

Blacks need to define themselves. In defining themselves, blacks must formulate concepts which are useful to themselves; blacks must take responsibility for their own realities. A positive belief system might be one method for eradicating negative beliefs perpetrated by white psychologists and sociologists. For example, an avenue open for exploration is the methods used to train psychologists and psychiatrists. The criteria used in most training programs for defining mental health problems is based on a "white" or monocultural model. Exploring mental health within a black cultural framework, better yet, within a multicultural framework, would increase the awareness of those trained in mental health services for understanding what a mental health problem is from a variety of perspectives. Mental health agents need to understand that categories which are normally used for "white" mental health disorders are unsuitable for blacks.

The possibilities are endless. The ideas presented in this critique provide further areas for exploring solutions to the problem Brown has addressed. Shirley Vining Brown has focused the problem, but she needs to explore viable solutions for the black Americans who have negative self images.

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Critique

Aside from the intrinsic merit of Dr. Shirley V. Brown's "Symbolic Interaction and Black Mental Health, . . ." the paper raises several important corollary issues that need extensive investigation: (1) the effects of one's self-concept upon how he or she views others; (2) the negligible effects of affirmative action programs; (3) the adverse effects of public school integration on blacks; (4) the validity of the assumption that schools in predominantly black neighborhoods are inherently inferior; and (5) the insidious notion that mainstreaming is both possible and desirable.

Probably all too few people realize that the images which they have of others are, in a large measure, the images which they have of themselves. The images that we have of ourselves and others are not independent but rather dependent. It is totally impossible for one to feel good about others without having a positive self-image. For

example, when a black, in despair, talks about the achievements of whites, often expressed in that all-encompassing cliché "a white would do it this way," he is not being altogether complimentary for he realizes that whites have made it impossible for him to "do it that way."

A thorough evaluation of the Affirmative Action Program will probably prove that it is one of the most offensive jokes perpetrated upon blacks. The attrition rate among black students is very high at many predominantly white institutions which have vigorously recruited these students to keep the federal dollars flowing in. Moreover, with a scarcity of jobs, many professors at these institutions are reluctant to graduate minority students who, because of the alleged intent of the Affirmative Action Program, might have an edge on their own children or friends in getting a job. In brief, affirmation is not to be confused with confirmation.

Far too few people realize that, while nothing is so constant as change, change is not always progress. Blacks once believed that integration of the public school was the key to all kinds of opportunities—educational, social, political, and economic. On the contrary, two adverse patterns have clearly emerged. Many white teachers, in regard to the black child, have adopted an attitude which sounds something like this: "The federal government says that you have to be here; but it can't make me teach you." The other pattern is that the staff (faculty and administrators) in most school districts are becoming progressively whiter. Black people are now singing (to the tune of the nursery rhyme "O Where, O Where Has My Little Dog Gone?"): "O Where, o where, have the jobs gone? O where, o where can they be? We have looked around and they can't be found. O where, o where can they be?" Gone are the jobs; gone are the black role-models.

The assumption that schools in predominantly black neighborhoods are inherently inferior because they lack sophisticated equipment and are "poorly" staffed needs extensive evaluation. In many cases, sophisticated audio-visual equipment is used not as a reinforcement of, but as a substitute for, teaching. Did not the teachers in the predominantly black neighborhoods have to meet the same standards for certification as those in the more affluent neighborhoods? Are there not other factors operative in the poor performance of black students? How about the apathy which results from deprivation of all kinds?

Mainstreaming can be taken to an extreme. As Julian **Mayfield** puts it, "into the mainstream, into oblivion." Only in **diversity are** there both health and strength . Moreover, the pigmentation of blacks obviates their being melted into that mythical **American** melting pot.

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