

20 percent of this number. Black males account for less than two percent of the remaining percent of male teacher aides. Hence, it could be concluded that a majority of black males attend the public schools without much interaction with a black male authority figure until the secondary school years.

Since the beginning of serious attempts by school districts to desegregate the American educational process, researchers have noted the positive effects on both black *and* white students of black teachers and administrators within the newly constituted schools. This is emphasized by Weinberg (1977):

*Black teachers and principals in the desegregated school seem to be strongly affirmative factors. This importance is based in part on the optimism about students they bring along and in part on their symbolic value to both black and white students.*

Now that desegregation has been, if not wholly accomplished, at least institutionalized, some observers see additional advantages for the black male, particularly in the presence of "appropriate" role models and reference group authority figures. The social influence of similar others – black teachers, counselors, administrators, and coaches – may serve to convey the appropriate value orientations to academic tasks and achievement. The most appropriate sources of social comparison for the black students are similar others who share not only values and aspirations, but characteristics and experiences as well. Positive affective expressions from these similar others result in high interest orientations. Conversely, the effect of dissimilar others predicts an opposite effect on the interest, orientations, aspirations and achievement (Gary, *op. cit.*, p. 204).

According to some 20 empirical interracial studies, the teacher in the classroom tends predominantly to be skeptical of the capacity of minority children to achieve beyond minimal levels. Frequently, minority children are ignored by teachers and subjected to considerable discouragement (Weinberg, *op. cit.*).

Weinberg adds parenthetically that there are also numerous recorded instances of teachers in nonsegregated schools relating in a productive, essentially just way to minority students. Still, he cites St. John's formal study of 959 black and white children, wherein she found that teacher behavior affected the two groups in different ways. She concluded:

*Especially important for black children was the presence of teachers who were optimistic about their performance and high expectancies for success. Such orientations by teachers are more important than matter proficiency for black achievement. (Ibid)*

To the barriers to black male advancement presented by historical patterns of racial prejudice and the effects of desegregation on the population of black educators, one must add the effects of formal systems of academic assessment – the ubiquitous standardized test. Too often these tests are "normed" on populations exotic to the black male student. The result frequently is the labeling of black male students as potential "underachievers" while they are still in the most important years of their academic lives. Pioneers in the field of intelligence testing long ago cautioned against a too ready reliance upon single measures to assess the learning potential of human beings. To cite one writer:

*With human beings, when the problem is primarily psychological, statistical studies of populations should always be supplemented by case studies of individuals: early histories will often shed further light on the origin and development of this or that peculiarity. Tests should be supplemented by what Binet called the methode clinique and interpreted by introspective observations, designed to verify the tacit assumption that they really do test what they are intended to assess. After all, each child is a complex and conscious organism, not a mere unit in a statistical sample. (Burt, 1972)*

Another important factor to consider is that the black community has not exercised sufficient control over the socialization of its children. Often dominant socializing structures are ineffective to meet the needs of a community with many absent fathers and a limited number of well-educated men who could assume responsible community leadership positions. Black community-based organizations have not intensified their efforts toward providing positive socializing experiences and role models for the black male youth.