order to get an interactional perspective. This participation could only be assured in an interview. The interview in its unrevised form appears in Appendix B.

**Selection of the Community for Study**

Brownstone Center in Hartford, Connecticut was selected for study
for several reasons: a) The researcher wanted to control for socio-economic status. Although culturally specific traits are believed to exist across class lines, it is felt that too many confounding variables would be introduced as the result of the acquisition of goods and services that come with a rise in socio-economic status. b) The researcher is familiar with the community, having lived in Hartford for two years. c) The community's size provided ease in conducting the interviews. d) A resident could be identified to be a research associate. This strategy is important in providing legitimacy for the research in the community and aiding in the establishment of rapport and the credibility of the researcher.

Field Work Design

The field work portion of this study was divided into three phases: (1) the selection and training of the research associate; (2) the selection of two families through an interview; and (3) the case study of the two families.

Phase 1: Selection and Training of the Research Associate

The research associate was selected from candidates identified by leaders and influential persons in the community. These leaders consist of school administrators and ministers who lived in the area. Four criteria existed for the selection of the research associate (r.a.). They were: the ability to be trained to conduct an interview, residence within the community, positive participation or reputation within the community, and not being a member of a family participating in the
study. The candidates were contacted, interviewed, and one was selected based on the criteria. Midway through the training phase of the research, the research associate had a heart attack and died. Another research associate was selected from those interviewed.

The role of the r.a. was to conduct the initial interviews and the final focused interview. These interviews were audio taped. Training was conducted to familiarize the r.a. with the interview questions, and to revise or add questions that would more adequately obtain the information. Further training included use of simulated questions and role play for entering the homes and interviewing the families.

For the purposes of Phase II, the r.a. did not know the overall purposes of the study to minimize bias. Upon completion of Phase II, the r.a. was instructed on the intent of the entire research project and the conduct and nature of the final interview.

Phase 2: Selection of Two Families through an Interview

Ten participant families were randomly selected from a list of Black families from Brownstone Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Randomization was achieved by putting all names in a hat and drawing out the first ten as participants and the next five as alternates. Drawing of names was done by a person not involved in the research project. The ten participants were interviewed and based on the responses made, two families were selected to participate in the case study. Two families were selected to aid in the search for commonalities.

The criteria for selection of the two families consisted of the following: (1) most important, is the family's self report that they
have survived by their own definition. The rationale for this criteria is based on the discussion of decolonization of research (Lewis, 1973); (2) their ability to adapt to the stressful situation(s) they describe in the interview including the roles that family members assume; (3) the family's current sources of strength and support; (4) articulation of the elements of a Black value system as identified in the definition of terms; (5) at least one child over the age of six who can participate verbally; (6) the family is not currently in a crisis that they feel is beyond their control; (7) all family members consider themselves Afro-American, Black American, Negro, or colored; and (8) a willingness to participate in the case study. Each family was rated on the criteria and the two families that possess these qualities were selected.

Permission was obtained from 10 randomly selected families (see Appendix A) and an interview questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered to them. The purpose of this procedure was to minimize the influence of the researcher on the responses made in the interview. Based on the responses, two families were selected from the criteria identified above. In the event that either of the families selected did not agree to participate, another family would have been selected from the group. This family would have been the next closest match to the criteria.

Permission (see Appendix A) was obtained to conduct the case study and the methodology of the case study was fully explained. However, the purpose of the study was not discussed until the study was com-
pleted. At least one session prior to Phase III was devoted to establishing rapport and researcher credibility with the selected families.

Phase 3: Case Study of the Two Selected Families

Case study methodology was utilized for this phase. Each family was observed by the researcher over a four-month period. The description of the families that were selected will appear in Chapter IV. The method of recording observations included: one video tape session of one to two hours, all other focused sessions were audio taped; the researcher kept a written log of non-directive sessions completed as soon after each session as possible but not reviewed until completion of the study; and, a follow-up session conducted by the research associate. Planned activities for Phase 3 include a structural assessment, a genogram, problem solving tasks, and non-directive observation.

Structural assessment

A structural assessment was done at the beginning of the project. The structural assessment was proposed by Minuchin (1974) as a means of understanding the family's current structure. As indicated in Chapter II, general systems theory suggests that the universe is organized in a hierarchical manner and that one can observe this hierarchy. Hence, the structural assessment focuses on the family organization, boundaries around subsystems, and between the family and the larger context, enmeshment and disengagement, current sources of stress and support and the family's developmental stage. This data is collected through the observation of the family interacting together.
Genogram

The genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976) is designed to give a reasonably clear definition of the membership and boundaries of the system. It is a multigenerational record which is used to spell out physical and emotional boundaries within the family, the available relationship options, nodal events, toxic issues as well as the broader community and cultural context in which the family is embedded. The genogram is a structural diagram which indicates names, dates, and places of family members and frequency and type of contact. The author also adapted questions for the genogram which are of particular importance to this study. These questions are: What is one family story that you recall; were there incidents in your childhood of encounters with whites?; how has the family dealt with past stresses and developmental crises?; what are your hopes and aspirations for your children?; how does the family deal with important institutions?

Decision making and problem solving tasks

The decision making and problem solving tasks were designed to observe the family's ability to organize and work on solutions (Ferreira, 1965; Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976). The purpose of this was to view patterns of adaptability and also gain information about boundaries, roles and functions, and family rules. The session on decision making and problem solving was video taped for review later. The purpose of this procedure was to capture both the verbal and non-verbal behavior for analysis.

Three tasks were designed to elicit the range of information
outlined above. Task #1 was adapted from Minuchin (1978) entitled the Family Fuss. In this task, the family was to identify and discuss an argument that occurred between family members. Task #2 was also adapted from Minuchin (1978) and entitled Picture Stories. Pictures were cut from Ebony magazines. Four pictures relating to family activities were placed in one folder and four pictures relating the family to outside stress were placed in the second folder. In this task the family was to select one picture from each folder and make up a story about it. Task #3 was adapted from Nobles (1976) entitled Family Roles. In this task several roles were identified and family members were asked to agree on a person(s) in the entire family that best fit the roles.

The instructions for the tasks are to be found in Appendix C.

Non-directive interview/observation

These sessions were designed to observe the family in its day-to-day tasks. For the purposes of adequate documentation, these sessions were recorded in a written log immediately following the sessions.

Research Setting

The research setting was the homes of the families that were selected. This setting was selected in order to make the family as comfortable and natural as possible for the purpose of collecting meaningful data.
Data Collection

The primary means for the collection of data was one video taped session for each family, audio recordings of all other focused sessions and the researcher's written log of non-directive sessions completed immediately after each session (Good and Scates, 1954). Data of a developmental nature was collected through the use of a genogram following the guidelines established by Guerin and Pendagast (1976). The purpose of the genogram was to develop a historical perspective. Further, questions were designed regarding the transmission of survival skills and Black values in order to determine how the family organized around stressful situations in the past, to evoke parental aspirations for children at the time of their birth, to determine how the family sees itself dealing with significant outside institutions, and to identify patterns that exist across generations.

Problem solving tasks were used to determine how the family currently organizes around various situations. These tasks were video taped for closer examination.

Non-directive observation occurred and was recorded by the researcher in a written log. Finally, a focused interview was used to debrief the family, determine the extent to which changes had occurred in the family as a result of the researcher's presence and to determine (if possible) the accuracy of the picture of family life that the family presented to the researcher.
Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using two related frameworks, General Systems Theory as it applies to families and the African philosophical position as forwarded by Nobles (1974, 1976, 1978). These frameworks were used to view each family, categorize the data, and generate hypotheses. Information was also gained from various assessment tools which were used to analyze each family's system.

The structural assessment (Minuchin, 1974) provided information about family organization, family rules and roles, boundaries, family developmental stage, sources of stress and support. This assessment provided data about the current status of the family.

The genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976) provided a historical perspective of the family's life and exposed possible patterns across generations.

The problem solving tasks (Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976) provided additional information about rules and roles in the family and data on the family's ability to solve problems and make decisions in the "here and now."

All of this information, when analyzed together, helped to create a picture of the families' ability to cope with the outside world, support members in times of crisis, and to continue to function on a daily basis. This picture provides a base from which hypotheses are generated.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected. General Systems Theory as it applies to families and an African philosophical perspective were used as a lens for observation. Specifically, the notion of the family as an interacting system was utilized to identify ways that the elements of a Black value system are embedded within the family context. Several assessment tools were used to generate hypotheses regarding selfhood in the family system.

The genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976) provided a historical perspective of the family's life and exposed possible patterns across generations. The author's adaptation of the genogram was designed to directly relate to the purposes of the research project.

The structural assessment (Minuchin, 1974) provided information about family organization, family rules and roles, boundaries, family developmental stage, sources of stress and support. This assessment provided data about the current status of the family.

The problem solving tasks (Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976) provided additional information about rules and roles in the family and provided data on the family's ability to solve problems and make decisions in the "here and now."

Non-directive observation provided the view of the family as they faced their day-to-day tasks. The observation gave richness and dimension to the other assessment techniques used.
All of this information, when analyzed together helped create a picture of the families' abilities to cope with the outside world, support members in times of crisis, and to continue to function on a daily basis.

This chapter is organized to present a view of the larger context of the families using recent unemployment data. Then each family will be discussed individually. In this discussion, the description is limited to what was observed. Explanation or analysis is, by and large, reserved for the discussion section. Each discussion will include a three generation genogram, a structural assessment, and an analysis of the problem solving tasks. These data will be combined with the data from the non-directive observation and examined in relation to selfhood. Examples of the family interaction are included to illustrate the data. Finally, the families will be compared and commonalities drawn.

The Larger Context

Brownstone Center is located in the North-End of Hartford which is a predominantly Black and Hispanic section of the city. The North-End is divided into five neighborhoods which are identified as Blue Hills, Arsenal, Garden Street, Albany Avenue, and Northeast.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) computes unemployment in Labor Market Areas. These Labor Market Areas are large and because of their size, the unemployment rate in a small community can be distorted. The Hartford Labor Market Area is all of Hartford County which
includes, not only Hartford, but the extremely wealthy suburban towns of Simsbury, Avon, East Windsor, Farmington, and Glastonbury. Therefore the unemployment rate as reported by BLS is 4.0%.

A recent unemployment survey was conducted by Education/Instruction (1979) to determine the rate of unemployment in Hartford's North-End. The sample size (309) was selected to exceed a 95% confidence level on the unemployment percentage. Participants were selected randomly by dividing the neighborhoods into housing tracts and selecting three units from each tract.

Their results showed the modified (II) employment rate to be 46.1%. This figure includes all unemployed job seekers, discouraged workers, housewives and disabled. The unemployment rate (I) excluding housewives and disabled was 39.5%. One of the neighborhoods, Blue Hills, has a large number of professional Black workers. When this neighborhood is removed from the data, the unemployment rate (I) soars to 51.4%. Brownstone Center is in the Albany area. As might be expected the 17-20 year-old group was the hardest hit with 64% unemployed. Forty-one point four percent of the female population surveyed (181) was unemployed which the researchers indicate is due to the extreme difficulty that women in the North-End have in securing employment. Further, the mean educational attainment of the people surveyed was 10.9 years.

These data are connected to the families in this study in several ways. Job prospects for the adolescents in these families are bleak. Although, both of the mothers in these families are employed (or
rather underemployed), it is highly possible that members of the "extended" family, friends and neighbors are not employed nor do they have hope of employment. The spectre of poverty surrounds them.

The Wilcox Family

The Wilcox household consists of four persons: Elaine, 38, and her three sons, Greg, 15; Derek, 10; and Casey, 7. They live in a two bedroom apartment that is attractively decorated. Pictures of family members can be seen on a table in the living room. Prints and pictures are hung on the walls. Books, African artifacts and records are also visible. On one wall are wooden zodiac signs of family members. The main center of action in the home is the kitchen where most of our interviews were conducted. The apartment is small but as Elaine indicates, it's what she can afford.

Derek and Casey attend the same elementary school that is near their home. Greg attends high school (sophomore year) at a predominantly Black (95%) school nearby. Elaine involves herself in several activities besides work. She spends time in the evenings at the NAACP, is a member of the Black Democrats, is running for Town Committee and involves herself in the children's school and school activities. Part of her reason for this involvement is that she realizes that it will help her children when it's time for them to go to college.

The research assistant interviewed the Wilcox family in early October 1979. At that time, they decided to talk about Elaine's separation from her husband. We held a similar conversation during the
study which is outlined in the genogram section.

The family's definition of family was where you shared good times and bad. Casey said that a family meant being kind. Derek said that family meant love and financial support. They indicated that the reason that a family exists was to provide a backbone where members are able to relate to those close to them rather than seek outside support. Also a family is where there are children and people to carry on the family name. Closeness was an important reason for a family according to the members of this household.

Genogram

During the second session, information was gathered regarding the family's development over time. The genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976) depicts three generations spanning the lives of Elaine's parents through to her children. The following historical and contextual information was gathered. Figure 2 is the genogram for the Wilcox family. Elaine is the youngest of ten children born of Black parents. Her mother, Barbara was born in Americas, Georgia and migrated to New York City when she was 19. Her father, Fitzgerald was born in New York. Fitzgerald and Barbara met and were married in 1924. Her father was Catholic and her mother was Baptist. Elaine indicates that religion was not an issue between her parents. She and her siblings were christened Catholic. Between 1923 and 1925, her family migrated from New York to Hartford.

Elaine was born and raised in Hartford. She had six brothers and
Fig. 2. Genogram of the Wilcox Family
three sisters who lived to adulthood. The two oldest siblings, one brother and one sister died in Hartford as did her two brothers who were twins. Her father died in 1965 from sugar diabetes. According to her no one else in her family suffers from the disease.

Elaine characterizes her family as being very close. Everyone except for 6 of her 30 nieces and nephews grew up and remains in the Greater Hartford area. Contact is made between siblings at least weekly but most often three or four times a week. Daily contact is made between Elaine and sibling 7. The family gets together on holidays at Elaine's house or sibling 7. They had a family reunion three years ago (1976). Elaine met her husband in Hartford and married him in 1966. She had three children. Although separated from her husband for eight years, there is still monthly contact with his sisters.

Nodal events in Elaine's life are the passing on of siblings and her father, a family reunion, 3 years ago, the stroke that her mother had in 1973, the separation from her husband, and children's activities including Greg giving the speech for his graduation from 8th grade and Derek's performance in school plays. Her father's incapacitation led her to defer her own educational plans. Her other siblings had families of their own so she had to quit school because of finances. Soon after her father's death, she married. With her marriage and the children, her educational plans got put aside altogether. She always believed that she would be a wife and mother so that this was not disturbing to her.

She describes the separation from her husband as something that
was better for her. It took some time to make the decision but when she did, she decided that if she was better off, the children would be better off, too. The children, especially Greg, report that things are better because their mother is happy. According to Greg:

> It was some hard times with him gone but then it was a lot better times cause he still lives in Hartford, he comes around, he calls, and what-not. Whenever one of us needs him he's there so it wasn't that much of a change. It was just a matter of both of them, I guess knew they couldn't make it together but yet we know that both still love us, you know, so that I can't really say that it was a big change.

Each of the children indicated that he knew their father loved them. He takes care of them when Elaine needs him to. He also calls every other week, sees the children on holidays and birthdays and attends school functions.

One of the questions designed as an adaptation to the genogram was regarding parental aspirations for children. According to Elaine specific aspirations are formulated by individuals in this family. As a child, her parents did not have specific goals for their children. They wanted their children to be happy and to be good at whatever they did.

Linda: Were there things that either your parents or other people in your family told you or let you know they wanted you to become a certain thing or...

Elaine: No, my mother always stressed the fact that whatever walk of life any of her children decided or chose she hoped that we were the best at that. She did not ponder on, well, you have to be a nurse or a doctor or a lawyer or whatever, it's just that she felt that we had the common sense and our own mental workings that whatever we decided we wanted to be she certainly would be 100% in our corner, but we just do the best we can in whatever we decide to do.
Linda: Did you have dreams of what you wanted to do?

Elaine: Really recall, Linda, no not really fantasy type dreams. Just that I wanted to make a decent living and have a happy family life as relates to me becoming a wife and a mother and what-not. I always did want to become a Certified Public Accountant. That was basically it.

Later when asked about her dreams for her children a similar pattern emerges.

Linda: As you think back on when Gregory was born, did you think, I want this boy to be _____, what kinds of hopes did you have?

Elaine: I really, Linda, with all of my kids always wanted them to strive to be the best at whatever field they choose, certainly wanted them to get education, inclusive of college, because I felt like three males, they would have to be out there on their own.

Linda: So now Greg, now that you're going to school what are the things that you hope to do?

Greg: Well besides finishing school and going through college, I wanna major in Business Communication and Journalism.

The pattern that emerges across generations is evidence of several elements of a Black value system. The high value placed on children is evident. This phenomenon relates specifically to what Nobles (1976) suggested as the idea that in Black families children are loved "because you are, not because you do" (p. 165-6). Here it is clear that whatever the child chooses to do, s/he would not face rejection, rather the mother would be 100% in his/her corner. Also, indicated here is an emphasis on human values rather than material values. That is, the concern is for happiness rather than the acquisition of material goods. Elaine's dreams for herself indicate an assumption that
family life would be part of living and in her view an assumed part of a young Black woman's future. Finally a value is placed on education not only as a means of improving one's status but as a value in and of itself.

Another adaptation to the genogram was a question designed to get at the nature of past experiences with white people. When asked whether Elaine discussed how to deal with white people, all family members answered no.

Linda: What did your family tell you about dealing with white folks?

Elaine: You know, I don't really recall them saying anything 'cause going back and thinking, a lot of my mother and father's friends, when I was 9, 10, 11, seemed to be, 'cause we were basically in a predominantly white neighborhood at the time when I was coming up on Fairmont St., so most of the people there were white. Was no constant visiting but the times I remember people coming to the house, we had a very good family, a Black family on the 1st floor who we call "aunt" and we call the children our cousins, we just grew up like that, my mother and her were very close, but a majority of people that did stop in or sent us food baskets and stuff were the white neighbors in the neighborhood. And we really never got into discussions of Black vs. white or the prejudice or anything like that.

Linda: Did you ever have any bad experiences?

Elaine: No, I haven't, no. I don't like white people though, but I have never had any bad experiences.

Linda: Well, what do you tell your kids about...?

Elaine: We don't get into that, I just tell that they have to tolerate them, they have to be as good as, if not better than...we don't go into any deep conversations.

Derek: I don't worry about any white people.

Linda: Are there any things that you've heard from your mother or family members about dealing in this world or how to get along...
Greg: I, really no, haven't heard anything from different family members or from my mother. I just from experiences and what-not I just know that you can't act the same with everybody...I don't communicate with the ones who aren't friends.

Several important considerations emerge from this discussion. Elaine explains that although her parents never discussed prejudice and she never had any bad experience, she does not like white people. Even though she has never had any "deep conversations" about whites, Greg indicates that he knows that you can't act the same around them. The "learning" of these attitudes appears to be handed down, not verbally, but through observation of the behavior of significant people in the life of the child. These behaviors are connected to two values: adaptability and oppression/paranoia. Also implicit in the statements regarding the family not having direct conversations about prejudice are the notions of humanism and optimism. The strategy of not directly commenting on prejudice allows Black children to evaluate whites on their individual merits. In this family, this strategy does not block family members from interaction with whites but rather facilitates an optimistic philosophy of "seeing is believing."

Structural Assessment

The structural assessment (Minuchin, 1974) was completed in the first and second session. The assessment included: the family's structure as revealed in its subsystem organization; boundaries and the relative enmeshment or disengagement; the family's developmental stage and its performance of tasks appropriate to that stage; and the family's current life context including sources of stress and support.
The reader is referred to Chapter I for definitions of these terms.

**Organization**

According to the theory, no particular form of family (nuclear, single parent or extended) is inherently better than any other. The extended family, Minuchin states, "is a form well adapted to stress and scarcity" (p. 95). However, much of the focus of therapeutic practice is on family members who live within the same household. Household analysis limits appreciation of the complexity of Black family life. Examination of the data on the Wilcox family's organization reveals a much more complex system than is described by structural family therapy. The family organization and structure extends beyond the household to include her siblings and parent.

For the purposes of this subsection, the primary focus of family organization is viewed in terms of its subsystems and hierarchy. Boundaries, which are usually associated with organization will be discussed in the subsection on enmeshment and disengagement.

The household is organized into many subsystems including the parental subsystem, the executive subsystem, the young children subsystem, the sibling and male subsystem, and the "function" or task subsystem.

The parental subsystem consists of Elaine. She is clearly the parent-in-residence regardless of whether she's home or not. The executive subsystem consists of Elaine and Greg. It's functions are similar to those of the parental subsystem. It serves to protect,
care for, nurture, guide, teach, and discipline the young. When Elaine is away or unavailable, Greg is in charge and could be termed the patental child. In one sequence Greg and I were discussing school activities while Elaine was on the phone.

Derek: Ma, may I have a piece of cake? (Elaine, on the phone, does not answer. Derek then directs his question to Greg.)

Greg: (stops talking about his activities at school)...No, not now, put it back.

Derek: Why?  

Greg: 'Cause.

Derek: (to me) See how jive he is.

Greg: You haven't even eaten lunch yet.

Derek: I wanna piece of cake (putting the cake back in the refrigerator).

Greg then continues with telling me about his activities.

There appears to be some difficulty with Elaine and Greg working out a smooth understanding of his authority when she is not home and how to give it up when she is. For instance, occasionally Elaine would clash with Greg when he corrected the boys in her presence. She would make a direct challenge to his exerting authority rather than undermine his authority by overruling him. The children state that sometimes when their conflicts get too big, they call Elaine on the phone. In this way, the boys call on Elaine to resolve sibling conflicts which they could resolve themselves. This means that Elaine is overworked in her parental role. Three possibilities are indicated: there are real limits to Greg's authority which have been implicitly agreed upon
by the family; Greg's authority is ineffective in certain areas; and/or they (the children) have found an interesting way to maintain Elaine's involvement in the sibling subsystem. The function of this behavior was not discovered during the course of the study, however, it does not appear to be creating dysfunction in the family.

The two younger boys are connected to each other in a subsystem. This subsystem serves many functions including care and protection of each other at school, an available peer group when others are not around, and a place to talk about their older brother. Often Derek bids for an alliance with Casey in order to form a union against Greg.

The boys form a sibling subsystem. Conflict arises between the three but it appears reasonable for the ages of the boys and is overridden by the degree of caring and concern that goes on even in their fighting. Greg protects each of his brothers by expecting a lot of them. They, in turn, protect and support him in his role as parental child through challenges to his authority (a Black behavior pattern identified by White, 1972).

Elaine comments on them as a male subsystem by stating that it seemed easier to only have children of one sex since other decisions like the safety of female children did not have to be considered nor the judgment of differential treatment/privileges on the basis of sex have to be decided.

The whole family serves as a "function" or task subsystem with each member sharing tasks which are undifferentiated by them in terms of difficulty or importance. These tasks are seen as necessary and as
contributing to the functioning of the whole. Included in their list of functions is holding a job; school attendance and school work; housework including vacuuming, cleaning, trash, clothes; and maintaining house rules. Each of these tasks result in the smooth operation of the household and constitutes an overt declaration of belonging and commitment to the family group.

When viewed only from the context of the household, some of the richness and shared responsibilities are ignored. A view of the so-called extended family shows that many of Elaine's siblings also participate in the maintenance of this household. Several adults participate in the care and socialization of the children including Elaine's husband and her mother but also her brothers who involve themselves in the boys recreational and religious activities. This socialization subsystem provides for each boy a wide range of interpersonal experiences with adults. This is contrary to the findings of the negative bias literature which suggests a limited amount of contact with male figures of children in female headed households. Each adult also contributes to the growth of each boy by exposing him to some particular activity. The "limited background" and "deprived experiences" notions forwarded by negative bias research were not evident in this family. The complex organization found in this family has implications for family therapy practice which will be discussed in Chapter V.

Another dimension of family organization is hierarchy. Minuchin's work on the subject seems to suggest that a single, linear hierarchy exists in families. Examination of the data on the Wilcox family found
multiple simultaneous hierarchies existing and in operation according to the demand. First and foremost is the hierarchy of generation or age which emanates from a Black value system that places respect on age. In this hierarchy, Elaine's mother calls the whole family together. She is identified as the head of the family and Elaine describes herself as having inward strength that keeps everyone going. Another hierarchy is based on the possession of human values. In the Black community, status and respect are given on the basis of how one treats others rather than on material wealth, job position, age, or sex (Staples, 1976). This is also evident in the Black family. Within the Wilcox "extended" family, Elaine who is the youngest sibling is also the one that family members seek out for advice, and has problems discussed with her. She smoothes out conflicts between family members. This central role as problem solver and negotiator places her at the top of the hierarchy on this dimension. There also seems to be a discipline hierarchy in the Wilcox household. Elaine disciplines all three boys but Derek remarks that Greg is "hard" on him and Casey states that Derek is "hard" on him. Data regarding discipline outside of the household members was not obtained. Other hierarchies may also exist but this did not emerge during the study of this family.

**Boundaries and enmeshment or disengagement**

According to structural theory enmeshment-disengagement is a continuum that also suggests the type of boundaries that exist between subsystems. The boundaries in the Wilcox family would most likely be
termed diffuse and their transactional style termed enmeshed. Members were extremely concerned about each other, to the point that often distance was minimized. Also, there was a concern for individual behavior which affected every member of the family. For instance, if one of the boys did something wrong, it was likely that everyone will contribute to the verbal chastisement. This was in some ways disciplinary but most importantly, it appeared to be the voice of what was acceptable as a member of the family.

Boundaries in this family allow for a large amount of participation on various levels by all family members. Children were allowed to have opinions about any subject. However having an opinion did not necessarily constitute influence in decision making. Certain areas were strictly reserved for Elaine's decision making even though opinions could be expressed about the subject. For instance, the boys seemed to have opinions about whether their father should be in the home or not, however it was clear that this area of decision making was Elaine's alone.

Participation, in this family, could occur either simultaneously or one at a time, particularly among children. That is, rarely did the children and Elaine speak simultaneously. Participational behavior seemed to be related to interest and excitement in the topic under discussion. The more interest, the more simultaneous participation there was. Rather than being chaotic, this form of participation seemed to spark even greater interest and excitement. Each of the boys seemed to be able to hear and appreciate the other's comments and
build from each other's statements. Participation and decision making is discussed later in the discussion section.

Certain areas within the family were marked by rigid boundaries. These are the peer group activities and most recreational activities. Each member has authority over entertaining his/her self, who their friends are and what activities are done with friends. These areas are not necessarily shared within the family. The basis for allowing this degree of autonomy is a mutually agreed upon rule regarding respect. As Elaine states it:

I don't go anywhere that they don't know where I am and I expect the same from them. It's all a matter of giving and receiving respect and I basically think that that's what our guidelines are. I'm not going to ask them to do anything that I wouldn't do.

Developmental stage

In families with many children, it is often possible for family members to face many stages at once. Thus, Elaine and her family face the aging of her mother, the early school years of Casey and the launching of adolescence with Greg. The family seems fully prepared to enter each of these phases. Casey has begun school and is doing fine. Greg, partly because of the need for his independence, is ready to enter the adult world. He has plans for college, is able to care for his basic needs--being able to cook, clean, iron, he can care for others, and can handle himself in various situations. Elaine and her siblings have faced and are somewhat prepared for their mother's eventual death. Her stroke in 1973 brought this reality much closer to home.

The family's organization and behavior pattern not only reveals
appropriate functioning for the developmental crises they face but also an implicit preparation of members to assume roles as people leave or pass on. As Greg prepares for college in a few years, Derek is being groomed for the role of parental child which is necessary for the family's continued survival. Elaine, too, has begun to participate in some of the central functions of the entire family by being available to her siblings. This will make the passing of her mother somewhat easier for everyone. Each person is in a kind of unconscious apprenticeship program that prepares them to fill necessary functions.

Sources of support and stress

Sources of support for this family are wide and varied. The larger family serves as a major source of support for the household. Many relatives participate in the functioning of the family. Two of Elaine's brothers help by providing the boys with recreational activities. The boys' father helps both with childcare and education. Elaine's mother is available to talk to about personal problems and Elaine's sister occasionally helps with monetary needs. Aside from that, there is the daily contact between family members which provides strength and support implicitly. Another source of support is the flexibility of roles within the household. Each member is responsible for housework and their own entertainment. Although the family is not religious, in the going to church sense, there is a spiritual quality that provides strength to carry on day-to-day activities. Elaine believes that "the Man up there is watching over all of us."
Elaine states that she has no major complaints. She identifies three things that support her. Her mother is key, she serves as an example that keeps her going. She has a few very close friends that are available to call when she feels depressed. She says:

I know I can pick up the phone and call and chat for half an hour about something entirely different but it's helping me get back onto the right wave length and I feel good about that...then, you know, the kids keep me going. So between those three factions, I really don't have any major complaints 'cause I have my health, the kids have their health and I'm thankful for that.

Once again the values of optimism and family (in its broadest sense) unity emerge in our conversation. The family in this instance included what Nobles (1976) calls 'para-kin' or non-blood relatives who helped support family members. Also of interest in this statement is Elaine's indication that she gets "counseling" from friends, not by talking directly about the problem but by talking about something completely different. It appears that it is the personal contact with a close friend rather than the content of the conversation that has "therapeutic" value.

Sources of stress for the family include facing the death of Elaine's mother. Being poor, of course, contributes to stress. However, not having money is dealt with in a pragmatic way. The focus in always on "what we have, rather than what we don't." Additional sources of stress also originate in the larger context of the neighborhood due to high unemployment, the other is patterns of racism which serve to limit the family member's choices and options for the future.
Decision Making and Problem Solving Tasks

The decision making and problem solving tasks were designed to observe the family's ability to organize and work on solutions (Ferreira, 1965; Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976). The purpose of the tasks was to view patterns of adaptability and to gain more information regarding boundaries, family rules and roles, and subsystems. These sessions were video taped for more careful analysis. This subsection is organized to discuss the family's responses and behavior regarding the introduction of the video tape. Their responses to the tasks are then analyzed.

When presented with the possibility of being video taped as part of the study, the family agreed without hesitation. In fact, the boys appeared quite excited at the prospect of being on "T.V." We proceeded to make an appointment for the following Saturday. I arrived on Saturday to find a somewhat reticent family. They seemed quieter than our previous meeting. They chose to approach the taping very casually. All of the boys were still in their pajamas when I arrived and remained so for the interview.

I began setting up the equipment. It turned out that the equipment was bulky and took up an enormous amount of space in the small apartment. The two boys slowly became interested in the equipment and helped me set it up. We talked about how each piece functioned. Then I let them operate it and look at the picture they had made. During this time Elaine remained in the kitchen. When we were ready for the interview to begin, Greg was reluctant to come out of the bedroom.
Elaine had to do a considerable amount of coaxing. I understood the cautious quiet of the entire family and Greg's hesitation to be an expression of the family's protection of it's boundaries. The introduction of this "foreign" equipment and interviewing procedure elicited a response which appeared to be rooted in the value of oppression/paranoia. This value indicates a sensitivity to potential danger and a skepticism of the unfamiliar. Derek and Casey were sent out as scouts and their acceptance of the camera and recorder loosened up the family considerably. As the interview began, everyone seemed to relax a little and there was some "hamming it up" on the part of the two younger ones. Greg appeared to maintain some degree of caution throughout the interview, however. In this session Greg behaved as the family's boundary guard. The importance of this behavior cannot be overstressed and will be discussed in more detail in the Discussion section of this chapter.

Review of the video tape of the problem solving session revealed that the audio portion of the tape was not working. [This was discovered after all the completion of data collected.] Therefore data from this session will be taken from notes and observations of the researcher. The reader is referred to Chapter III and Appendix C for a description of the tasks.

The first task was the Family Fuss. Instructions were given by audio tape. This procedure proved to have a negative effect on the family. The family appeared confused and the researcher had to re-explain the tasks. Consequently, it was not used for the following session nor for the other family studied. The family selected a recent
and recurring fuss in the house that occurs about who decides what to watch on television. Elaine was the person who selected the particular fuss to talk about.

From their description, it appears that this fuss is sometimes resolved within the sibling subsystem but more often than not it is resolved with Elaine stepping in and moderating. The tone of the discussion was flat and of a "school report" nature. It appeared that the family resolves their difficulties as they happen so that talking about them after resolution has been reached is seen as unnecessary and in some ways meaningless. The fact that this task did not elicit the type of involvement that it was designed to provoke may be due to the fact that this is a healthy family. In more conflicted or dysfunctional families, a discussion of this issue may have elicited a broader range of response. On the other hand if this observation is combined with other research in Black psychology, it may call into question a use of the past. Further elaboration of this issue will appear in the Discussion section of this chapter.

The second task was the Picture Story task. Instructions were given by audio tape. The family was asked to select a picture from each of two folders. From the first folder, the picture they selected showed a couple going over their bills. The process for selecting this picture was that the first person who said, "Let's do this one" turned out to be the picture that they chose. Greg was the one who selected the first picture. Each of the children, beginning with Casey, gave their version of what the picture was about. Then Elaine tied it all
together so that all of their versions were included. The process of this story telling did not seem to really engage the family. Most of the talking was speaking in turn rather than the simultaneous talking referred to earlier. The family was somewhat flat in their presentation of the story. The story also did not yield any significant data regarding the family's values toward money, bills, etc. Elaine states that she always tries to live within her means. She does not have any bills and tries to pay cash for what she wants. Perhaps the picture was too far afield from the family's experience. The reason for their selection of this picture was not revealed.

The second folder was offered and a picture selected. Once again the first person who spoke up was the one to select the picture. Derek selected a picture which showed a man carrying a television on his shoulder with the appearance of sneaking down the stairs with it. Each family member had a slightly different version of the story. All of the stories, however, were related to the man stealing the television. What was most interesting about each version was the fact that all family members saw him stealing the television as a result of some desperation and hardship. Casey thought that he was taking the television because he had never had a family (he was an orphan) and he didn't know any better. Elaine, Derek and Greg all felt somewhat similarly that the man was stealing to feed his family, take care of someone who was sick or someone who needed money. No one mentioned stealing to buy something for himself or for personal profit. This view is similar to the one identified by Ladner (1971) in which she found that there was a
strong value against stealing in the Black community but also a pragmatic view that stealing was often necessary to provide the basics—food, clothing, shelter—in a society that advertises wealth while simultaneously supporting continued poverty. The family felt that the ending to this story would be that the man's troubles would be resolved somehow and he wouldn't have to steal any more.

The tone of this picture story livened up a little in comparison to the first. Still the family was not as active as they had been in other portions of the study. Elaine, again, summarized everyone's view so that they were all included as part of the study. At no point in either portion of this task did the family try to come to some kind of consensus type decision even though the instruction explicitly stated that they should try to agree. This issue will be discussed further in the Discussion section of this chapter.

Some values emerged from the discussion of the second picture. The humanistic value was clearly evident in their description of the man's plight, as being related to human and survival needs as opposed to monetary gain. Also, the value of optimism was clear in their speaking on how the story would end up. They were sure that things would get better for him so that he wouldn't have to steal. Issues that arose in Tasks 1 and 2 will be raised in the Discussion section of this chapter.

The third task asked the family to identify who plays what roles in the family. Instructions were given orally. Much of the specific content has been related in other sections of this description so that
the process is described here.

Striking was the amount of involvement of Elaine's siblings in the life of the household. Important, too, was the process of the family for deciding who played what role. Whenever a particular trait was read many of the members would shout one one or two names. Then each family member would take turns saying who they thought it was. There was no disagreement about who fit a particular role. The family chose not to answer the question regarding who preaches to everybody about how bad they are as they felt that no one in their family fit this characteristic. Aside from illustrating Nobles' (1972) notion of "continual flexibility in circularity," it was impressive how clearly and unanimously members saw each other's participation in family roles.

The data presented above is the synthesis of the observations of the Wilcox family in a variety of circumstances. The treatment turns now to a description of the Cole family and then commonalities and issues are raised in the Discussion section.

The Cole Family

The Cole household consists of seven persons: Mrs. Cole, 51 and six of her ten children: Marvin, 22; Deborah, 21, Gary, 20; Sherlyn, 17; Yvonne, 16; Andrea, 15. They live in a seven room apartment that is very comfortable. Pictures of the family line the mantle of the fireplace three deep. Photo albums are on a table in the living room full of pictures and newspaper clippings depicting the important events in the family's life. Despite the number of people who live there, the
rooms are clean and neat. The walls have pictures and personal mementos are placed on shelves in the nooks and crannies that most old houses possess.

Sherlyn, Yvonne, and Andrea all attend different high schools, the reason being that Mrs. Cole wants them to learn that they can make it on their own. This strategy is working out well by the family's assessment. Deborah works as a teacher's aid at a Day Care Center, each of the others have part-time or work study jobs. Mrs. Cole started working part-time recently, the first time in nineteen years. The family is fairly active in a Baptist church in the area.

The Cole house was always full of people. Each of the "children" had their friends over and often one or more of Mrs. Coles' siblings were present. The house was always warm, friendly, and actively noisy and alive.

The Cole family was interviewed by the research associate in early October 1979. Those present decided to speak on the death of a family member--Mrs. Cole's mother who died in 1974. They were Deborah, Gary, Mrs. Cole and Deborah's long standing boyfriend.

Mrs. Cole's mother was characterized as the head of the family. She was loving and warm and was central to the family's functioning. Each family member discussed their Grandmother and how they remembered her in life. They remember her as making a big thing of holidays, bringing the family together and being a peacemaker. All seemed to agree that Mrs. Cole had taken over these roles when her mother died. According to Deborah, Mrs. Cole is like a reincarnation of her Grand-
mother. Deborah's friend remembers his last contact with the Grandmother. He was going away in the service but insisted on seeing her the day before he left. They searched and searched for her. Finally at about nine p.m. they found her. She had been visiting with friends all day. He said his good-byes and left the next day. A week later, she died. The family places significance on this occurrence which speaks to three issues: the mystical attribution placed on the occurrence; the impact that she had on people that extended beyond the "blood family"; and Deborah's friend's right to belong to the family. The spirit of their grandmother is still strong and she still lives within the family.

When asked about their definition of survival, they responded:

Mrs. Cole: Survival to me is a daily thing. Ask the Lord to give you strength daily and weekly and just trying to make it day by day.

R.A.: Would you say holding your family together, feeding your family...

Friend: Feeding the family is a problem sometimes.

Mrs. Cole: My idea of survival is its more physical and mentally, its more than the material side of it. See, I like that part better than just thinking about any luxuries or material things I could get. I would just rather hope that their spirits are in good form and good health.

Reflective in this conversation are several values including optimism, spirituality, and an emphasis on human values rather than material things.

Several family members and 'para-kin' discussed the question of what the term family meant to them. Those present at this session were
Mrs. Cole, Deborah, Dolly and her son Garth (a friend of Deborah's),
Travis (nephew of Mrs. Cole), and Donald (a friend of Gary's).

Dolly: Family means a group of people that you love and love
each other, friends everybody gets together having a good
time enjoying everyday life.

Deborah: Family to me is something like a tree—it's people
being together loving one another, sharing things, doing
things that's going to make each other happy.

Mrs. Cole: And the good times and the bad times...

Deborah: ...still we're all supposed to stick together.

Travis: everybody being together and stuff.

Donald: means love.

Deborah: It means whatever you go through, I'll be right
there by your side regardless whether it's good or bad.

Linda: What do you think is the main reason for a family?

Deborah: To talk things over with especially when you have
problems or you're down and out.

Well sometimes it sorta means having somebody to lean on.
Like if you're a mother by yourself or you're a widow or
something and you have children, this makes you feel good
because at least you have your children. Don't you agree
with that, Dolly?

Dolly: Yes.

Mrs. Cole: and if you're a father and you don't know too much
about raising up a family at least if you have your children,
like the boys and girls to show you the way and show you the
different things, they can do, like run the house or going to
the store or how to pay the bills.

Dolly: They lift you up when you're really down.

Mrs. Cole: Created by God and I think it was a very mean-
ingful thing to have a mother and father and the children, you
know the sons and the daughters and the grandchildren, aunts
and uncles. And you know like recently in my case my son's
death and all the family came together and they were all mak-
ing me feel better and the minute I saw them all coming it
just uplifted me even in an hour of sorrow. It's nothing like having a family. It's really wonderful having them all be around you and they make holidays seem more sparkling. There's times when you wanna be private but mostly it's good to have them around.

Mostly on Sunday afternoons, I have my family around or some of my company or some of my extended family like Dolly and Garth. They're my extended family.

The value of family and the expanded definition of family is illustrated here. Also significant is the importance of children in the family and the psychological support that the family offers.

During the second, third, and fourth session, information was gathered regarding the family's development over time. The genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976) depicts four generations spanning the lives of Mrs. Cole's parents through to her grandchildren. The following historical and contextual information was gathered. Figure 3 is the genogram of the Cole family.

Mrs. Cole is the oldest of ten children born of Black parents. Her mother Esther was born in Atlanta, Georgia and migrated to Hartford. It was there that they met and married in 1928. Both of her parents were Baptist and the three children were baptized in that faith. When Mrs. Cole was fifteen, her parents divorced (1943). She attributes this to their age difference and just a general parting of the ways. She remained in contact with both parents after their divorce.

Mrs. Cole was born and raised in Hartford. She has four brothers and five sisters who have lived to adulthood. She characterizes her family as being very close. She states that any time she feels
Fig.3. Genogram of the Cole Family

KEY
- Male
- Female
- Marriage
- Child
- Deceased
- Date of birth
- Date of death
- Date of divorce
- Date of marriage
- Date of separation
Fig. 3. Genogram of the Cole Family (Continued)
depressed, it always uplifts her to see her family coming. Everyone grew up in Hartford. Sibling 3 lives in Dallas as a result of making a career in the Armed Services. All other siblings live in the Greater Hartford-Springfield area. Contact occurs daily between Mrs. Cole and siblings 2, 4, 5, 6, 10; weekly with siblings 3, 7, 8, and her father; and three times a week with sibling 9. Sibling 3 visits three times a year. The family gets together on July 4th and Christmas at Mrs. Cole's house.

Mrs. Cole met her husband in Hartford and married him in 1955. Her husband was born in St. Andrews, Barbadoes. The date of his migration was not obtained. He is a Seventh Day Adventist. According to Mrs. Cole, religious differences never presented any problems for her and her husband. All ten of her children are Baptists--what Mrs. Cole terms slow-walkin' Baptists. She had four children prior to her marriage. They had six children together. In 1976, Mrs. Cole and her husband were separated. As she describes it, the decision was difficult to make but it was for the benefit of the entire family. Recently (12/79), Mrs. Cole and Deborah went to Barbadoes and met her husband's family for the first time.

During the course of this study, her eldest son died unexpectedly. The whole family rallied to encounter this stressful event. Mrs. Cole's way of helping to deal with his death is to talk about him and to encourage family members to do the same. Nowhere is there an attitude of "forget-it and it will go away." Instead, she talks about their last day together and how grateful she is to have had that time
with him. In this way the dead (including the grandmother, son and others) continue to exist in the family and are used as examples. The memory of the son is used to remind the younger girls that they should continue their education as he would have wanted. His death is used by Deborah to remind her mother to stop sacrificing and "putting off" her goals in life. This opinion convinced her to take the trip to Barbadoes which was another of her son's wishes.

Deborah: You can never keep putting things off. And that's the only little key problem my mother has wrong with her. She's a beautiful person but she has a lot of goals she wants to reach but...

Mrs. Cole: That's why I'm going to Barbadoes on the 31st.

Deborah: She say...well ah...

Mrs. Cole: 'Cause Deborah says, "no, Mommy, can't promise forever, we're goin' this year."

Deborah: Right! 'Cause next year ain't promised to us. In that case you could never have told me that death would come knocking on our door two days after Thanksgiving. That was just somethin' that happened and just like it happened to him it could happen to any of us. So you must fulfill and do what you wanna do now.

Mrs. Cole: Yes, and then my sister says, "when do you want your mother to go," and then she walks in with the tickets. So, I can't fight against that. (laughter)

Nodal events that Mrs. Cole identifies are the passing on of her mother and son and her aunts who lived in New Jersey. Also a nodal event was a surprise birthday for her mother's 28th birthday. Mrs. Cole felt that she was so old that she didn't want her friends to know her mother's age. She now laughs about that and relates it as one of the stories that she remembers from her childhood. Finally, the
separation from her husband after 21 years of marriage was a nodal event in her life.

The question of parental aspirations was in adaptation to the genogram. In answering this question Mrs. Cole stated that aspirations were formulated by individuals. What was important to her is that each member find a field that s/he wants to be in. What she hopes for is that her daughters live their lives somewhat different from her own.

Mrs. Cole: When I was 21, like Deborah, I had probably three or four children by then, three at least. I want her life to be steered a little bit away from that and leave the children 'til a little later and get to know and develop her ownself, and Sherry, Andrea and Yvonne, all three of them. Especially my girls more so I want them to be more, to see about their self first and to grow and develop in their self. I would really like that.

She elaborates on the acceptance of individual decisions regarding career choice and life goals when she discusses her son.

Mrs. Cole: Like my oldest son, he went to college and he came out the service and he could have been an accountant but he chose to work in the restaurant to be near the people.

Deborah: Near his people...

Mrs. Cole: and be with the people so I never had the feeling that all my children had to be greatly educated or be so outstanding I just rather for them to be their own self and each one find their personal happiness and that's quite a job for a mother to have this many children and make each child feel important.

Aside from a description of aspirations, this is a clear articulation of the values of group identification and racial loyalty which when discussed by the family was a highly respected trait.

Mrs. Cole describes the job of a parent in a large family as:

Any mother that had that amount of children, people will ask us if....it's something for the mother to feel that she's
reaching every one of these children and making them feel very much loved and very much in the family, you know you're included.

All of these conversations depict the high value placed on children and family. The children are accepted for what they are and what they decide. Even though her two oldest daughters followed in her footsteps and had children at 18, she still hopes that these four daughters will have the opportunity to pursue some of their other interests first.

If not, there is a "take it as it comes" attitude which seems connected with a belief system which emphasizes a flow with nature attitude rather than a control of nature belief system. Each person remarks that whatever happens, happens. It has to be dealt with in some way depending upon the situation.

When asked the question of what each member has learned from the family, the daughters answer:

Linda: In terms of like bein' able to deal with the streets, what did you learn about that?

Deborah: Well I mostly learned about the streets when we were living down on Bedford Street 'cause at a young age we was exposed to a lot but we still knew how to deal with it, and we still, regardless of what type of background a person came from, white, or Black or Puerto Rican, any type, we still knew that they all had feelings and we cope with a person as an individual.

Linda: Are there things that you learned from your family?

Sheri: From my mother, Learned how to talk to people politely, be more nicer to people, be kind, open but I always hear my mother tell me don't do people how you don't want to be treated. Treat people how you want them to treat you in return.

Another adaptation to the genogram was a question designed to get at the nature of past experiences with white people.
Linda: What kinds of dealings have the three of you each had with white folks and has anything bad ever come out of it?

Deborah: As far as me, I've never had any problem around white people. The simple fact is because I'm not prejudice. And I judge all us on the same balance, you know, I don't behold whites above me, I don't behold Blacks or Puerto Ricans. I put us all on the same level. You respect me, you speak and be kind to me, I'll do you the same. I'll respect, I get that from my parents.

However, her philosophy does not block her from seeing her relationship to whites and to understand some of the dynamics of racism that she encounters.

Deborah: Like on a job they always have the say-so but I know how to deal with 'em 'cause I get white too, at times. I definitely know how to deal with 'em. But as far as having crisis or serious problems, uh, uh.

Linda: Well, when you say you know how to deal with them what do you mean?

Deborah: I'm talking about according to what situation or what should come up, I know how to deal with them. In a way where I'm not going to come off where they say they have a term "all Blacks or all niggers get uptight or get upset." I wouldn't dare let one of them get me upset or uptight. 'Cause that's what they want to see you do--act crazy or start cussing, and talking loud. I deal with them just how they deal with me. If they come out cussing and I could tell them off without slurring or using not one cuss word.

Linda: So you try to rise above what they try to do?

Deborah: Oh, of course! Of course!

Linda: Where did you learn that?

Deborah: Definitely from my mother.

Linda: Did she say to you or just by you watching her...?

Deborah: By her reactions, she never said, cause my mother was never the type never to set us down and discuss races because we always from young little kids, babies, she always had a multiple of friends, white, Black, gay, straight. She just knew how to deal with anybody so that that was something
brought into focus with us so we definitely know how to deal with it.

Linda: Have you ever had any problem with white people?

Sheri: No, I don't see any difference between Black people and white people. I just treat a person the way they treat me whether they are white, Black, whatever color. You respect me, I'm going to respect you.

Linda: How about you?

Andrea: No.

Although there are no overt discussions about dealing with whites, it is clear that Deborah has worked out a way for dealing with them using the values of humanism, adaptability and oppression/paranoia. Sheri's response most clearly indicates an optimistic value. Family members have been exposed to a variety of people and have learned to deal with them. Consequently, their approach to people is based on individual behavior. When they have determined that a person cannot be trusted or does not respect them they are able to initiate a range of behaviors that are functional to the circumstance.

Another question related to other survival tricks that Mrs. Cole has taught her children yielded the following:

Linda: How about other kinds of survival things? Little tricks that your parents taught you when times were hard?

Mrs. Cole: Well we were always taught, I guess I did that to my children too. I'm sure there were days thank God, they weren't hungry, they were fed and they were told not to discuss this. To go to school and I knew they were clean and neat as anybody else and to hold they head up high and go right on and do whatever. 'Cause I never tolerated sassiness. If you don't have everything up to par you're still just as good and you can hold your head up and go right on and act as though your world was O.K.

Linda: When there were times when there wasn't enough to eat,
how did you explain that or did you?

Deborah: No, because it was like oatmeal was better than no meal. Oatmeal is just not definitely meant for the morning. If you don't have a meat to put on at dinner time then you put oatmeal and you substitute that for meat and they ain't gotta go out and tell the world that we didn't have meat and bread.

Mrs. Cole: 'Cause we had to pay our rent and utilities.

Deborah: And they didn't know it unless you told 'em because you were just as clean as the Board of Health and just as clean as the next kid.

Mrs. Cole: And looked just as plump and fat as the next one.

Deborah: It just wasn't with steak.

Mrs. Cole: I didn't really need to go into detail. If I was satisfied with it, so were they. I've been very fortunate, I never had much grumbling about that. My children have always been satisfied cause I could go to the bakery and get bakery goods and buy milk and they would drink and eat it and think nothing of it. And I was glad they were that way. At the same time I wanted them to be thankful for everything. Thankful that they could see the sun that there were other children who can't see and that they could see the stars in the evening.

Several values emerge from this discussion. What is essential to the family is a sense of pride that despite the problem you are clean and you hold your head up. Spirituality and optimism are significant here with the attitude being, "be thankful for what you have, we'll make it and be O.K." This view had helped the family get through rough times together and remain intact.

Structural Assessment

The structural assessment was completed in the second and third session. The assessment included: the family's structure as revealed in its subsystem organization; boundaries and the relative enmeshment
or disengagement; the family's developmental stage and its performance of tasks appropriate to that stage; and, the family's current life context including sources of stress and support. The reader is referred to Chapter I for definitions of these terms.

Organization

As in the Wilcox family, analysis of only the household limits appreciation of the complexity of this family's life. Many family members participate in various aspects of life.

For the purposes of this subsection, the primary focus of family organization is viewed in terms of its subsystems and hierarchy. Boundaries which are usually associated with organization are discussed in the subsection on enmeshment and disengagement.

The household is organized into many subsystems including the parental subsystem, the executive subsystem, age subsystems, female subsystem, sibling subsystem, "function" or task subsystem, and the socialization subsystem.

The parental subsystem consists of Mrs. Cole. She is clearly the parent, that is the one that everyone would identify as the person in charge.

Within the household, Mrs. Cole and Deborah form an executive subsystem. Mrs. Cole describes Deborah as being very helpful to her in the management of the other children. She is responsible and guides them. For instance, Mrs. Cole and Deborah have decided that Andrea does not know how to speak up and be assertive. This is part of the reason for the decision to have the three girls attend different high
schools. In this way Andrea learns how to take the bus across town, make necessary connections and be on time. Although she felt that she would not like the school before she started, it seems to be working out fine and she is finding her confidence and, according to Mrs. Cole, developing her personality. Both Deborah and Mrs. Cole are concerned that Andrea not remain the baby of the family and have put this concrete plan into action in order to avoid that possibility.

Mrs. Cole identifies age subsystems as important to the way she relates to her children. She places them in three age categories. The older group consists of her first four children. There is a three year separation then the next three children form the middle group. There is another three year separation with the younger group consisting of the last three children. Each age group has a different set of expectations that applies to them. The older group are out of the house, and are expected to be independent. The middle group lives at home but have total freedom over their social lives. Finally, the younger group's social life is much more closely scrutinized both to offer needed protection and to make sure that each girl develops socially.

The female subsystem appears to be the strongest both in the household and in the larger family. Mrs. Cole is very close to her sisters and usually speaks to them nightly on the phone. Also there is a lot of concern about the growth and development of the female children. The socialization process within this subsystem is to teach each girl what the street is like and how to handle herself out in it. The family has some very clear ideas about how girls ought to behave
which they inherited from Mrs. Cole's grandmother.

Mrs. Cole: Maybe from my grandmother that this level of moral strictness was gotten. Because and my mother also taught us that you have to have respect for yourself in order for people to have respect for you and this would be more important than a quick dollar or gettin' to be known in the street. We always say your reputation is more than anything.

Deborah also contributes to this subsystem.

Deborah: The main thing talkin' to young teenager girls is about morals, responsibility, hygiene, taking care of yourself, puttin' yourself first, more so than others. But when young girls start gettin' 15, 16, and 17 they usually start courtin' and you have to put your feelings first before anyone else. That's how come you see so many young girls with families at the age of 15, 16, and 17. Because they forget more about their self and was concerned according to how their boyfriend would feel, doin' something to make him happy. My main concern with my little sisters is making their self happy before they make anyone else happy.

Father also has some policies regarding the female subsystem.

Deborah: The simple fact is because my father has very strict lines when it comes to courtin' or having boyfriends. He believe that your education should come first and boyfriends can come later.

Mrs. Cole encourages the girls to bring friends home, to date and develop their social lives within the framework of decency.

Mrs. Cole: Yeah, we like the open door policy. We like, we figure that the more company comes in, this eliminates them so much going out. I'd rather have them in. And sometimes we have quite a crowd and it can get noisy but over the weekends I'd rather have the company in. It makes them more geared towards being home types.

Their concern is that they protect the females from physical harm and from the possibility of prostitution until they can deal with the street life with confidence. Each girl is assessed individually regarding this ability and given freedom to come and go when she proves her competence. The female subsystem is so strong that once when one
of the girl's friends was there, she was invited to come in and talk with us. The thought was that since she was the only girl in her family, it might help her to hear about the streets and other important information that young ladies should know.

The sibling subsystem was much more difficult to see in operation as it was often impossible to get them all together at the same time. However, it appears that this subsystem functions to give each other support and to support their mother through a high degree of cooperation and mutual self regulation.

The "function" or task subsystem serves to keep the household running. Each person has responsibilities for the maintenance of the house. Generally, the men have what Mrs. Cole terms the heavy work which includes taking out the garbage, washing floors, shoveling snow, and sweeping and cleaning the porches and stairways. At least once when I was there, the oldest son, Marvin, was preparing a meal and Mrs. Cole commented that he is quite a cook. The women do the dishes, clothes, beds, cleaning and dusting. These tasks are done on a rotational basis.

A socialization subsystem exists which transcends the boundaries of the household. Each of the older family members contribute to the socialization of the younger members. Deborah comments on this socialization subsystem from her own experience with it. In a discussion regarding her knowledge of the streets, she states:

Deborah: I learned this mainly a lot as far as when it comes to street, drugs, dealing with dope addicts, prostitutes, or whatever, I learned that and took much of my education from
my oldest brother, Pops (Ronnie) and my aunts. They're very straight forward more so than like my mother. She's just beginning to open up and talk about different things like sex, young girls, drugs, and different things out on the street. Usually she would hand us a pamphlet to let us know about different things about menstruation or whatever but my brother, my aunts, and my oldest sister, they are very open and aggressive and they come out and tell you, you know, they don't break the words down, they just say if you're screwin', you're screwin' just like that to let you know what.

Interesting in this conversation is that the family members recognize that Mrs. Cole is not able to tell her children the facts of the streets so they take on the responsibility. There is no sense that she should change as it is obvious to everyone that there are others who are better qualified and more comfortable to talk about these issues. Mrs. Cole, on the other hand, handles tasks of the family that others would not be able to do. An example of this is bringing the family together.

Another dimension of family organization is hierarchy. Many hierarchies exist in this family as they did in the Wilcox family. First and foremost in this family was a respect for age. Examination of the data revealed repeated references to the respect of older people. Mrs. Cole encourages her children to show concern for the older people who live on the street that runs behind their house. They periodically go and see if there is anything that these elders need and also take responsibility for questioning anyone who might be handing around their homes. As the eldest sibling, Mrs. Cole calls the family together and encourages family closeness. According to her this is a tradition handed down by her mother which she feels must be carried on.
Another hierarchy is based in the possession of human values. Within the Cole family, it appeared that the eldest son was a person that everyone went to in order to share problems and get his opinion. He was held in high respect as the family saw that when he could have chosen financial "success," he chose to be with his people. It was not clear who among them would take on this role as a result of his death.

Other hierarchies may also exist but they did not emerge in the course of the study.

Boundaries and enmeshment and disengagement

According to structural theory, the boundaries of the Cole family would be considered to be diffuse. Members were extremely concerned about each other to the point that distance was often minimized. Also, individual behavior immediately affected every other member. For instance, it was observed that often Deborah or Mrs. Cole would speak for the younger daughters while simultaneously encouraging them to speak more.

Boundaries in this family allowed for a large amount of participation of each family member. Each of the children was encouraged to have and express their own opinion on a variety of topics. Not all of their opinions were accepted in the decision making, however, each opinion was voiced without argument. Often, it appeared that Mrs. Cole made decisions and if there was disagreement then Deborah might step in and join with her mother's opinion. This move served to dissolve the difference. An example of how the family handled differences of
would get them all dressed and walk to visit friends. She says:

I never really thought about it, 'til one day I said, my goodness, I have ten children.

This enmeshment is extremely functional as it provides inclusion and unity for all family members.

Developmental stage

This family faces many stages at once. When Mrs. Cole was having her first child, her mother was having her ninth child, Mrs. Cole's sister. This makes this family atypical in terms of developmental stages as they are presently outlined in the family therapy literature. However, this family is not atypical in terms of a Black norm of developmental stages which would reflect the so-called extended family model. This issue will be discussed in Chapter V.

Currently, Mrs. Cole is facing the growing up of all of her children, her own aging and the aging of her father. Although the members of the middle group of children still remain at home, it is believed that this reflects a Black lifestyle in which children only leave home for a reason (school, job in another city, marriage or children). Living on one's own is not seen as a sign of being grown up. Rarely do members strike out on their own simply because they reach their 18th birthday. In addition, there are pragmatic reasons for remaining at home, including sharing the costs of living and being able to get and give needed support.

No mention was made of the possibility of Mrs. Cole's father's death during the course of this study. Mrs. Cole, on the other hand,
is in many ways feeling that life is just beginning for her. She has many goals and has started a job where she is extremely popular and successful. She seems to be adapting well to her children needing her less and is actively involved in building a life of her own.

Sources of support and stress

Sources of support in this family are wide and varied. The larger family serves as a major source of support for the household. According to the household's definition of family, a family includes many people who are not necessarily related by blood or marriage. In identifying family roles, they included many members who would be considered para-kin (Nobles, 1976). Three of Mrs. Cole's siblings help with money making, many siblings and para-kin are also involved in helping with education, religion, personal problems, and housework. The richness and depth of support in this family allows members to face the world with their heads up high and with a sense of belonging to a strong and united family. Another source of support, related to the first, is the flexibility of personality styles encouraged and supported within and outside of the household. For example, Mrs. Cole can be who she is without feeling she needs to be all things to all people. If there are some things that she does not do, there are others who can do them. Her personal qualities and strengths are also put to good use within the family. Each family member can develop their personality as unique—each with their own strengths to contribute to the functioning of the whole. The fact that family members share household tasks is an enormous source of support for the ongoing functioning
of the household. No single person is overwhelmed with the work of the entire household. Another source of support for this family was the peer groups that each child had. These allowed for growth and development of individual qualities outside of the family. Although it was not within the scope of this work to study peer influences, their relative importance to the family's overall functioning should not be ignored.

Sources of stress for the family center around being poor. Although not having money is dealt with in a very pragmatic way, it appeared that Mrs. Cole's focus on the non-material side of life was not as highly held with the younger generation. They were much more concerned with material things and much more unwilling to say, "it's O.K., we don't have these things as long as we have our health." It is not known whether this conflict ever arises in the family or whether it finds emergence in the children's activities outside the home. An additional source of stress was the death of Mrs. Cole's oldest son during the course of the study. The family has dealt with this stress admirably. It was not evident who will fill all of his roles. Patterns of racism and high unemployment serve as continuous stressors which limit the options that family members can pursue.

Decision Making and Problem Solving Tasks

The decision making and problem solving tasks were designed to observe the family's ability to organize and work on solutions (Ferreira, 1965; Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976). The purpose of the
tasks was to view patterns of adaptability and to gain more information regarding boundaries, family rules and roles, and subsystems. These sessions were video taped for more careful analysis. This subsection is organized to discuss the family's responses and behavior toward the introduction of the video tape. Their responses to the tasks are then analyzed.

When presented with the possibility of video taping the family, everyone became very excited. The family is one that enjoys that kind of involvement. In fact, the first time I came to their house they were showing home movies and having a great time laughing and talking about each other. The prospect of being on television, therefore, proved to be an exciting one. The appointment was set for the following Sunday. When I arrived, most of the family was there and also three friends and a cousin. After setting up the equipment, everyone got involved in developing a scenario for how the interview should go. There was a desire to have the family appear like a television family. Semi-classical music was put on the radio. Mrs. Cole led the discussion regarding how the production would go. It was decided that each person would enter and be greeted by Mrs. Cole. Each person would then improvise what they would say when they entered. There was an enormous amount of energy and excitement regarding this. The family welcomed the opportunity to play together. Several people entered and tried to be what they believed was proper or white. Deborah, for instance, entered saying "Hello mother, dear, you should have accompanied us to the game," using very exaggerated language and body movements. It was
so exaggerated that everyone laughed.

The performance went on for a few minutes. Each person was introduced to the camera. We then began discussing the questions. Everyone participated in the "what does the term family mean to you?" and "what is the main reason for a family?" When we moved to the problem solving tasks, only household members answered although there was no verbal indication that it should be that way. Even though the family accepted the video equipment with a sense of humor and openness, Mrs. Cole acted as the boundary guard for the family. For instance, when the Family Fuss task was introduced, Deborah whispered something to her and she said, "no, that's too deep." At other points she reminded people that they were on camera. The importance of this behavior will be elaborated on in the Discussion section.

The first task was the Family Fuss. Instructions were given orally. Mrs. Cole decided which fuss was discussed. It was a recurring disagreement between Andrea and Sheri over washing the Sunday dishes. Sheri asked Andrea to do the dishes for her. Andrea refused because it wasn't her turn. When this fuss occurs either Mrs. Cole or Deborah go in, help out with the dishes and break the argument down. On this particular occasion, Deborah resolved it and later Sheri apologized. As in the Wilcox family, the tone of this discussion was flat and like a "school report." The family seemed to have resolved the difficulty and approached the task in a very matter-of-fact way. Further elaboration of this phenomenon appears in the Discussion section.

The second task was the Picture Story. Instructions were given
orally. The family was asked to select a picture from each of two folders. From the first, they selected a picture of a large family having dinner. The story that they related was about outside family members all getting together to eat, joke and talk about memories. The picture to them showed togetherness and love. As Mrs. Cole summarized, one picture is a thousand words. The family appeared bored during this task. They each talked in turn. However, the story did yield additional substantiation of their value on family unity.

The second folder was offered and a picture selected by Andrea. She was asked by Mrs. Cole to pick a picture and selected one with a little boy sitting in a window looking out at the world. Each family member had a different version of the story. Yvonne said, "it's a little boy looking out the window, that's it." Deborah thought he was lonely or figuring something out. Gary thought he looked lonely. Mrs. Cole thought he was looking out the window waiting for his mother or father to come home on the 5:00 bus. Andrea thought that he was being punished and couldn't go outside.

The differences of interpretation were ignored. No one tried to create a single story as the instructions directed. Everyone agreed with the outcome of the stories, however. They all stated that something was going to happen to end the loneliness. Interesting in their discussion of this story was the notion that the little boy's problem was in relation to other people. No one mentioned, for instance, that he was poor and didn't have food or money and was worried about that. This illustrated the emphasis on humanistic values. The values of
optimism and spirituality emerge strongly in the outcome of the story. Something (luck, God, mystical stuff) would happen to him to make him feel better.

The tone of this story remained much the same as the first picture. The story seemed very external to the family's interests or concerns. Issues that arose in Tasks 1 and 2 are raised in the Discussion section of this chapter.

The third task asked the family to identify who plays what roles in the family. Instructions were given orally. Much of the specific content has been related in other sections so that the process is described here.

This task got a considerable amount of involvement from the family. There was a lot of simultaneous discussion. Whenever a particular trait was read everyone had someone in mind. Often there was total agreement on one, two, or three people. The only disagreement occurred with the trait, "who is stingy." Mrs. Cole suggested that they not answer because what people did with their money was their business. Gary disagreed with that notion, Andrea thought two people were stingy, Gary disagreed with one of the people. Deborah said she was very upset sometimes about people being stingy. Yvonne thought no one was stingy. They did not try to resolve this conflict by agreeing, although Mrs. Cole summarized by saying that there might be someone that was stingy. Everyone nodded and they moved on to the next question.

Another interesting part of the process was the evidence of the alliance between Mrs. Cole and Deborah. Deborah read the traits and
wrote the names in. Most frequently what Mrs. Cole said was what Deborah wrote regardless of whether she or the others had additional names.

As mentioned earlier what was particularly impressive was the diversity of people in roles clearly illustrating Nobles' (1972) notion of "continual flexibility in circularity." Further, the clarity that members have regarding roles that people play in the family is extremely impressive. The family enjoyed this task so much that they asked for copies so that they could do it together with the whole family. The ability to comment on each other speaks to their functional rules.

The data presented above is the synthesis of the observations of the Cole family. Commonalities, values and issues are raised in the Discussion section which follows.

**Discussion**

Several values were identified from the literature and were used as guideposts for the interpretation of the data. A Black value system includes values of group identification, humanism, empathetic understanding, oppression/paranoia, spirituality, optimism, adaptability, mutual aid, high value placed on children, maintenance of strong kinship bonds. These values are supported from a cultural perspective which has its roots in Africa. The major philosophical underpinnings of this tradition are: (1) survival of the people and (2) being one with nature. Selfhood was introduced as the notion which more adequately
describes the Black individual as an interacting being whose values place importance on the "we" rather than the "I." Selfhood is the ability to survive in an openly hostile and anti-Black environment.

Two families were studied to determine how selfhood is supported. Many common patterns were observed and will contribute to the discussion which follows. The discussion is organized to present the values that were identified, to discuss issues or questions that were raised in relation to those values, and to elaborate conflicts that may arise in clinical or school settings.

Consistent themes which indicate selfhood emerged throughout the course of the study with both families. These themes include humanism, optimism, spirituality, oppression/paranoia, adaptability, family unity, and education. Examination of these two families raised issues regarding family organization, hierarchies, and developmental stages. All of these themes will be addressed in this discussion.

Each family viewed the outside world as something that needs to be dealt with. They went out into it with a humanistic view placing emphasis on relationships with people rather than with things. The rule that guides the Wilcox family is respect; the rule of the Cole family is a concern for people's feelings. These rules not only allow for ongoing maintenance of the household but for successful interactions with people outside of the family and neighborhood. Both of these rules are interrelated and directly connected to the value of humanism.

The humanistic value emerged in discussions of the aspirations for
children, the picture task, in teaching children to deal with whites, in the flexibility of family definition to include para-kin, and in the way that the families were willing to participate in this study. Humanistic values are also reinforced behaviorally in the amount and types of contact between family members and peers. Despite separation from their husbands, contact is still maintained with their husbands' families. This is consistent with Nobles' (1976) thesis that when Black people marry, it represents the union of two families rather than a contract between individuals. If separation or divorce occur, the relationship between the families does not necessarily dissolve. In clinical practice, the therapist might work toward dissolving these connections based on a hypothesis of enmeshment without realizing that their healthy maintenance is a cultural imperative.

The work of Young (1971) indicated that Black children are socialized from birth to interact with human beings rather than things. In fact, she found that Black babies are often discouraged from playing with things and encouraged to play with people. The emphasis on relationships between people was identified by the Cole family who saw this as the dilemma of the child in the picture story. The Wilcox family also attributed this quality to the man stealing the television set. This emphasis on humans reinforces humanistic values. In schools, a Black child meets a very different environment in which s/he is expected to interact with things--paper, pencils, books, or at most to interact with a single person, the teacher. The rules of classrooms (i.e., no talking, no getting out of your seats, one person speak at a time) run
counter to a Black value system which prizes talking, interaction with many people, and simultaneous participation that enhances excitement and involvement (Gay and Abrahams, 1972). In clinical practice simultaneous participation may appear chaotic and may be considered an indication of enmeshment. Attempts on the therapist's part to create a white middle class participational pattern where one person speaks at a time may be complied with from the family's value of adaptability but will probably result in a flat and monotone presentation, what the author has termed "school report."

Another aspect of the humanistic value is the physical and verbal challenges that occur among siblings and peers. Derek and Casey challenge Greg's authority but that challenge strengthens his position and his ability to deal with further challenges. In a Black value system challenge behavior by significant others is seen as supportive behavior that insures a kind of mental toughness and quickness (White, 1972). It constitutes the equivalent to a Ph.D. in 'Dealing Scientology', where the individual learns how to talk or fight their way out of tight situations. In developing notions of a Black value system what can be particularly troublesome are behaviors which appear to be similar to those seen in white families (i.e., competition, sibling rivalry) but which have entirely different pragmatic functions. In clinical practice, a therapist might see the challenge behavior as "sibling rivalry" and move to reduce its occurrence without realizing the survival function that it serves.

Two closely related values, optimism and spirituality, often
simultaneously emerged in the study. These were particularly evident in the families' views of the meaning of survival, in their dealings with the outside world, in their view of how problems will ultimately be resolved, and in their teaching about prejudice. The values of optimism and spirituality in combination with the value of humanism allow family members to go out and give the world a try. Optimism allows for events to be taken and responded to situationally. Spirituality supports optimism with a view that "God (or some other higher order) watches over His flock and knows best." This value appears to be in opposition to the more deterministic values in Western society which emphasize long range planning for the future and anticipation of events prior to their occurrence. The clearest evidence of the conflict between these values is that Blacks have been cited by practitioners and researchers for failure to delay gratification and for impulsiveness. This view which can be traced to the Western philosophical assumption of control of nature runs counter to the African philosophical assumption of being one with nature.

Emphasis on the present and on going with whatever happens made it particularly difficult for the families to respond to the Family Fuss or Picture Story tasks. Generally speaking, the first and second problem solving tasks did not engender any particular excitement or interest in the families. The nature of the tasks required a certain type of participation which the author, at least tentatively, believes is inconsistent with Black values and culture. In the first task, the implicit expectation was that the family would really get into a fuss
and reveal their patterns under stress; the second task demanded a certain level of hypothetical behavior which seems much more consistent with the Western practice of cognitive-affective split, a view which emphasizes reason over feeling (Boykin, 1977). There also appears to be some question regarding a focus on the past. It appears that within a Black value system, the past and future serve to link people together and serve as connectors of the race. If the past were used to influence or inform behavior in the future, optimism could not be a value. An optimistic view by Blacks could not be supported with evidence from the past. It would seem that the only realistic future view that Blacks could then have would be one of fear and pessimism. The pragmatic effect of optimism, spirituality, and humanism is that they allow families to be accepting of a wide range of impacts on family members such as "unwed" pregnancy, dropping out of school, imprisonment and even death. However, the issues raised here represent a whole area which requires theory building and which is addressed in Chapter V.

It appears that oppression/paranoia serves as the balance of optimism and spirituality. Situations are judged and evaluated in terms of immediate input. Responses made are spontaneous and directly related to one's evaluation of the situation. In these families, oppression/paranoia was seen in the introduction of the video equipment and in discussions of their dealing with whites. One or more members acted as a boundary guard for the family during the video taping. The protection of the family to the outside world is an important survival
value. When something or someone threatens that security, members react with caution, checking out the situation to determine the amount of potential threat. In clinical practice, schools, or research situations, oppression/paranoia might be termed resistance, apathy or hostility. These clinicians, educators, and researchers assume that Blacks are behaving as if life is oppressive when in fact it is not. But the Black individual is filtering his/her reality through a web of collective experiences in which oppression has played a major part. The reality of the situation is that if the author was standing on a streetcorner and it was a day to pick up prostitutes, the likelihood is that I would be picked up, too. If a Black male commits a crime in Amherst, the likelihood is that indiscriminate arrests of Black males would occur. The function of oppression/paranoia is to sense and monitor the level of danger that exists in any situation. It provides a level of defense within the situation and allows for an appropriate response (from a Black perspective) to the situation. Removal of this value strips the individual of this survival mechanism and places him/her in physical and mental jeopardy.

If clinicians, teachers, and researchers who recognize this value can appreciate its function in protecting the individual or the family, they can work with the family without feeling the need to breakdown its "defenses." In fact, they should appreciate it as a healthy sign that the family can protect itself and its members. A Black family without this value probably needs to have some of it infused into their system.
The value of adaptability emerges in close connection to oppression/paranoia. Behaving according to what the situation requires is the hallmark of this value. For instance, behavior that has been called Tommin' served (and maybe still serves) an important survival function at a time when a Black male could be lynched for looking directly into the eyes of a white man. In clinical practice, the family can behave in an adaptive way if they view the therapy or therapist as threatening.

More data is needed in this area and will be outlined in Chapter V.

The degree of family closeness and kinship bonds were seen as a strong value within both of these families. The family and children are so much a central part of their lives and expectations, they could appear to the observer to be overlooked. Often, the mothers in these families did not differentiate between themselves and their children or among their children. Nobles (1976) also found that parents did not differentiate between themselves and their children. This process serves to create close ties between family members. In clinical practice, this would be identified with enmeshment and diffuse boundaries but intense family unity is part of a Black value system. This pattern could therefore represent a norm for Black family life rather than a dysfunction. More research is needed in this area and suggestions will be presented in Chapter V.

A seemingly contradictory behavior was the fostering and recognition of the individual or unique personality in each person. The humanistic value allowed for acceptance of a wide variety of personality
styles within the framework of compliance with the fundamental family rules of respect and concern for people's feelings. Each person could contribute their particular strengths to the maintenance and support of the whole. Crises or nodal events would result in a shifting of roles but it appeared that the member(s) who assumed them had been implicitly groomed over a period of time. There was no evidence of any attempts to make members conform in their opinions or feelings. Also, there was no attempts to reach consensus type decisions in any of the tasks. These values may run into conflict with the operation of schools which tend to foster conformity and opinion and action, and enforce an alleged consensus of values. However, the function of this behavior is not known at this time.

Education was highly valued in both families, not only as an access route to employment but of importance in and of itself. The definition of education given by both families extended beyond the school room and included education about the streets, relationships and religion.

Others issues also emerged from this study. These issues include family organization, hierarchy, and developmental stage. In viewing family organization, it was revealed that both families possessed a complex organization which was not addressed in structural theory. Nobles' (1976) notion of continual flexibility in circularity was clearly illustrated. In clinical practice, adherence to the traditional nuclear family model or even to a household model may ignore important influences from outside the household. For instance, a view of
the Cole household might suggest that Mrs. Cole, as parent, should take the responsibility of discussing sex with her daughters. Analysis of the larger family would indicate that this is being taken care of and that interventions to change her would be inappropriate.

Also revealed was the idea that multiple hierarchies exist within these two families. Age is one hierarchy; possession of human values another. Examination of the issue of multiple hierarchies and the process of their functioning is an area for additional study outlined in Chapter V. In relation to hierarchies and respect, it is important to make note of a process in the reporting of data in this chapter. The reader may have noticed that in the Wilcox family, the mother was called by her first name, in the Cole family, the mother was addressed as Mrs. Cole. The differentiation did not become conscious to the author until the writing of the chapter occurred. Elaine was called by her first name because we are in the same generation. Mrs. Cole was addressed in that way as a sign of deference, for she is in my mother's generation. As a child, I learned to address those older than I, as Mrs., auntie, Mr., or uncle, depending upon their relationship to our family. Also I was always expected to address teachers and preachers as Miss or Mrs., regardless of age.* In clinical practice, it is most appropriate to address the parents and older members as Mrs., Mr., or Miss.

*Recently in a course taught by the author, an older Black woman always addressed me as Mrs. even though white students younger than I addressed me by my first name. Rather than a sign of formality, this was a sign of respect for my position as teacher.
Attempting to place these families in a particular developmental stage proved difficult. It appears that these stages are more a reflection on the nuclear family model. Clearly, a more appropriate model needs to be developed.

Summary

We must return for a moment to the quotation by Lerone Bennett (1970) offered in Chapter I. This quotation represents both the struggle and the answer to some of the dilemmas that the author faced during the course of this study. He states, in part:

It is necessary for us to develop a new frame of reference which transcends the limits of white concepts... We must abandon the partial frame of reference of our oppressors and create new concepts which will release our reality... (p. 7).

The struggle that arises in creating new concepts for Blacks is that there are no theoretical boundaries in which to place the data. Case study was used in this study precisely because substantive theory from a Black perspective is relatively non-existent. The difficulty with this approach is that many behaviors are observed for which there is presently no explanation. These areas, as outlined in the Discussion section, are ones in which the basic underlying assumptions should be questioned and different definitions, concepts and explanations must be developed from a Black perspective. At this level of theory building many unexplained areas remain. Identification of them is most crucial at this stage. The author, herself, was limited in her ability to explain all the behaviors observed simply because there are no models
in which to do that which are also consistent with a Black perspective.

Two families were studied in order to identify selfhood which increases the likelihood that the family and its members will survive. The data was collected using family systems theory and an African philosophical position as the lenses for observations. Several values were identified and substantiated through conversations between family members and the author. This chapter offered an analysis of the data. The study was conducted on two Black families and is not generalizable. Interpretations of the data were presented with examples from the families. The use of the data for clinical practice, schools and research was outlined. Suggestions for further research and implications for therapeutic practice were identified and are presented in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to challenge the predominant literature on Black families and Black self concept by proposing another view based on a Black cultural perspective. The Black cultural perspective advocates the position that Black people possess a culture which is separate and apart from mainstream culture; and this culture can be traced to its origins in Africa. The essentials of the African philosophical position (Nobles, 1972, 1974) have survived the Middle Passage, the mixing of African ethnic groups, and the systematic attempts to destroy them.*

In mainstream literature, the Black family has been the subject of considerably negative attention. Often researchers have considered it as a pathologic form of white middle class family life (Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1965, 1970) or as a form which can be equivalent as long as it approaches the white middle class family model (Bernard, 1966; Scanzoni, 1971). In addition, Black children have been attributed with negative self concept. The Black family is often cited as responsible for the negative self concept of Black children. Both of these negative bias perspectives fail to explain or address the fact that Black

*The reader is referred to Before the Mayflower, Bennett (1962) for a complete description of Black history.
families have survived despite the most comprehensive and enduring system of enslavement and discrimination the world has ever known. Rather, they approach their study from the perspective that groups of people in the United States have essentially faced the same collective experience with the institutions of society. The author rejects this position and posits that the Black family has developed unique ways of dealing with society. Further, the Black family provides the needed support and value system which insure the survival of its members. Other authors (Billingsley, 1968; Ladner, 1971; Nobles, 1974, 1976; Staples, 1978) have also developed a positive bias perspective which serves as theoretical base upon which this study rests.

Selfhood, rather than self concept, represents the view that the individual responds to events situationally from a world view that emphasizes survival and interconnectedness between people. Selfhood is the ability to survive in an anti-Black environment. Several Black values were identified from the literature (Boykins, 1977; Foster and Dixon, 1971; Staples, 1976; White, 1972) and used as parameters for this study. In addition, family systems theory (Minuchin, 1974; Watzlawick, Beavin, Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, 1978) and an African philosophical position (Nobles, 1972, 1974) informed the author's observations and provided the philosophical underpinnings of the work.

Method

A case study, participant observation method was used with two Black families from Brownstone Center in Hartford, Connecticut to
ascertain how selfhood was supported with family interaction.

Procedure

The study was divided into three phases. Phase I of the study was the selection and training of the research associate. Several names were gathered from people in the community who were known to the author. From these names, candidates were interviewed and one selected on the criteria outlined in Chapter III.

Phase II was the selection of two families from a randomly selected group of ten families. Randomization was accomplished by putting all the names of Black families that lived in the project and drawing ten names out of a hat. The ten families were initially contacted and interviewed by the research associate who was a well-known and respected member of the community. The interview was a focused interview designed in collaboration with the research associate (see Appendix B). The selection criteria are outlined in Chapter III.

Phase III was the case study with the two families. The author spent four months meeting with the families, collecting data. A final interview was conducted by the research associate (see Appendix D).

Data Collection

The author used several methods for data collection identified in the family therapy literature. The structural assessment (Minuchin, 1974) was used to identify the family's current organization and functioning. The genogram (Guerin and Pendagast, 1976) and questions adapted by the author were used to determine the family's growth
over time. Problem solving and decision making tasks (Minuchin, 1978; Nobles, 1976) were used to identify additional information regarding family rules and roles. Non-directive observations were also done. Data was collected in written journal form for non-directive sessions; audio taped for genogram and structural assessment; and video taped for problem solving tasks.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the family systems theory (Minuchin, 1974; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, 1978) and an African philosophical viewpoint (Nobles, 1972, 1974) as the philosophical underpinnings of this work. From this vantage point, two Black families were studied to determine the operation of selfhood within the family system. Analysis of the methods outlined above helped to create a picture of these two families and their lives.

Analysis of the Data

Analysis of the data revealed several values which are elements of selfhood. In particular, the values of humanism, optimism, spirituality, high values on children and family life, oppression/paranoia and adaptability were found as strong characteristics in both families. These values were revealed not only in the content of individual family members discussions but consistently in the process of their interaction. The data was presented using transcriptions of actual conversations. The Discussion section reviewed the values found and outlined the impact of these values when they come in contact with mainstream
values. Many areas were identified as critical for the development of substantive theory of the Black experience. Evidence was abundant that similar events are seen from a significantly different viewpoint that is rooted in a Black cultural perspective. Study of the Black world view seems mandatory in order to develop theory and practice which is consistent with and of value to Black people.

Implication for Therapeutic Practice

Several implications for therapeutic practice emerged as a result of this study. These are elaborated here rather than in the research section as they have also been identified in previous research efforts. This section is organized to discuss specific implications and then to outline a more general implication that emerged.

Although the issue of multiple hierarchies is an area which requires more specific research, one hierarchy exists in Black families and in the Black community that has been consistently identified by researchers (Nobles, 1976; Staples, 1976). This hierarchy is an age hierarchy with respect for elders as a value which derives from it. An important behavioral manifestation of this age hierarchy is the attribution of the title Mr., Mrs., Miss (always pronounced Ms.) to those members of the community who are in an older generation relative to the speaker. Significant to this behavior is the signal of respect that it carries—a respect that recognizes both the age and the experience of the person.

The white humanist perspective appears to advocate the elimina-
tion of all titles as they create artificial barriers and hierarchy between people who are essentially striving to be equal. From this perspective, addressing a person as Mr., Mrs., or Miss has the pragmatic function of creating distance. The therapist attempting to work with a Black family should recognize that this identical behavior has a very different function within the Black community. In addition, the white therapist should be aware that from slavery to the present Black men and women have been called by their first names by whites in order to remind them (the Blacks) of their "correct" place in society. Addressing Black adults by their first names implies a familiarity which white people generally do not have. As a result, this form of address should not be used in therapeutic practice with Black clients.

Studies are often based on assumptions that all people in the United States share similar definitions from common terms (i.e., family, education, etc.). This seems supported by at least two belief systems. In part, this is based on a belief that since we all speak English, we all understand each other to mean the same things. Further, this can be traced to a belief that we all have relatively similar experiences (with liberty and justice for all) in encountering the larger society.

Many counseling theories attempt to address the first issue by encouraging therapists to check perceptions, ask clarifying questions, and summarize. These techniques may get at gross divergences in world view but often there may be more subtle divergences, particularly in the stage of common terms, which would be overlooked. This study and others (Cummings and Carrere, 1975; Nobles, 1976) revealed that at
least some definitions are different in the Black community, for instance, the two families interviewed in this study felt that the term family expanded beyond the limits of the household to include the "extended" family, close friends and influential others. Nobles (1976) data supports this finding and terms it the para-kin network. The implication of this data is that therapists must come to know the client's definitional system. Ignoring this aspect of the client's world view can be a cause of major errors in therapeutic practice.

The author actually witnessed this behavior in a clinical setting. The therapist had seen the family for a number of months and their adaptive behavior had persisted over that time. It appeared that the therapist had not come to know the family's definitional system, had not explored the impact of the extended family and had not understood or appreciated significant aspects of Black culture such as the value on spirituality.

To the author's knowledge no traditional counseling theory or practice addresses the essential inequalities of the society nor do they raise the issue of institutional racism. Rather, theory and practice tend to treat all clients as if they have had relatively homogenous experiences with society. This is accomplished by completely denying racism as an issue, by acting as if it is an individual phenomena specific to the Black client that's being treated or by considering one's good intentions ("I'm not prejudiced") as being sufficient to dismiss the issue from treatment. Even when the context is considered, it is often from a very narrow definitional frame (i.e., the household) rather than from a careful examination of the individual or family in
relationship to the larger society. In practice, the therapist may see behavioral manifestations of this phenomena which emanate from the value of oppression/paranoia. Failure to recognize the impact of institutional racism on the client or family may lead the therapist to respond to the client as hostile, poorly motivated, or resistant. Additionally, the possibility exists that viewing the family interaction fails to reveal how the dysfunctional behavior is maintained. Widening the context might reveal the dysfunction to be supported at the level of the family in interface with society (or more specifically one of its institutions). For instance, a Black family in a predominantly white community may come to therapy for a child behavior problem which exists within the family and in the school. Focus on the family unit produces little evidence regarding how the symptom is supported. Only upon inspection of the interface between the family and school can the behavior problem be explained. Without recognition of the effect of institutional racism on the family, the therapist might attempt to create change in patterns in the family that simply aren't there. The therapist who limits his/her view to the family unit may have to operate from an assumption of "if you look hard enough, you'll find the solution" which will serve as a self fulfilling prophecy. Therapy on this level is destined for failure.

Another implication emerges from the study. Nobles' (1976) notion of continual flexibility in circularity was further substantiated in this study. This notion suggests the flexible boundary definition of family and the important of inter- and intra-family role performers.
Much more extensive information gathering regarding the Black family's (client) definition of family and performance of roles in the para-kin network needs to occur in therapeutic practice. Essential family members can be ignored if the household is the primary unity of treatment. Since the family is the primary informal counseling service to the individual, the therapist may move to mobilize the para-kin network in support of the household. This move is particularly consistent with a Black value system. Of all the issues raised from the study, the interrelationship of whole families and the strong survival supports that this interrelationship offers is the most significant new learning for the author. It will have the most direct effect on the therapeutic work of the author.

When working with Black families much more time will be spent by the author in understanding the entire family constellation and its impact on the household. The effect of household isolation from a para-kin network will be a major consideration in analyzing a Black family's current difficulties. Mobilization or redefinition of para-kin functions will become a major treatment goal with most Black families.

This study also substantiated previous work (Boykin, 1977; Gay and Abrahams, 1972) that Blacks have a unique participational style which allows for multiple levels of activity to occur simultaneously. Perhaps this occurs as a product of poverty--of living in overcrowded housing--where everyone's needs have to be met. The television may be going, the radio playing children playing and more than one conversa--
tion happening all within one or two rooms. The positive consequence of this is that family members learn to deal with all of this input, to participate in it and to do what they have to do. The effect of simultaneous participation in therapy may be disconcerting to the therapist. It means attending to several levels at once which is very difficult. Yet this may be a transactional style which is very comfortable and appropriate to the family. Simultaneous participation has been shown to be an indicator of involvement and interest (Gay and Abrahams, 1972).

The outreach therapist might come to the client's home and find the television going. Rather than understanding this to be a disqualifying message or the client's overinvolvement in the "boob-tube," it would be more appropriate to view it as part of their ongoing context and a valuable skill which the therapist does not possess.

All of these study-derived implications lead to one general overarching implication. That the therapist understand the client's world view and values is an absolute necessity. Watzlawick (1978) has addressed this issue cogently from the perspective of the general client but it is believed that due to the nature of racism in society, the therapist must learn some specifics of the Black world view and value system.* Therapies that derive their theory from General Systems

*It is important to note that this position also applies to other Third World groups. Racism and ethnocentrism in this society make it very difficult for the therapist to learn a cultural relativist position. Once a therapist learns the process of multicultural viewpoints, it becomes easier to make that translation with clients from other cultures. Watzlawick in a seminar at University of Massachusetts, Amherst (1979) stated that he felt that therapists need training in working with diverse cultural groups.
Theory promote an emphasis upon understanding the context of the family. Other therapies also pay lip service to this phenomenon when establishing rapport or the therapeutic relationship is addressed. Too often, however, understanding the context or establishing rapport comes from the therapist's perspective or belief system (as outlined above) rather than the client's. What this study points to in this regard is that the therapist must possess a knowledge of the mechanisms of institutional racism in the society, an understanding of the nature and processes of cultures, and a willingness to engage in a continuous challenge to his/her assumptions and belief systems. Rigorous training in the understanding of multiple realities can attune the therapist to the issues inherent in working with culturally diverse populations.

The foregoing are the immediate implications for therapeutic practice. The emergent theme in all the implications was that when the world view and value system of the client(s) and therapist clash, it is the therapist's responsibility to understand the client's world view if change is to occur. The discussion now turns to an examination of the implications for further study.

**Implications for Further Study**

The purpose of case study is to generate more specific hypotheses or issues for further study. The outcome of this study was the discovery of several areas that require further research.

The primary issue which this study addressed was selfhood. Selfhood was identified as operating within the two families studied.
Several values were shown to have particular impact upon the life of the family which provided a level of security of all family members. However, selfhood remains a fairly loose concept still requiring additional investigation. Categories which would aid in the further development of selfhood are: (1) are the criteria for survival different for Blacks as compared to whites?; (2) what is the world view of Black families regarding members imprisonment, "unwed" pregnancy, or school leaving and how does that world view help or hinder members sense of belonging to the family; (3) what are Black people's criteria for success?; (4) how do discrepancies between criteria for success and access to society's institutions get resolved?; (5) how do contextual variables (i.e., school, job, etc.) threaten selfhood?; (6) is there a relationship between selfhood and school success?; (7) what is the role of selfhood in the translation process between Black culture and school culture?; (8) what are the processes which would be more consistent and more enhancing of selfhood; and (9) are these processes achievable in schools. In addition, case study research will be continued into the nature and process of selfhood in Black families.

A Black world view differs significantly along other variables identified in this study. The author noted that decision making had a different nature in these Black families as compared with white families that the author has seen in treatment. The out-of-treatment vs. in-treatment variable is certainly a significant one, however, there appears to be some difference in the method of approach to and the goals of decision making in Black families. In both families, there
result of the "we" being more significant than the "I." An interesting study would be on the perceptions of family members about their relative differentiation on a community, family and individual level. Another question might address comparative enmeshment of Black and white families to determine a Black norm and to inform therapeutic work about the difference.

The assumption of the author is that Blacks live with a large amount of stress as a way of life. A research question might be directed toward discovering what is the nature of everyday stress and what Blacks consider to be extreme stress. Finally, as evidenced from the study, a new developmental life cycle needs to be developed which is more sensitive to diversity and which moves away from the nuclear family model.

This study identified values that compose the nature of selfhood. Selfhood is the ability to survive in a racist environment. As indicated in Chapter IV, although selfhood insures survival of the family and its members, it is often construed as a form of pathology when explained by those who believe that there is only one true reality. Generally speaking, this one true reality is identical to the reality of mainstream society. This study revealed that the two Black families had developed unique ways of dealing with all forms of oppression. These ways are consistent with a Black value system and have contributed to the maintenance of Black culture. Rather than being merely reactive these survival values arise from and are consistent with a cultural heritage which has its roots in Africa and which has a
balance of flexibility and resiliency. The two families studied here showed complexity and humanity which is rarely portrayed in the Black family literature.
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Schultz, D.A. Variation in the father role in complete families in the Negro lower class. Social Science Quarterly, 49(3), 651-9.


Staples, R. Toward a sociology of the Black family: A theoretical and


APPENDIX A
Participant's Consent Statement

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Linda Webb-Woodard

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Selfhood: Discovery of Survival Values in Two Black Families in Hartford, Connecticut

PHASE II: A Focused Interview of Ten Black Families

Procedures. This interview will be used to select two families to participate in an intensive study of how they have survived in the past and manage to survive on a day-to-day basis. The researcher will ask you to select an incident in the past that you can talk about. The way that this interview will be done is with as many household members present as possible. Each person will be asked to talk about the event in as much detail as possible. The interview will be taped so that we can listen to it afterward. The interview will last approximately one hour.

On ___________(date), we were informed by Linda Webb-Woodard of her research project having to do with the study of Black families. We were told of the procedures involved and we agree to participate in this dissertation project. We realize that we are free to withdraw our consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time.

(Date) ____________________________________________ (Participant)

Interview Date: ____________________________ (Participant)

Time: ____________________________ (Participant)

__________________________________________ (Participant)
APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

Participant Consent Statement

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Linda Webb Woodard

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Selfhood: Discovery of Survival Values in Two Black Families in Hartford, Connecticut

PHASE III: Case Study

Procedures. The case study will ask questions regarding family history and current functioning. The researcher will ask you to talk about your immediate and extended family. You will be asked to participate in a problem solving task that will be video-taped. All other interviews will be tape recorded. It is important that as many family members as possible be present for the sessions. This case study will be conducted over a period of approximately two months.

On [date], we were informed by Linda Webb-Woodard of her research project having to do with the study of Black families. We were told of the procedures involved and we agree to participate in this dissertation project. We realize that we are free to withdraw our consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time.

(Date)

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

Participant Consent Statement

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Linda Webb-Woodard

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Selfhood: Discovery of Survival Values in Two Black Families in Hartford, Connecticut

PHASE III: Case Study

Procedures. Video taping of family problem solving task.

On __________, we were informed of the video taping procedure and (date) we agree to allow it for the purposes of data collection. Further, we agree to allow Linda Webb-Woodard to use the video tape and its contents in the writing and defense of her dissertation. We agree that she can use this video tape at his discretion, except for distribution purposes. Should she decide to distribute the tape for educational or training purposes she will contact us for permission.

(Date)

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________
A Note to Participants

This questionnaire and the conversation we are about to have has been designed to find out how your family has made it through rough times.

The information contained in this questionnaire is CONFIDENTIAL. No one, other than Dorothy Payne and Linda Webb-Woodard will know that you participated without your written and dated consent. For the purposes of this research project, you will be assigned a fictitious name as a resident of a fictitious place, Brownstone Center, in Hartford. Your privacy will be protected at all costs. With this in mind, feel free to not answer any questions that you are not comfortable with.

Also, your comments and additions to this questionnaire are appreciated. Anything that comes to your mind that may have been left out is important. Please let me know.

Your contribution will aid in the positive understanding of Black family life. Thank you for helping us out.
**APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)**

*Initial Interview*

**HEAD(S) OF HOUSEHOLD:**  
FEMALE ____________________________________________  
MALE ____________________________________________  

**ADDRESS:**  
________________________________________________  
________________________________________________  

**PHONE NUMBER:**  
________________________________________________  

**HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (these need not be blood relations):**

Please list the names, ages, and relationship on the lines provided below. Indicate with a check (✓) who was present at the interview. Use back of sheet, if more space is needed.

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**MEMBERS OF THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY WHO NO LONGER LIVE AT HOME:**

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WHERE DO EACH OF THESE MEMBERS NOW LIVE? WHAT WAS THEIR REASON FOR LEAVING?

NAME ___________________________  PLACE ___________________________

NAME ___________________________  PLACE ___________________________

NAME ___________________________  PLACE ___________________________
APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

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SUPPORT NETWORK: (of Head(s) of Household)

A. EXTENDED FAMILY OF FEMALE HEAD:

Brothers, Sisters, Mother, Father, Grandparents

Please list the names, ages, relationship and place where each of the extended family members live. Also include the amount and type of contact, such as who usually makes contact, in what form (letter, phone call, visit), etc. Use back of sheet if needed.

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Are there relatives that you contact on a regular basis? Use back of sheet if needed. Include information as specified above.

...
APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Who do you call in a crisis? This can be relatives, friends, or neighbors? Use back of sheet if needed. Include information as specified above.

Who do you call most often?

B. EXTENDED FAMILY OF MALE HEAD:

Brothers, Sisters, Mother, Father, Grandparents

Please list the names, ages, relationship and place where each of the extended family members live. Also include the amount and type of contact, such as who usually makes contact, in what form (letter, phone call, visit), etc. Use back of sheet if needed.

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Are there relatives that you contact on a regular basis? Use back of sheet if needed. Include information specified above.
APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Who do you call in a crisis? This can be relatives, friends, neighbors? Use back of sheet if needed. Include information specified above.

Who do you call most often?

Seven important events have been identified in the life of a family. We would like you to select one to talk about. I will ask you some specific questions about the issue. Then I would like all of you to have a conversation about it and talk in as much detail as possible. We would like every family member to contribute as much as they can to the story.

1. Death of an important family member
2. Teen age pregnancy
3. Family member leaving (as in desertion, jail, or marriage)
4. Financial loss or stress (loss of job, unexpected expenses)
5. Migration (South to North, neighborhood to neighborhood)
6. Serious illness
7. School problems

TO THE RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Please observe and record how the decision about which topic to talk about gets made. Also observe and record other non-verbal behavior that you notice in the session. Depending upon the item selected, ask the questions that have been identified.
APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

1. DEATH OF AN IMPORTANT FAMILY MEMBER

Name of the person who died: ________________________________

Relationship to the family: ________________________________

How long has the person been dead: _________________________

What was the role that this person played in your family: ______

What did the family do, in terms of changing roles, as a result of the death of this member?

_________________________________________________________

2. TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Who was pregnant: ________________________________

What happened to the child: ________________________________

What did the family do to deal with this event: ________________

_________________________________________________________

3. MEMBER LEAVING

Who left: ________________________________

Why: ________________________________

When: ________________________________

What role did this person play in the family prior to his/her leaving?

_________________________________________________________

Who took over this person's role? ______________________________

_________________________________________________________
4. FINANCIAL STRESS
What happened: ________________________________

How did this loss change what had been done before: __________________________

5. MIGRATION
Moved from where to where: ________________________________

When: ________________________________

What did this mean for family members: __________________________

What did you do to cope with it: __________________________

6. SERIOUS ILLNESS
Who was sick: ________________________________

How long: ________________________________

Who took care of the person: ________________________________

How did family members deal with this illness: __________________________

7. SCHOOL PROBLEMS
Who had problems: ________________________________

What was the problem: ________________________________

In what grade: ________________________________

What happened as a result: __________________________
APPENDIX C

Task #1 Family Fuss
(adapted from Minuchin, 1978)

INSTRUCTIONS:

In every family things happen that cause a fuss now and then. Please talk together about an argument you've had. Be sure you say who started it, who was in on it, what went on and how it turned out. See if you can remember what it was all about.
INSTRUCTIONS:

In a moment I will give you two folders. Each has some pictures that relate to Black families.

In folder 1, I'd like you to select one picture to talk about. Then I'd like you to make up a story for that picture. Say what is happening in the picture, what you think happened before the picture was taken and what the people are thinking and feeling. Then make up an ending for the story. Remember to discuss the picture and make up the story together. When you have finished with that story, select one picture from folder 2 and do the same thing.
INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE TRY TO COME TO SOME KIND OF JOINT AGREEMENT

In most families, there are people who because of the way they are, play special roles. In terms of your relatives (including yourselves) and how you all act towards each other, who is the person who usually...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Smooths out problems between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sets up activities that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bring family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is asked for advice or has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>problems discussed with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tells everybody's business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to everyone else in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Keeps to themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is moody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is critical (never satisfied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of everything that happens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is seen as the family drunk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is very stingy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kisses on everybody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is very emotional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>RELATIONSHIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Showing off and acting the clown.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Takes over the conversation and explains everything.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Judges everybody else and tells what they should be doing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. Knows all the home remedies and how to cure folks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Preaches to everybody about how bad they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Starts people to arguing and fighting.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Entertains everybody by telling stories.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Interprets dreams and mystical stuff.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHO IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD: PARTICIPATES IN: IS MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- money making
- taking care of children
- recreational activities
- housework
- educational activities
- religious activities
- personal problems (helping out)
WHAT RELATIVES OUTSIDE YOUR FAMILY, HELP YOUR FAMILY WITH:

money making

taking care of children

recreational activities

housework

education

religious activities

personal problems
APPENDIX D

Final Interview

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESEARCH ASSISTANT:

The purpose of this interview is to find out from the families how they experienced the researcher's presence and how they portrayed their family's life. Please allow as much free discussion as possible.

PLEASE RECORD THE DISCUSSION

1. Are there any things about your family that you did not get a chance to say? If yes, what are they?

2. Do you think that your family will be treated fairly and honestly in the research report?

3. Has anything changed in your family as a result of the research? These can be bad or good changes.

4. If you had the opportunity, would you participate in a research project again?

5. Do you have any suggestions to give about how to do the research or interviewing differently?