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CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO RACIAL DIFFERENCES: TOWARDS A
REVISION AND UPDATE OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC LITERATURE ON
RACISM

City University of New York

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CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO RACIAL DIFFERENCES:
TOWARDS A REVISION AND UPDATE OF
THE PSYCHOANALYTIC LITERATURE ON RACISM

by

LILA A. COLEBURN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

1984

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1984

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Racism is a perennial American concern, shared by her social scientists. In the 1930s and '40s social anthropologists and others began to observe its effects on children. They were soon joined by psychological theorists, many working within the psychoanalytic tradition, who, faithful to it, looked for the antecedents of adult racism in childhood. No one has been more dissatisfied with the results of these efforts than the authors themselves: in some cases because of distrust of their findings; in others because their faith in them led to such discouragement.

The principal points of dispute within the field have usually concerned details surrounding the onset of hostile racial attitudes. Some researchers have pointed out, however, that as yet we really know very little of the developmental context of such feelings or of their functional relation to other values. Most striking to me is how much tacit agreement there has been over the years on two fundamental issues: first, that children's racial views are best studied by eliciting their biases regarding color through formal tests of color preferences ("preference tests"); and, second, that such biases are best explained as the inevitable outgrowth of a specific body-based symbolism of darkness.

The most common psychoanalytic corollary to these views is that adult racism is a manifestation of two ills of early

childhood: anal fixations and/or oedipal pathology (which leads to regression). Accordingly, the theoretical interest of analytic writers in this area has been concentrated primarily upon the anal psychosexual phase. Material drawn from a handful of adult analyses and from informal analyses of social patterns along with selected data gleaned from the skin color preference tests has been taken as confirmation of these hypotheses. In fact, they have been adhered to so unquestioningly that it was not noticed until recently, after 35 years of domination of the field by the preference paradigm, that a substantial sample of the most frequently-cited preference studies actually had failed to demonstrate their hypothesis of preference for white over black (Banks 1979).

Thus in the search for a unitary psychological theory of racism, itself a questionable endeavor, color (that is, negative associations to darkness and dark skins) has been considered the major key. It has been seen as the operative factor in cross-racial interactions, almost to the exclusion of other circumstances; it has been viewed as having the most consistent effects on the persons involved, almost to the exclusion of other influences; and in this context, it has been interpreted according to a narrow catechism--almost in the manner of the old dreambooks--with great complacency.

Most writers in this field have apparently agreed with Ernest Jones that it would be "hard to find an example of racial prejudice against a people who were less pigmented"

(1945). Typically, cases which do not fit this model have been dropped from the analysis or considered to be adequately explained as reactions to the 'true' phenomenon. The feelings and behavior of those with darker skins have been isolated into a sort of psychology of oppression and considered exhausted by an enumeration of the marks of it. In short, racism has been thought to be the exclusive prerogative of whites. If time has shaken that idea, it has yet to be much reflected in the theoretical literature or in the research.

I propose to open a renewed inquiry into the psychological issues posed by racial diversity from the child's point of view. My objective is to make a critical reappraisal of the dominant psychoanalytic (and general psychiatric) notions on racism and to suggest alternative ways of formulating the issues involved. In my view the prevailing treatment of children's responses to racial and color differences is overly literal and adultomorphic. It takes as a given the pervasive use of particular symbolizations which I regard as an outcome to be explained--and one not adequately explained as "caused" by developmental 'invariants.' It fails to account for much of what can be observed or to relate it to like phenomena. And it derives from an earlier and more limited conception of the child than we now have. Nonetheless, it continues to be generalized with great regularity in the professional and popular literature to 'explain' adult race relations. I shall

take the position that there are more salient principles within analytic thought than those commonly recruited to explain the psychological aspects of race and that these are just as persuasive, more consistent with our understanding of other issues, and help to organize more of what we see.

In the following pages I will present some alternative perspectives based upon 1) a different and more neutral mode of approach to the study of children's ideas on race consisting of Piagetan-type clinical interviews, and upon 2) a re-examination of the traditional research and theories in this light. I propose here to work toward the hypothesis that middle childhood (latency) is the critical phase for the consolidation of racial identity and that the issues characteristic of this phase are specially pertinent to the formation of social attitudes that underlie adult racial views. A second idea I will discuss is that "the most serviceable angle of approach" (Freud 1893) to an understanding of cross-racial hostility is through analysis of the narcissistic issues involved--not as derivatives of other conflicts, but as issues in their own right. These propositions are related to the central thesis that the phase-characteristic developments and issues of latency are critical to an understanding of the psychological aspects of race and this will be my primary emphasis.

Although the idea proposed here departs from the most prevalent psychoanalytic and general psychiatric assumptions

on the subject, there is considerable support to be found for it from two distinct sources within the literature. A sampling of these will be summarized briefly below, along with a preview of illustrative data derived from my own interviews with children and other clinical material.

The first source of support is the existing studies on children's responses to race such as those undertaken by Goodman (1952) and Porter (1971) to investigate the racial awareness and preferences of three to five year olds and McDonald's (1970) study of "the impact of racial differences on children's development" in a therapeutic nursery. It was in part my reading of these and other stalwarts of the literature, now considered classics, which provoked my questioning of the current theoretical conventions. Notwithstanding their allegiance to the prevailing ideas in concept and design, these studies cannot really be said to confirm them. This becomes evident at once when one takes into account the many original observations made by the researchers which have been slighted in the authors' own summations and often ignored entirely in subsequent extrapolations. For example, the most extensive psychoanalytic treatment of racism in recent years described Goodman's 103 four year old subjects as having expressed "the uniform fantasy" that dark skin was dirty and therefore inferior (Kovel 1970, p. 86)-- despite Goodman's having reported that many of her subjects showed almost no awareness of color differences at all.

To my mind the most solid finding of these studies is the infrequency with which prelatency children--even in mixed race, high tension, urban settings--can be said to make spontaneous distinctions on the basis of color or race, either verbally or behaviorally (such as by their choice of playmates), despite the incentives to do so which either inhered in the circumstances of the research or were introduced deliberately in order to obtain the desired data. McDonald's intensive observations of prelatency children over a period of two years are congruent with this. She stated that it was the staff's final impression that "a racial prejudice cannot develop before latency" and that "with the arrival of latency the dictionary definition of prejudice gradually becomes applicable" (1970, p. 95, 156, emphasis added). She did not specify why this should be so. Moreover, she went on to postulate a pre-anal disturbance as the origin of racism, which she conceptualized as based on skin color differences. It may have been this a priori notion which prevented her from following up on her own suggestion that "a study of latency . . . would be especially helpful in tracing the relationships between skin color conflicts and ego and superego development" (p. 141).

Support for the revisions proposed here is also offered by the literature on latency itself: in the studies of specific aspects of development in middle childhood reported by Piaget (1952), Kohlberg (1966) and others; and in the

theoretical perspectives provided especially by such authors as Erikson and Blos (1979).

Erikson is the only author among those mentioned who speaks directly on racial issues. Again, as with McDonald, his specific conclusions, which neglect middle childhood, seem less useful than the underlying data and basic sense of the issues conveyed--which point very much to that phase. He states that to him "on the whole American children of play-school age and the elementary grades seem remarkably free of prejudices and apprehension." He places the onset of hostilities and concern about differences in color at adolescence, which he sees as a "shock" introduction to "the standardization of individuality and intolerance of differences" characteristic of this phase in America (1950, p. 245). He sees prejudice as a manifestation (along with other forms of "pseudo-speciation" such as nationalism) of the failure of human beings to achieve a wider identity--the task of youth (adolescence). However, as I shall discuss in Chapter IV, his clinical observations and statements on the formation of identity and, even more cogently, his formulations regarding the stages of psychosocial development, are most consistent with the notion that latency is the critical stage for the taking on of one's race as a vital part of the own self and the subsequent formation of race-related attitudes. The crisis of "industry vs. inferiority" (which Erikson identifies as a focus of the minority child's troubles) can be

seen as a lasting element of racial consciousness for all. Certainly the most tenacious and thorny racial struggles on the social level (which have been over access to social technology: education and employment--not sex!) have revolved around precisely those issues which Erikson has designated as central to this phase.

That racial issues may take on either added significance and new meanings in adolescence or retrospective meanings in terms of earlier conflicts, or both, and may merge with broader issues of identity (or come to stand for them) is not disputed. However, in this instance what emerges stormily later must be seen as having been a work-in-progress during the latency phase.

Similarly, emphasis on the importance of the issues of middle childhood to a developmentally sound psychoanalytic theory of racism would not exclude appreciation of the fact that some children learn to make and abide by rough racial divisions very early, as Robert Coles attests (1967). Rather, it forces us to inquire into the circumstances--and having done so to recognize, I submit, that narcissistic issues--intactness, constancy and valuation of the own self--on an interpersonal level (which may acquire intrapsychic significance) govern the experience of this difference. In other words, I think it is important to see race in the psychological sense as in large measure a question of sameness or difference with immediate narcissistic significance.

This notion (the second of the alternative ideas to be explored) is congruent with suggestions by Freud as to the critical role of narcissistic "ego interests" to racial and other social conflicts (1914). Greenacre (1949) takes a similar stance in her comments on race and related identity issues. Despite its distinguished genealogy and the current stress on narcissism and related pathologies, very little attention has been paid to such issues in this context. In my view, consideration of the narcissistic aspects of racial consciousness and self-definition as these evolve during latency may offer an important clue as to how color may become "causal," especially in any setting in which it is an anomaly: that is, as an organizer of self-related fantasies.

My own study of children's ideas on racial differences has produced a number of results consistent with the revised focus and emphases which I propose. My approach has been to ask children about their ideas on the origin of racial differences and to encourage them to pursue whatever topics occur to them as we talk. Their responses have brought to life (in fact, inspired) the ideas which are outlined here, and I will report them in more detail separately and as illustrations in the discussions to follow. My rationale for utilizing the relatively neutral paradigm of the Piagetan-type interview will be presented as a preface to the interview summaries.

As a preview and introduction to this material, I will mention here that the children whose views will be presented in these pages have voiced a wide range of ideas on the question of racial origins and have spontaneously introduced a number of topics which they felt to be related and which seemed to be of great interest to them. Some of these "theories" have seemed commensurate with my estimate of the child's level of development in other respects; some have not. I have been especially interested in these discrepancies and also in those to be observed between 1) the child's level of racial awareness (not sufficiently recognized as dependent upon the situation at hand by previous researchers, I contend); 2) grasp of race-related concepts (such as 'black' and 'white'); and 3) concern with moral and social issues (which often far outstrips the child's grasp of the physical aspects of race). It would be difficult to fit these children's statements into the prevailing formulas.

Summary

Existing research on children's responses to racial differences and the prevailing theoretical notions on this subject do not adequately represent the phenomena to be observed and explained. Re-examination of the original data of the major observational studies together with other neglected material suggests new findings as to: 1) the development of racial awareness (timing and impetus); 2) the

circumstances under which children exhibit racial hostility and its psychological meaning to them; and 3) factors important to the development and tenor of racial attitudes. Different issues emerge from those heretofore considered important in this area which are not adequately addressed by the dominant theoretical formulations. A developmental perspective emphasizing the cognitive-affective developments and psychosocial tasks of middle childhood is suggested. What is commonly referred to as racial identity is reconceptualized as a gradually developing aspect of self-experience which normally takes on important dimensions during the latency phase.

In sum, I propose a drastic revision upward of estimates of the importance of middle childhood to racial consciousness. I nominate it as the focal phase for the consolidation of a sense of one's race as part of oneself and for the initial development (in part as a direct consequence of the first event) of related social attitudes. I hypothesize that it is in middle childhood, following some confrontation with oedipal issues and the coming into being of quite a bit of cognitive complexity, that physical differences are reliably understood to have social significance (in fact, their significance often then begins to be insisted upon). The delineation of and identification with a peer group, the discovery and positioning of the self with respect to now comprehensible social issues, and the increasing exposure to

social 'technology' make racial classifications a salient concern. This constitutes an alteration in traditional conceptions of children's responses to racial differences and in the dominant approaches to racism found in the psychoanalytic and general psychiatric literature. In the remaining chapters, I will present clinical evidence for these propositions, then discuss their fit with general observations of latency-age children and with theoretical perspectives on development during this phase offered by Piaget, Erikson, Blos and others.

CHAPTER II
A REVIEW OF THE TRADITIONAL LITERATURE
ON THE CHILDHOOD ANTECEDENTS OF RACISM

In this chapter I shall review the dominant psychoanalytically-oriented theoretical contributions to the study of racism and then examine some of the pertinent test and observational research on children's race-related behavior. The theoretical material which I will discuss has typically been based upon speculations about children's responses to race as extrapolated from work with adults--to the extent that it is at all clinically-based. The major research studies derive more directly from the source (i.e. work with children) but generally conform to the same basic conception of the issues involved. Put briefly, these works view responses to racial differences as predictable reactions to color and physical appearance and present dark skin color as an independent impetus to prejudice somewhat akin to a powerful carcinogen. These theories and studies comprise what I shall refer to as the traditional or 'classical' literature on the childhood antecedents of racism.

Most of the material which I shall discuss has appeared in American publications, but I will also refer to some British research. Where relevant, I will include mention of analytic treatments of anti-semitism; however, my primary focus in this discussion will be on notions pertaining to

racism against blacks. Discussion of some suggestions by Freud and a few others which for the most part have not been 'taken up' into the theoretical dialogue on race will be deferred until a later chapter (where I advocate something along these lines) so that here I can focus more sharply upon the ideas about children's responses to race which have been most prevalent in the analytic mainstream.

In discussing this material I have in mind two basic aims: first, to suggest how thoroughly racism is threaded through and distorting to much of the analytic work on that very issue; and second, to show how, quite apart from the matter of unconscious bias, the pertinent research fails to support those conclusions about the timing and impetus toward racism for which it has been most noted, and instead suggests alternative hypotheses (to be elaborated subsequently). Accordingly, by way of introduction to these specific notions and research, which began to emerge in volume around the time of the Second World War, I shall briefly sketch some earlier approaches to racial issues by psychological theorists and also cite some contemporaneous writings which indicate what the prevailing 'working' image of blacks within the analytic field has been. This may help to clarify just what some of the traditions in the traditional literature are.

I.

To paraphrase Shafer (1978) speaking on a subject (sexism)

reminiscent of this one in its power to confuse and divide, issues of racism may be discerned in the typical ways in which observers have defined and appraised the very phenomena in question. Traditional ideas of what it is to be black or white and of the relations between blackness and whiteness have tended from the outset to bias the choice of questions to pursue and the observations made. In other words, as will appear more fully below, the analytic literature itself has often dealt in stereotypes inadvertently favoring the direct translation into theory of some of the same race-related notions which it was intended to explain.

To begin with, the very questions considered here--when and how racial feelings develop--were initially prevented by preconceptions about blacks from even being discerned. Those writing on racial matters sixty or seventy years ago against the backdrop of blacks' mass migration north generally espoused the idea of there being an innate cross-race repugnance. Blacks' presumed genetic inferiority, as evidenced by their different appearance and lowly estate, was thought to evoke a natural antipathy on the part of those not so cursed. Whether instinct or experience fueled this dislike and whether blacks' nature or poor nurture furnished the grounds for it, were thought nice questions for pedants, propagandists and biologists. All roads were still presumed to lead to the same psychological result: cross-racial (white to black, of course) repulsion, disgust and hostility (Thomas, 1904).

Just as this conviction foreclosed certain questions, it also inevitably obscured certain data from view. Intermingling (including the commonplace crime of miscegenation) and other phenomena running contrary to the expectation of antipathy were apt to be ignored (just as later, sexual conflict was apt to be relied upon totally) for purposes of formulating explanations of racial views. Moreover, since blacks' physical and other personal characteristics were thought to be entirely sufficient to stimulate such results (see discussion in Gould 1981), little consideration was given to the identification and analysis of the circumstances surrounding particular exhibitions of cross-racial hostility.

Instead, early statements on the psychological aspects of race tended to echo rather naively the then-current popular concerns: the amount of pathology (or depravity) exhibited by blacks and how whites' fortunes (psychological or other) might be affected adversely by blacks' social proximity. In this spirit Jung (1910) urged the Second Psychoanalytic Congress to consider whether anything was "more contagious than to live side by side with a rather primitive people?" and warned that "living together with Negroes exerts a suggestive effect on the laboriously tamed instinct of the white race and tends to pull it down." This potential degradation necessitated (he thought) the "energetic sexual repressions" he had encountered in America (quoted by Brill in Freud, 1938).

Ironically, blacks themselves had been thought by many to

be immune to mental illness--a felicitous result of their being impervious to civilization, then regarded as the main precipitant. After this shield of savagery proved permeable, clinicians concentrated on documenting the reputedly extraordinary instability found lurking below (sometimes falsely, see Prudhomme and Musto, 1973). Waves of insanity were then said to have been unleashed by the slaves' emancipation--and, incidentally, to be likely to attend any further enhancement of their status. Thereafter, blacks were often diagnosed as suffering from their freedom. Abolition, it was argued, had left them bereft of the rigid social structures which those so illendowed with internal resources were thought to require (Evarts, 1913; Bleuler, 1924; and see more recent references to "liberation panic" in Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951).

The early analytic literature's emphasis on black pathology was complemented by its routine characterization of blacks as infantile, both culturally and in intrapsychic terms. The inaugural issue of the first psychoanalytic journal published here announced the view of the editors (Smith Jelliffe and William Alanson White) that "the existence side by side of the white and colored races in the United States offers a unique opportunity . . . to study the psychology of a race at a relatively low cultural level" (1913). An article featured in this volume also pointed out that while Freud had "recommended the study of child psychology as a valuable aid to the understanding of abnormal adult psychology,

it must be remembered that in his country there is no such race as (the Negro) whose psychological processes are so simple in character and so readily obtainable." To the American investigator, the author suggested, "the Negro might prove as valuable and more accessible than the child" (Lind 1913). A postscript to this (and a further indication of trends prevalent in the literature) is that although not much was learned about children by studying blacks, a substantial literature did spring up analyzing the black psyche in terms of deviant child development (see, e.g. Sharpley 1969; Hunter and Babcock 1967).

A comparably patronizing tone and conception of blacks as psychologically primitive also runs through the early psychiatric literature. The first issue of the American Journal of Psychiatry recommends the charting of blacks' "phylogenetic traits of character, habit and behavior" as interesting "peculiarities" (Bevis 1921).

Not until the mid-twenties did the scientific focus on blacks' 'inferiority' loosen sufficiently so that racial attitudes could be seen as sometimes irrational, hence as an appropriate object of inquiry in themselves (see, e.g. Allport 1924). The pioneer in taking this step seems to have been the journalist Walter Lippmann who published a conceptual analysis of stereotyping, based on observations gleaned from his profession, in 1922. There followed one of the first and still most frequently-cited studies of racial stereotypes

(Katy and Braly, 1933) which concluded that college-age students' ethnic and racial views must be the product of socialization since the test subjects had not all had actual encounters with the various stimulus groups whom they professed to admire or despise.

The dawning of apprehension in academic circles that racial distinctions could be advocated to excess was probably hastened by the progressively more northern resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, along with the rise of National Socialism in Germany and other contemporaneous historical influences. A general movement in social science toward valuing objectivity more dearly (while developing instruments--such as attitude scales--designed to measure it) probably also encouraged scientific arbiters to regard overt racial hostility as personally and socially malignant, hence as a phenomenon to be 'explained' (Milner, 1975). In any event, whereas previously the idea of childhood innocence of prejudice had coexisted quite comfortably with the common social and scientific belief in natural antipathy, it then began to be officially observed that children were sometimes 'unfairly' affected by racism and also sometimes appeared to exhibit it. Hence the body of research and theory on children and race which this paper undertakes to examine in pages 39-61 was spawned.

Probably the first formal investigation of children's responses to racial differences was undertaken by Lasker (1920) in the form of a broad sociological survey collecting

adult opinions and anecdotes on this subject by questionnaire. Upon learning from his adult correspondents that many children did express awareness of racial differences and issues, the author deplored this and attributed it (somewhat ambiguously) to the "inheritance of limiting social attitudes." I will be examining Lasker's research progeny in Part 3 of this chapter, below. The main significance of this study for present purposes is that its appearance and form indicate how very recently and tentatively questions pertaining to the development of racial feelings came to be entertained in anything resembling their modern form.

Setting aside specific theoretical issues for the moment, the emergence of genuine investigations of the origins of racism can be taken as a sign of increased tolerance on the part of journal contributors and editors toward persons different from themselves. Nonetheless, blacks have continued--until very recently and by both black and white authors--to be presented in the literature as a poorly differentiated psychic mass distinguished chiefly by its pathology.

Thus, for example, nearly forty years after Lind's (1913) remarks on blacks' childlike psychic simplicity, the most highly-touted (still) psychoanalytic treatment of black adaptation and personality development, apparently proceeding upon the same assumption, could blithely construct "A Psychodynamic Inventory of the Negro Personality"--not to mention a subchapter purporting to present 'The Life Cycle of the Negro' (Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951). The authors had set out to

determine whether there was "a basic personality for the Negro," a telling endeavor in itself. They concluded that their work "prove(d) decidedly" that there was: "having no possible basis for a healthy self-esteem and every incentive for self-hatred . . . the basic Negro personality is . . . a caricature of the corresponding white personality." For this insight the authors had relied upon interviews with 25 subjects who were either paid or offered therapeutic gain, along with a 'blind' Rorschach analysis in which the one outside datum given the test analyst was that all of the test subjects were black.

A comparable rush to judgment is indicated by Erikson's contemporaneous statements about race, such as that among the (over 20 million) black people of America "three identities are formed" from "the inventory of available prototypes" rejected by whites (1951). Grier and Cobb (1968) reflect the tendency of many black writers to create similarly simplistic monoliths from germs of clinical experience.

In retrospect it seems clear that the development of professional interest in the origins of racism and of concern about 'the black experience' represented an important shift in valence but not a cure for previously ingrained tendencies. Throughout the period during which the basic theoretical notions and major research studies in this area were being conceived, the conventional view of blacks presented in the psychological literature really remained quite consistent with

earlier, obviously (we see now) distorted views. The fact that whites in the psychological literature on race have typically been presented in caricature-like fashion as well will appear more clearly when I discuss specific theoretical statements in Part 2 of this chapter, below. In brief, the tendency has been to search for a basic all-purpose White Racist personality type. To this end, extreme groups characterized (it is said) by particular pathological syndromes have been carved out of the mass to serve as exemplars of bigotry-- thereby nearly exempting the authors who presumably belong to some other personality group.¹

To be fair, it should be acknowledged that the literature does offer a few sensitive clinical portraits of blacks (e.g. Wohlberg, 1975; Goldberg, et al., 1975). Coles has even contributed interviews with self-described racists which carefully preserve a measure of individual complexity (1964). However, such individually-drawn efforts have tended to resist generalization (or rather their authors have) into theoretical statements on racism or race.

The upshot is that the analytic literature on race from

¹The authoritarian personality theory (Adorno 1954) linking anti-semitism to certain character traits is probably the best-known effort to explain prejudice as the outgrowth of special personality features. Doubt cast upon the universal coincidence of anti-semitism with authoritarianism (or other "-isms") has discouraged such approaches to that particular issue (Stephan and Rosenfield, 1981). This is a recent development, however, and, as I shall describe, the group clinical diagnosis has continued to be the primary mode of analytic inquiry into anti-black attitudes.

the earliest to the most recent relies heavily upon a fictive race of psychological grotesques. Mythic blacks and complementarily fantastic whites (the one perhaps unconsciously derived from the other) have been teamed to make a sort of textbook "cultural pair" (Loewenstein, 1951). Constructs such as Civilized Man and Savage (or Child), Repressed Man and Primitive, and Racist and Victim have been treated as actual types in a dramatic but distorted schematization of personality.

Of course, even the most flagrant offenders along these lines in recent years have been meaning to attack racism and not to promote the idea of black inferiority. Nonetheless, their depiction of blacks as passive, near-inanimate objects whom whites simply act upon (rather than interact with), be it in a beneficent or abusive way, still bolsters the idea of white omnipotence even while purporting to repudiate it. "One comes to wonder," notes Erikson (1968), who has not been immune to this himself, "about the ways in which a majority in its sudden zeal to regain its moral position and to 'face the facts,' (may) inadvertently tend to confirm the minority's negative image . . . in the very act of dwelling exclusively and even self-indulgently upon the majority's sins. A clinician may be forgiven," he suggests, "for questioning the restorative value of (such) an excessive dose of moral zeal Even a remorseful majority must be watchful," he continues, "lest it persist unconsciously in

habitual patterns (for it) seems that hidden prejudice is even to wilt into the very measurements by which the damage done is to be gauged" (p. 304-305).

I will touch only lightly and for the most part indirectly upon the general issue of racism in the literature in the pages to come as I move in more closely to focus upon specific theoretical notions and research and to compare the two. My intention here has been to indicate in broad outline the points of reference and departure for those treatments of racial material to be discussed below, many of which do carry, perhaps more subtly, the insignia of the old school. To wit: the distortion of data by neglect of its "interesting discrepancies" (Coles 1981), extreme schematizations, and the incorporation of commonplace racial assumptions into theory, there to be rationalized and disseminated under this new imprimatur.

II.

In the post-1930 psychoanalytic literature earlier views of anti-black sentiment as being either innate or caused by a conscious apprehension of blacks' inferiority were supplanted by newer notions grounded in the belief that "racism has its origin in the infantile unconscious" (Kovel 1970). These still prevalent notions consist mainly of speculations regarding the antecedents of racism in early childhood, based

upon reasoning from pre-existing theoretical constructs, fragments of adult analyses and dissections of social events.

Though derived inferentially, these ideas have often been announced and treated as though they had been independently confirmed, e.g. by comparative longitudinal studies of children's racial views. Further, researchers themselves have often read their own data as though it were confirming of these theories (speciously, I contend below in Part III). As a result, most of the ideas which I will now discuss have not really been confronted and evaluated in terms of their 'fit' with clinical data drawn from elsewhere and with contemporary psychoanalytic thinking. Their very pervasiveness may have provided some proof against dispute, as credence is often gained by frequent repetition. Also, some theorists have suggested that only a squeamish inability to face unconscious facts would prompt questioning of their views. Thus while one or two authors may have quietly reconsidered some of the ideas that they previously insisted upon (see, e.g., Coles 1981), for the most part these second generation hypotheses have escaped close scrutiny.

Probably the most frequently presented of these hypotheses is the idea that racism may be largely understood to be a direct byproduct of a natural association of dark skin with dirt and excrement. This association, seen as established in early childhood when anal issues are (it is presumed) at their peak, is then thought to stimulate an almost inevitable

displacement of anal drive-related conflicts onto persons who are dark-skinned. Accordingly, an unconscious apprehension regarding blacks' physical appearance is seen as leading to their being segregated (like wastes) and despised. A popular variant of this thesis which somewhat shifts the emphasis (or blame) is that it is those persons most mired in anal conflict who are most apt to indulge in the displacement described.

Often presented as a companion to the anal theory of anti-black prejudice is a second hypothesis also based on a coincidence of coloring. This holds that the human experience of darkness and night predisposes all peoples (including blacks, presumably) to an aversion to dark skin. The basic idea here is that since at night human and other objects are lost to view and danger can approach unseen, fear and dislike of these experiences are generalized to skin colors reminiscent of night. Those who espouse this view suggest that only something this comprehensive could explain what they take to be the universality of anti-black sentiment. (Pinderhughes, 1973).

Diverse theorists have elaborated upon these central notions in various ways. Some have emphasized the pathology of the key associations; others, their inevitability in view of the child's primitivity and/or the exigencies of the body image--as if to say, "biology is sociology." Before examining (in Part III) the available clinical material which seems pertinent to these issues, I will present individual variants

of these hypotheses below.

An early statement of the anal-association thesis was made by Kubie (1937). In a paper on the origins of man's feelings about dirt and its investment with fantasy, he suggested that "the white man's prejudice against the pigmented races comes from his feelings about excrement and the pigmentation which with advancing years develops around the (bodily) apertures." He noted that, while they did occasionally comment on color differences, small children did not seem to be spontaneously hostile to blacks. Rather, he thought, prejudice tended to increase with age. Later, during the heat of the Civil Rights Movement, Kubie returned to the subject of racism, this time presenting a more extensive statement based upon a revised view of early childhood, but without presenting the clinical or other data from which his thinking derived. At this point he placed the crucial determinants of prejudice in the child's very early ambivalence about "untouchable and unmentionable body parts and products" (1965). The problem lay in the teaching of the child at the toddler stage that "his body is an animated . . . dirt factory," which necessarily resulted in the development of "biased fantasies" and an aversion to dark pigmentation.

At one point Kubie also invoked the dark skin-reminds-of-night hypothesis as an adjunct to the anal thesis. "Does night itself with its darkness and its threatening mystery and terror," he asked, "enter into the formation of these biases

in our early years?" However, basically he inclined more towards the notion that darkness was first connected with evil or badness, while associations with strangeness were secondary and defensive. "As long as bed and toilet are concepts with connotations of dirt," he reasoned, "dirtiness seems to the child to begin at home." As evidence of this association of home with dirt, Kubie asserted that the small child usually prefers food served in someone else's home "even when their own home cooking is a combination of Gourmet and Cordon Bleu." Only by such phrases as "the dirty foreigner" (or by dining out?) could the child fend off "the hidden feeling that he and his home are the dirtiest of all." Thus racial prejudice in adults derived from an unconscious association of blacks with dirtiness which in turn had been made repugnant by the parents who failed to teach their child 'wise restraints and the ability to postpone gratification in [the] use of his body . . . without making him hate [it]."

In remarks upon anti-semitism, Fenichel (1940) attributed the impetus toward prejudice to the potency of the provocation provided by the object. He took the position that "the anti-semite arrives at his hatred of the Jew by a process of displacement stimulated from without." [Emphasis added.] He named blackness as a "bodily peculiarity" likely to stimulate animosity along with other "peculiarities of Jewish life."

A few years later Jones (1945) elaborated upon what he saw as "the curious part played in (racial attitudes) by the

simple matter of pigmentation." Noting that "the association between 'dark' and 'evil' is familiar enough, as is that between blonde and pure," he credited (unspecified) psycho-analytic studies with establishing that "this dark evil is, in the unconscious mind, related to the contents of the bowel." Bowel contents were associated with strong emotions and could be either incorporated or expelled. As a result of the color connection, he reasoned, "to have close contact with a dark foreigner . . . comes to mean to admit some poisonous material into the system." Moreover, it was just this connection which he felt allowed "evil impulses" to be projected onto dark persons.

Jones seemed to feel that the associative power of color virtually compelled these results: in fact, a 'touch of the tar' was sufficient to set these damaging associations in motion. As a case in point he cited the prejudice felt by "pure" Germans towards German Jews. (Though there was also in that instance, he felt it necessary to add, the matter of "the Hittite nose, so suggestive of deformity.") Color also accounted, in his view, for the 'fact' that Mediterranean peoples are "less afraid of being swamped by marriage with dark foreigners" than are more Northern ones "who have more bloneness to lose." Based on such instances in which he thought he saw its influence writ plain, it seemed to Jones that darkness of skin must be a near-prerequisite to prejudice. "Indeed," he remarked, "it will be hard to find an example of

racial prejudice against a people who were less pigmented . . ."

Reiser (1961) also stressed the primary contribution to prejudice made by negative associations to darkness which he saw as being additive throughout psychosexual development, thus combining and expanding upon the two basic hypotheses described. During the oral stage, he suggested, "night is felt to be 'bad'" because then "the good mother and the good breast disappear." Moreover, during the child's (now apparently insufficient) isolation from his parents "they engage in mysterious, frightening activity"; as a result "darkness retains in the unconscious its association with incestuous wishes . . . frustration, anxiety and hostility." Reiser characterized the anal stage as being that in which the child "is taught that feces are dirty . . . [thus producing further] ambivalence over this 'black' substance." And finally, additional reasons to hate darkness inevitably arise in the phallic phase when "incestuous impulses, homoerotic feelings and masturbation [fantasies] must be kept safely confined to the 'black pit' of the unconscious."

While deploring the suffering involved, Reiser stressed that blacks nonetheless provided a "suitable" external symbol of feared inner wishes, being at once "dark and mysterious, distant yet childlike and human." To these factors he attributed what he described as adherence to a "fairly universal" taboo against blacks which, he cautioned, neither "evolution or revolution" were likely to change inasmuch as

"these highly emotional attitudes toward Negroes are . . . determined psychobiologically."

Pinderhughes (1973) similarly ascribes racial hierarchies and much of the impetus toward hatred to selected psychobiological factors. Citing figures of speech and incidents from adult analyses, he takes the position that the body image itself dictates that what is dark (like feces) be universally regarded as 'low' (as in below), morally as well as in terms of esteem, and kept 'behind.' He also alludes without clinical elaboration to the influence on racial views of negative associations between darkness and loss presumably established very early in individual and human history by the child's early experiences of night.

Kovel (1970) retains the traditional emphasis on the central importance of unconscious biologically-determined associations between feces and skin color. He begins his search for a key to racism in "the biological-historical fact of the Negro"--i.e., his [the Negro's] "blackness," which, he reports, was already an established European symbol of soil and evil at the time of the initiation of the African slave trade.² He explains that this symbolism developed into a schema of race" so organized that "whatever is forbidden and

²It is difficult to assess the significance of this 'fact' without undertaking historical and anthropological studies beyond the scope of the present work. Kovel follows certain historians (e.g. Jordan 1971) in allotting to blackness what amounts to an independent causative role in the
(continued next page)

horrifying in human nature may be designated as black and projected onto a man whose dark skin and oppressed past fit him to receive this symbol."

Turning from the cultural to the individual level, Kovel delineates two Ideal Types of racist, both of whom he depicts as stimulated to anti-black activity by childhood associations to darkness. The Dominative type (as exemplified by the stereotypic Southern bigot and lyncher) is seen as having been made violent by his association of darkness (as in 'night') with incestuous fantasies; his pathology is described as phallic and oedipal in origin. The more numerous and important Aversive type, whose anal sadism is seen by Kovel as "the cardinal manifestation of modern American racism," avoids blacks in response to his unconscious association of dark skin with dirtiness. In support of the generality and infantile origin of this association, Kovel refers (erroneously, see discussion p. 42-48, below) to the nursery school research of Goodman (1952) and to anecdotes in which adults express

establishment of slavery. Others have more recently pointed out (see especially Frederickson's comparative studies of South African and American racial practices, 1981) that white enslavement of blacks (not to mention, black enslavement of blacks) has at other times and in other places flourished without the ideological supports of a negative symbolism of darkness and that it is an error to view the significance of the skin color difference between blacks and whites as so simplistically fateful. It is also obvious that (like racism) slavery has a much broader history than is implied when it is attached to a specific black-white "schema of race," to use Kovel's phrase--after all, the word "slave" is derived from "Slav."

disgust toward blacks and reluctance to have physical contact with them. Kovel states that the key pathology here emanates from the anal phase when the child is "painfully detaching himself from his mother . . . Dirt becomes, then, the recipient of his anger at separation" and black people become to him "the personification of dirt."

At one point in his discussion Kovel refers to associations between skin color and excrement as "culturally established correspondences;" he also notes that the mutual influences of earlier and later experiences are vastly complex. Nonetheless, he returns repeatedly to the notion, pivotal to his analysis (really, a synthesis of events), that racism derives directly from a split between body and spirit, good and evil, black and white, inaugurated at the anal stage when, as an antidote to the rage engendered by separation,³ "the developing mind begins to look about to see what can be associated with its own excrement (p. 269)."

Throughout his elaborate "psychohistory of white racism," Kovel moves back and forth between cultural and individual developmental perspectives, periodically mixing the two via metaphor. Finally he describes racism as a socio-cultural

³Kovel emphasizes the critical significance to the child of the actual loss of feces which toilet training involves and his ambivalence toward the lost substance (presumably re-enacted in his relationship with blacks). He does not consistently distinguish between the child's naturally developing awareness of his separateness and the impact of forced actual separations from objects or (and these are more or less equated here) body products.

disease, a historical ill . . . [which] is the outcome of the West's assault upon the living world to create . . . idolatrous property, of an attempt, existing beneath white rationalizations to take back from the world what we fancy was taken from us in the process of separation . . . [an attempt to assuage a] sense of loss . . . most intensely organized for reasons of historical accident, mental fantasy and biological fact, about the perception of body colors" (p. 232). Thus he depicts racism as the normative and pathological outcome of the separation-individuation process in Western (i.e., body-rejecting, property-loving) societies.

McDonald (1970) also elaborated upon the notion that "it is especially the difference in skin color which is at the root of a racial prejudice." On the basis of her observations of children in an inner city nursery she could, she reported, "say very little about the manifest condition of racial prejudice," not having observed behavior which she felt warranted that formal designation. Nonetheless, she posited that a specific, normal developmental phenomenon which she called "skin color anxiety" combined with (primarily anal) drive conflicts to produce race-related difficulties for children and adults.

In the absence of actual data on this issue, McDonald thought it reasonable to assume that the recognition of skin color as a distinct human attribute begins during the period of stranger anxiety. She views the ability of the child "to

discriminate his first love object," as a herald of the emergence of a related capacity for skin color discriminations. At this point, she posited, "a specific skin color anxiety becomes distinguishable and persists for a while beyond the period of stranger anxiety." The degree to which skin color anxiety could be mastered and dispelled would depend upon the mother's handling of the infant's experience. A poorly managed encounter would set up a disposition toward racism in the form of "a preverbal affectively disturbed ego state as a prototype of what it is like to have contact with people of the stranger's color."⁴ Pursuing this idea to the end of its logical tether, McDonald eventually concludes that any

⁴Recognizing that not all children (or racists) are exposed to different (from own or mother's--it is not clear which is relevant here) skin colors in their earliest years, McDonald goes on to suggest that whenever discovered, this difference will hark back to 'skin' experiences during the first year of life. These early roots are always tapped while "the discovery of color difference is made and remade at later developmental stages." Hence "the nature of the [original skin color] anxiety becomes increasingly complex"--which complexity, McDonald explains, must account for its being (as indicated by her own lack of data on the point) so difficult to detect. As evidence for the existence of skin color anxiety as a normal phenomenon in children, she relies upon some of her disturbed nursery-age subjects' expressions of concern and curiosity when confronted with a change in a familiar playmate's appearance upon the latter's return from spring vacation with a tan. Eventually McDonald concedes that, aside from this rather dubious one, "it is difficult to find examples of undisguised skin color anxiety." Cf. Spitz' (1965) remarks that at six months "anybody . . . white or colored . . . can elicit the smiling response if he fulfills the conditions required by the privileged gestalt which acts as a trigger." Spitz reported no observations of differing reactions to strangers of different races by older infants, though he would have had the opportunity to observe this had it occurred.

tactilely or visually (she does not distinguish) skin-mediated disturbance in object relations whether at this early critical period or later would be likely to result in dislike of those with differently-colored skin.

Perhaps finding this formulation unhelpfully broad and, in any event, not borne out by the data which she had obtained, McDonald returns in her discussion of critical factors in the development of racism to the notion that it is in particular dark skin colors which arouse anxiety among children due to naturally occurring associations between dark complexions and anality.

After characterizing toilet-training customs and the prevailing racial climate in a society as environmental (hence secondary) factors influencing associations between anality and skin color, McDonald goes on to say that she is "inclined to believe that there is inherent within the child a natural tendency to make such connections himself, if he has had the benefit of exposure to differently colored people." During the anal phase, she continues, "'brown' becomes a color symbolizing all anal stage conflicts . . . a visual reminder of the ego's actual or threatened loss of control over anally-tinged feelings, as well as over anal contents To a small child in or recently through his anal developmental phase, his major concern in life has been a separation of himself from his feces, and all the conflicts that emanate from this body loss Whatever his color is in reality, to

have a brown skin would confirm his worst fears that he has no value, no control, and is just a dirty person to be left, flushed away like his feces, and forgotten about" (p. 135). Because of these associations, McDonald suggests, dark skin colors pose a threat to the developing child's identity⁵ (again, no matter what his own color may be). Thus, according to this formulation, it becomes the task of the maturing child (and adult) "to detach skin color, both his own and others, from the color of feces" so as to achieve a parting of the ways of anal conflicts and reactions to racial differences."

In support of her notions concerning the regular displacement of anal conflicts onto dark skin, McDonald presents several anecdotes in which one child teases or taunts another by referring to him either as dirty or "brown," along with instances of dark children expressing dissatisfaction with their own color. She was not aware of any instances of white or light-skinned children expressing dissatisfaction with

⁵At one point in her discussion, before taking this more narrow color-based position, McDonald speculates that disturbances in object relations reaching down into what she calls "the oral-skin libidinal phase of development" are focused upon differently-colored [from self] persons because the difference in colors "throws a vague uncertainty upon the old accomplishments of the primitive ego functions which established the earliest sense of identity on the basis of a particular skin color." Here it is suggested that in some way differences per se may threaten "identity" (or form a basis for it). McDonald leaves this interesting idea prematurely, I think. Later (cf. discussion in Chapters 4-5 below), I will discuss how this might be stated in contemporary analytic terms and may be a useful way of looking at some (including McDonald's) clinical material.

their coloring (cf. Chapter 3, p. 88). I will discuss this and other limitations in her data in Part III. below.

Thus despite several promising digressions, McDonald ultimately shelters within the traditional theoretical fold, abandoning her own caution against premature yielding "to the temptation to declare that anal phase conflicts, even if they do not significantly outweigh other drive determinants, are the critical organizing forces of trends that develop into later Negro-White prejudices." Instead, she concludes that "a critical [to adult prejudice] overlap of racial, skin color conflicts with inner developmental drive conflicts occurs in connection with the anal phase."

In addition to the authors whose views I have just described, Erikson (1964), Coles (1964) and others also refer with varying degrees of authoritativeness and conviction to the notion that anti-black racism is incited primarily by a disturbing nexus between darkness, viewed as a fixed symbol of evil or loss, and dark physiognomy.⁶ Underlying the various elaborations of this hypothesis is the supposition, often made explicit, that there is a biological or 'natural' imperative which in effect creates a necessary coincidence

⁶The more central and original elements in Erikson's treatment of racial issues concern the processes of identity formation. Insofar as he takes a more broadly developmental rather than drive-displacement-defense view, I have chosen to discuss his ideas in the chapter dealing with my own suggestions regarding connections between racial identity development in latency and social attitudes.

between dark skin color and the lower or most despised ranks of society. Though not altogether denying that children may be overtly or subtly inculcated with the habit of regarding blacks (or others) in a prejudicial way, within the traditional analytic framework such 'training' is treated as a decidedly secondary influence, dependent upon the first (natural associations to dark skin) for its effect, if it is even mentioned at all in the psychological formula. Instead, racism is presented as a derivative of the normal conflicts of the preoedipal and early oedipal phases, as presumably reflected in the propensity of children to act upon the 'obvious' distinctions between black and white. In the following pages, I shall discuss some of the classical research on children's responses to color and race as it bears upon these theoretical assumptions.

III.

The bulk of existing research on children's responses to racial differences consists of what I shall call 'preference studies.' These attempt to elicit and measure young children's biases respecting color. In the typical investigation of this type, the child-subject is directed to choose which of two dolls (one representing a black person, the other a white) is the good, nice, or pretty one; looks like himself; and/or is to be preferred as a playmate or friend.

The most well-known of these studies is Clark and

Clark's (1947) investigation of the self-identification and evaluative preferences of black children. The results--frequent misidentification of own racial group and outgroup (i.e. white) doll selections--were interpreted as indicative of low self-esteem engendered by school segregation and were cited by the Supreme Court in its decision outlawing that practice (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). Numerous similar studies purporting to show the rejection of black children (i.e. dolls) by whites and the self-rejection of black children have followed this basic design. The darkness and anal association hypotheses described in Part II above have both inspired and served as theoretical explanations for many such studies by analytically-oriented investigators. In turn, their 'uncovering' of such patterns of preference has frequently been taken as confirming of these very prevalent hypotheses.

During the past few years a number of methodological criticisms have been leveled at particular preference studies, questioning their internal validity (whether race actually was the salient variable for the stimulus chosen), intermeasure reliability, and sociotemporal specificity (given regional variations in results, responsiveness to black pride campaigns and the like). See, e.g., Brand, Ruiz and Padilla (1974). More recently, Banks (1976) pointed out that the overwhelming acceptance of such studies as demonstrations of the race-based rejection of blacks by both black

and white preschool age children has obscured notice of the fact that a substantial number of them have actually failed to demonstrate the predicted (white preference) phenomenon. Taking a sample of 21 preference investigations, Banks reanalyzed the original empirical data with respect to the choice frequencies of black subjects: "In all, [he] found that two of these investigations clearly support the hypothesis of white preference in blacks, four investigations clearly demonstrate black preference in blacks, and fifteen . . . offer ambiguous findings of inconsistent preferences or no preferences at all." Banks (1979) also questioned whether such studies fulfill their claim to tap underlying levels of self-esteem (assuming that this is even a valid construct). According to his data re-analysis, color-based evaluative choices and putative measures of self-esteem actually vary independently of one another in some of the very studies cited as proof of their covariance by supporters of the preference paradigm. Concluding that the results of this entire line of research have been ambiguous at best, Banks wryly refers to the preference model as "a paradigm in search of a phenomenon."

In this section I shall also re-examine some of the original data obtained via the preference paradigm, but from a conceptual (rather than statistical) point of view. As with the theoretical material discussed previously, I question the underlying conception of the issues involved in this

research. Further, I find that this paradigm fits rather poorly with some of the phenomena which child researchers employing it have actually observed during the course of their work. I have selected three studies to discuss in some detail (Goodman, 1952; McDonald, 1970; and Porter, 1971). I have based this selection upon two criteria: 1) these are book-length reports of intensive investigations of children's responses to racial differences which provide the data originally collected in enough detail to make an informed re-evaluation possible; and 2) all three present a broad range of observations of the children studied, including observations of their spontaneous play. McDonald's study did not include formal testing; however, her observational data was selected and organized in a manner consistent with the other studies and, like them, is in all other respects representative of the main body of research on children's racial views.

Goodman's Race Awareness in Young Children (1952) is probably the most frequently cited of all preference studies. It consists of projective tests, observations, and interviews administered by three white researchers to 103 (57 black, 46 white) four year olds, beginning in 1943. The subjects were nursery school students in a "blighted," multi-problem inner city area of Boston which since then has become notorious nationwide for its racial strife.

Goodman, a social anthropologist, noted a sharp

discrepancy between the results of the formal tests which her staff administered and the data obtained from direct observation of the same subjects at play. When tested, the children's responses were interpreted as indicative of a preference for white-skinned dolls, et cetera; yet observation in the classroom, behind a one-way mirror and during recess periods revealed no discrimination based on race among the children during their spontaneous activities. Goodman resolved this discrepancy in favor of the tests by characterizing her findings as evidence of "incipiently" prejudiced attitudes held by children "whose public behavior was wholly or largely free of racialism."

In her discussion of the test results, Goodman reports several instances in which a child gave dirtiness or unattractiveness as a reason for rejecting a black doll or hypothetical playmate: "Paul P. . . . sees the brown child in the (TAT card) picture as 'a dirty little boy' . . . Yvonne thinks the brown boy looks like her little brother 'because he (brother) gets dirty so quick.'" She estimates that half of the children (of both races) "have at one time or another remarked upon the 'dirtiness' they thought they saw about people of color." The emphasis that Goodman placed upon these remarks overshadowed her observation that among the children "'dirty' is used [regularly] as an epithet, or as part of one" and that there were "numerous" references to

dirtiness and cleanliness where skin color and race were not at all involved. Moreover, although the children were regularly observed behind one-way mirrors and when otherwise unaware of (hence presumably not inhibited by) the presence of an adult, no remarks were reported in which dark skin was associated directly with feces or night even by those children identified as especially race conscious or "incipiently prejudiced."

Nonetheless, this study has been cited regularly as clinical support for the dictum that prejudice appears so early that it must derive from what Allport (1954) referred to as "the initial damage of associated ideas." Allport himself drew from this study the maxim that "dark skin suggests dirt--even to a four year old."⁷ Similarly, in the most extensive theoretical treatment of racism from a theoretical perspective in recent years, Kovel (1970) credits Goodman with having "revealed the uniform fantasy" among her subjects that "Negroes differed from whites in being dirty" and therefore inferior.

However, even with respect to the preliminary question of the extent of racial awareness among her four-year-old

⁷He also acknowledged that children sometimes have quite a different reaction, describing a white four-year-old's "enchantment" with a black railroad porter whom he met on a trip: "for fully 2 years thereafter he fantasized that he was a porter and complained bitterly that he was not colored so that he could qualify." But note that Allport attaches no theoretical significance to this fact.

subjects, Goodman's findings are quite inconsistent with the notion of a "uniform fantasy" of any sort. She found that sixteen of her subjects were "only faintly aware of the color line," thirty-three (twenty-two blacks among them) could be said to "see it clearly," and the bulk of them, fifty-four subjects, could be said to have it in focus only "some of the time." These results are all the more striking considering the prompting provided by the experimenters' insistence that the children categorize and evaluate the dolls and other materials presented to them on the basis of color. Goodman's description of the child whom she saw as "fitting the text-book outline of the 'well-adjusted' four year old" is indicative of the response to such instructions: he was found to have only "hazy notions about people being different, The word 'Indian' comes into his mind when he sees a picture of some people who look different. So does the word 'red.' 'Brown' he also supposes may have something to do with people [but] the matter is unimportant so he carelessly applies it to the people in the picture, though they happen to be white."

Goodman's subjection of the spontaneous interaction among the children to statistical analysis produced similar evidence of the children's relative indifference to the color and racial differences among them. Three thousand twenty-five "units" of interaction were recorded for twenty-six children over a period of sixty-nine days. The white

children interacted with each other less often than predicted and black children more; cross-racial interaction was slightly above the level predicted by chance (52%). Goodman concluded that there was "no evidence of either avoidance or seeking of cross-racial contact." This comported with informal experiments and school staff observations to the effect that the children studied were not inclined to select their playmates on the basis of race, nor to regard their darker-skinned classmates with fear or aversion in neutral (i.e., nontest) situations.

Goodman's overall impression was that when these children did evince awareness of either their own or another's race, "the social definition of the child's racial identity [was] more important than his actual color or other racial features." If he perceived them at all, Goodman found, the tendency to see classificatory features (e.g., color) was far stronger when the child was looking at dolls or drawings than at real people; that is, when "the view [was] less obstructed by personality." My reading of Goodman's data indicates that even under these circumstances, the children's tendency to categorize along racial lines was rather weak. This was shown when, for example, Goodman presented her subjects with dolls of mixed sex, age and colors which could be assembled to represent two families, one brown and one white. The children were asked to make up family groups ("Which mother to go with this father?"). The results were reported as

follows: "The children usually mixed their people quite indiscriminately, putting browns and whites together at the kitchen table, in the living room and in the bedrooms When we asked the child to choose family members to 'go with' a given father, we usually wound up with a racially mixed family." In contrast, when asked for an expression of preference between one father doll and the other, Goodman reports that "usually" the white doll was chosen by white children--while Negro children (who themselves represented a wide variety of colors) often showed "equivocation and other indications of reluctance to make a choice." In evaluating this experiment, the expressions of preference were interpreted whereas the children's spontaneous mixing of colors was not. Such "mixing" might co-exist with strong racial awareness, but it is difficult to see how it could be indicative of either a spontaneous readiness to categorize or of aversion, fear or conflictual fantasies.

Goodman also noted without attributing significance to this fact that her subjects were often reluctant to comply with the experimenter's insistence upon a clear choice of one racial representative over the other. When, for example, asked to allocate a limited commodity such as a swing or lollipop, which they were told was "desired" by both of two (black and white) dolls, "not infrequently the solution appeared in the form of taking turns."

For purposes of her analysis, Goodman considered it

significant (i.e., indicative of prejudice) that "the first turn was nearly always given to the subject's own color" rather than surprising that the results were ever otherwise.

Even among those children whom Goodman found to be most consistently aware of racial differences as measured by the preference tasks, "attitudes" about such differences ranged widely. In other words, children with relatively high awareness of color differences as indicated by their verbal grasp of racial categories and other measures did not exhibit either uniform or even personally consistent evaluative views.

Thus, contrary to the prevailing theoretical notions in support of which her work has been cited, Goodman, in her own words, found "no monolithic attitudes springing from monolithic sources." Further, despite her own emphasis upon the detection of even "incipiently" prejudiced views through the elicitation of color biases and verbal expressions of aggression, she actually concluded that among four-year-olds, "hostility and rejection appear rather seldom in real life." Rather, she found that in general and in all three of the nursery schools studied "the pattern of friendship and affections [was] dictated by personal congeniality factors," apparently assessed independently of coloring.

Porter (1971) undertook a study modeled upon Goodman's work during what the author referred to as a school

desegregation crisis and mass media "blitz" on racial conflict in Boston in 1965. A sociologist, Porter studied three- to five-year-olds (175 white, 184 black) in a variety of nursery and kindergarten settings that were either segregated or recently desegregated. Using dark-haired brown-skinned dolls and blonde white dolls, the children were asked to match families; to identify themselves with a particular doll as a sign of racial awareness on a perceptual level (choose a doll "who looks just like you"); to choose and reject dolls on the basis of defined characteristics ("Which one of these boys does Johnny say is lazy and stupid?" "Which one of these girls does Mommy say looks so clean and neat?"); to award favors ("Which one gets the lollipop?"); and to categorize the dolls by race using social labels ("Which of these dolls look like Negro/colored/white children?"). After the structured part of the test, the children were allowed a period of unstructured play during which the experimenter recorded which dolls were selected for use. In a separate phase of the study a sample of the original subjects' playground interactions was tallied and analyzed for indices of racial preference.

Porter's basic finding was that awareness of racial differences and race-related affect increase with age. She

⁸The formal preference test data were statistically analyzed by an analysis of variance technique. This was done by combining the items on the structured portion of the test
(continued next page)

reported that three-year-olds of both races were not highly aware of racial differences and tended to be neutral in their comments ("this doll has a tan"), if they commented at all. The experimenters noted that many of the children in this age group were obviously either choosing the dolls randomly or exhibiting a response-set for the doll in a particular hand. Moreover, they reported that "since the child was forced to choose either a white or Negro doll," some subjects "resolved⁹ the dilemma by alternating their racial choices."

Color was considered to be somewhat more salient and affect-laden for the four-year-olds in Porter's study. A number of black children and some whites were characterized as having "begun to realize that color differences have some type of social meaning." In general it was found that color tended to be a more salient variable in selecting dolls that "go together" for the black children than for the whites; white children were found to be just as likely to sort dolls on the basis of clothing or sex as by color. In a finding directly pertinent to the present inquiry, Porter also noted that expressions of feelings about racial differences (as measured by doll selections and evaluative comments) were not

into indices. A +.20 correlation between indices was considered to be sufficient justification for consolidating responses into an overall measure of preference (except in the case of choosing the "lazy" or "stupid" doll, which was expected to have a zero or minus correlation with other items).

⁹Porter states that these factors necessitated the low correlation figure.

necessarily accompanied by an ability to differentiate either clearly or consistently between racial categories (as measured by matching and naming tasks) on a perceptual basis. In other words, some children made prejudiced-sounding remarks without being able to identify the persons to whom racial epithets were meant to apply.

During the period of unstructured doll play which immediately followed the highly bias-suggestive preference testing, 82% of the white children and 91% of the black children showed no discrimination in their choices; that is, they played with dolls of both colors. This result is all the more impressive since simply not choosing a black doll to play with from the mixed group available was counted as "discrimination" for purposes of this test. Reflecting a tendency (evident throughout her book) to de-emphasize evidence of racial tolerance (or more accurately, indifference) found among the children in her sample, Porter followed her report of this unexpected display of impartiality with the comment that "all of these data provide additional evidence that children of both races tend to accept whites and reject or show ambivalence toward blacks."

Following Goodman, Porter also presents data on the connection between her subjects' "attitudes" and their actual spontaneous play with other children. Choices of playmates and verbalizations during playground recess were recorded for individual subjects during observation periods several weeks

apart. Noting that all previous studies had found no or very low correlation between test-expressed attitudes and actual playmate choices at this age level (five-year-olds), Porter found that her own results were consistent with this, except that in one of the school settings studied, the opposite correlation was obtained (i.e., responses interpreted as rejecting of blacks on the attitude tests actually corresponded statistically with frequent selection of them as playmates in the "live" setting). No difference was observed between each child's type of play by race of playmate chosen. For all of the children observed, gender was found to be the factor most highly related to playmate selection among the variables studied. Porter concluded that "[play] patterns are situationally determined" and that "factors like sex, personality and play style seem to be more salient determinants of friendship than race does . . . even for those five year olds with the most intense racial attitudes" as indicated by the preference testing.

Similarly, despite the pessimism of her theoretical formulations (regarding "skin color anxiety" and the "normative" confusion of brown skin with anal material; see pages 36-38, above), McDonald (1970) also acknowledges having found very few instances in which any of the children whom she studied actually used derogatory terms to express their perceptions about racial differences or appeared to base their playmate selections on negative responses to color or

race. This is particularly pertinent to the present inquiry in view of the high level of pathology and high visibility of primitive material in McDonald's research setting. McDonald's subjects consisted of a mostly white group of children attending a therapeutic nursery and kindergarten for children with what appear to have been fairly severe psychological disturbances.

The school was situated in an inner-city neighborhood in Cleveland; the occasion for study was an attempt at integration of the nursery by soliciting enrollment of nonwhites. At its peak the number of black children was 25% of the total; the teaching staff remained all white and the housekeeping staff all black throughout the period of observation. During this period local race-related incidents were widely publicized: it was noted that the children were particularly affected by the stationing of the National Guard nearby to quell racial rioting and by the televised coverage of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., during their spring recess.

McDonald lists fifty observations of cross-racial interaction or comment derived either from direct observation of the children in the nursery or from reports by visiting parents or outside teachers. Twelve of these observations are characterized as simple perceptions on the part of the observer; i.e., it was felt that no knowledge of the child's life or of the school setting was required in order to recognize their racial content. Of these, two incidents involve

negative (teasing or fearful) reactions to children with dark skin, four consist of positive or affectionate comments directed toward dark children (in these instances making specific mention of their color), and six consist of neutral remarks or inquiries. The remaining clinical observations presented by McDonald are characterized by her as "defensively disguised racial perceptions and reactions." Some require a considerable degree of inference in order to detect and interpret a racial element. For example, one incident is described in which three boys--one white, one Asian and one black--are playing together in the doll house corner of the nursery. The white child's exclamation that "Danny is a boy, Andrew is a boy, and I'm a boy--what are we doing here?" is interpreted as an expression of the speaker's racial confusion and concern that "his nonwhite friends might have been nonboy friends as well." In her preface to the published study McDonald implicitly acknowledges the tenuousness of some of the connections made, if not the "strain" evident in portions of her analysis. She remarks that in retrospect "We tried too hard to notice too much"

Most of us sooner or later made ill-timed and tactless remarks to mothers and children, especially if they happened to be Negroes. For example, if a child made an obvious remark about his racial difference, we complimented him too quickly for his ability to talk about his brown skin, and we might even go further and hazard an interpretation of what he might be feeling about his color. Or we might flood him with factual explanations about racial differences.

The result appears to have been an environment of high racial consciousness and polarization between the teachers and the parents with parents of both races feeling that racial issues which had once been ignored were now being overstressed by the staff to the detriment of the children.

To the contemporary reader, many of the incidents which McDonald describes appear to involve the children's attempts to deal with narcissistic threats and issues (constancy, coherence and valuation of self) rather than with racial matters per se. McDonald herself reports that the children were most likely to display anxiety (which she construed as related to deep-seated racial fears) when someone's skin or appearance actually underwent a change (through illness, such as chicken pox, or deep tanning), regardless of its original shade. McDonald attributes the children's responses to the actual darkening of the skin (in the absence of data demonstrating their reaction to a sudden pallor). At one point, however, she notes that the fear of exposure to the sun expressed by some (black and white) children seemed to stem from the idea that "nobody would know them, remember them and love them if their body changed" (emphasis added)--which suggests that such fears might have quite a different (non-color-based) origin having little to do with darkness per se.

In general McDonald attempts to fit her observations (including those regarding the children's responses to change and seeking of assurances as to their likeness to others and

acceptance by them) into drive-defense terms rather than exploring the narcissistic issues involved in their own right (as suggested in Chapter 5, below). At the same time, she seeks to avoid outright classification of these observations as symptoms of displaced pathology, as her theoretical stance would seem to dictate. Instead, in her discussion of the clinical material obtained, she stresses the "temporariness" of any apparent displacements involved in the children's responses to one another and the nonpathological 'feel' of their reactions to the color differences among them at this (prelatency) stage of their development--notwithstanding their disturbed functioning in other respects.

Thus, despite her theoretical predilection to find manifestations of anal and oedipal conflict as well as remnants of a novel, specific developmental stress (skin color anxiety) in the data presented, McDonald eventually characterizes her subjects' comments and inquiries regarding color and race as expressions of a "healthy" trial and error process of reality appraisal. This view comports with what I see as a general (and well founded) resistance on the part of child researchers to the attribution of adult-like racial attitudes to prelatency children--in contradistinction to the theoretical 'pull' (to which they also sometimes succumb) to regard adult racial strife as a remnant of prelatency conflicts and associations writ large.

Before giving a summary and overview of the research presented here, I will describe one additional preference-type study which in some respects provides an interesting counterpoint to those discussed previously. The main element of interest in this study is that in contrast to those undertaken in highly politicized and racially polarized settings in the United States (as is typical, understandably), this one was conducted in Britain in what was then a context of minimal cross-racial tension. The significance of this circumstance to the present inquiry is that it may be presumed to have afforded participants the best opportunity to observe the 'natural' inclinations of the children involved, hence to disentangle biological and/or developmental imperatives toward particular responses to color, if these exist, from confounding influences. The study to which I refer was conducted by Laishley (1972) to examine "awareness of and preference for different skin colours in children aged 3 to 5 years from three London areas."

The few previous British studies of racial awareness and differential evaluation among children had produced divergent results. According to Laishley, Pushkin (1967) studied children aged three to seven years in three London districts which varied in the racial mix and amount of tension in the area. He found that "in doll-choice tests the White children's disfavour with the Negro dolls (shown by 31% of the children) generally rose with age with the sharpest increase in the 6th

year" (emphasis added). Marsh (1970) studied three- to seven-year olds, including foster siblings of differing races, and found that "awareness of differences in skin colour, even between the foster siblings [contrary to expectations], had not led to preference for one skin colour only." The significant factor was considered to be the lack of an atmosphere of racial tension or hostility in the homes or in the surrounding area.

This suggested to Laishley that "the area in which British children live exercises an influence on the racial attitudes they hold."¹⁰ It was expected, from the evidence of these other studies, that awareness of differences in skin color would increase with age and be greater in the geographic areas with a relatively greater racial diversity, i.e., where children would have more opportunity to compare themselves with persons of a different hue. It was also anticipated that a preference for white skin coloring over nonwhite

¹⁰The supposition among many American researchers that such factors as geographic area (level of racial tension and salience of racial distinctions in the social environment) do not significantly influence the development of racial awareness, and preferences along with some statistical findings to this effect have tended to reinforce the notion that inherent tendencies toward color-based discrimination provide the chief impetus toward prejudice. In light of the British findings, the American ones may be viewed as perhaps reflecting a relative lack of regional variation in such external social factors (despite contrary claims and appearances), rather than their lack of influence per se. In my view (to be spelled out further in a subsequent chapter), a simple "culturalist" position is nonetheless not warranted by the discovery that external factors count; the question remains how and when culture becomes salient.

would appear, particularly in the areas with more non-white residents, on the assumption of a greater probability of prejudiced adult attitudes in those areas.

Laishley's study population consisted of sixty-eight subjects (sixty-one white, seven of African or Asian or mixed descent) ranging from three to five years (mean 4.3). All of the children in one test group were white; the second test group contained sixteen whites and five "coloured"; the third contained twenty-three whites and two "coloureds." The children's home neighborhoods had roughly the same racial composition. The children were interviewed individually by the researchers (who had spent some time previously becoming acquainted with them) using dolls which were either white and blonde or dark-brown in color. The questions asked were directed toward revealing awareness of difference in skin color ("Which doll looks most like you? Why?"), preference for one skin color (e.g., "Which children will this little girl choose to invite to her birthday party? Give me the dolls that you think are the nicest") and extent of cross-racial contact ("Do you play with any brown boys and girls?").

The results of the study were considerably more complex than had been anticipated. Neither the unsolicited comments by the children nor their doll selections supported the expectation of white preference. Most of the children commented spontaneously on the appearance of the dolls, including skin color among other features mentioned while noting

differences between them (not only in terms of color but also, for example, that the girl dolls, but not the boys, had eyelashes). However, Laishley reports, "No verbal rejection of the brown dolls was found Remarks like 'It's nice' and 'Cos I like it' were made about [both] brown and white dolls [and] several of the subjects stated a preference for the brown dolls No negative associations with a brown skin color were apparent in the comments the children made."¹¹

Among the more complicated findings of the study was that the white subjects who attended the two mixed nursery schools tended to make more incorrect self-identifications (i.e., to identify themselves as nonwhite) than those attending the all-white school. Approximately one-fifth of the subjects in the all-white nursery and one-third and one-quarter of those attending the two mixed nurseries made incorrect self-identifications. The author states that "contrary to prediction, it appears that the [white] children who had the most opportunity to compare themselves with coloured adults and children . . . are the least clear on their own

¹¹The only possible exception to this absence of color-based negativism, although the authors did not think so, involved comments made by two of the nonwhite children. One Asian child picked up a brown doll and asked, "What's her name?" When the experimenter replied "Whatever you like," the child named the doll "Blackie"; when asked why, she explained that she did so "because she's black." The second incident occurred when another Asian girl picked up a brown doll and said "She's a black girl; she's not good"--in contrast to the white boy and girl dolls and brown boy dolls. Thereafter she never said any of the brown girl dolls were good, although she chose them in some of her responses to questions (to be invited to a party, etc.).

colour." This "unclarity" was thought to imply "that skin colour is neither salient, nor negatively evaluated by these children." The usual interpretation of findings of mis-identification when made by black children is that the child's error indicates his rejection of his actual color and racial identity. In other words, the error is interpreted as an indication of white preference.

Summary and Critical Overview

Throughout the analytic and general psychiatric literature on race, there is a reliance upon the hypothesis that primitive, infantile associations of dark skin with dirtiness and night create a fundamental predisposition toward discrimination and prejudice against blacks. These associations have been characterized as natural and necessary derivatives of the body image and of the child's experience with feces and with night and day. The assumption has been that such associations are forged in early childhood and derive their emotional power from instinctual conflicts arising in the anal or early oedipal phases. In this chapter I have presented historical, theoretical and research material pertaining to these hypotheses. I shall summarize this material and elaborate upon my criticisms of it here.

1. My most basic criticism concerns the extent to which psychoanalytic and psychiatric writings on race have tended merely to reflect and rationalize the prejudices of their

day. In the early writings this is most obvious: racial attitudes were not considered apart from their referents, nor seen as an object of study in their own right. Still less did psychological theorists recognize the mere possibility that their own prejudices might be enshrined in their very selection and characterization of data. Their open regard of dark physiognomy as an intrinsic failing and liability recalls the convictions of the early segregationists and apologists for slavery: they, too, credited "Nature" with having established a color-based social hierarchy which man could but obey.

The essentially self-serving (i.e., white-aggrandizing) quality of this thesis is made more subtle but not otherwise improved by assigning the primary impetus toward antiblack feeling to the "nature" of infancy and early childhood. From the beginnings of their admission there, blacks have been associated with children in the analytic literature. Their "childlikeness" or psychological primitivism was offered as an additional rationale for whatever treatment they were accorded. The more sympathetic theorists expressed the hope that blacks would render early development and primitive pathological states more accessible to study as a result of their presumed psychological simplicity. And even when blacks have been studied as objects of interest in themselves, the clinical material deemed most significant has usually revolved around the childlike stunting of their personality

development. Given the persistent appeal of this association, it is not surprising to find blacks' fate as citizens being linked to the effect that they are presumed to have upon children.

To the extent that it has focused on establishing a direct causal relationship between early anxieties and adult racial views, thus far the analytic literature has tended merely to validate social givens without actually investigating them. Further, it has functioned primarily to perpetuate an unconscious strain of ethnocentricity in analytic theory by providing an acceptably scientific-sounding restatement of popular rationales for white social dominance, even when it has ostensibly criticized this status quo.

But aside from the more general issue of how insidiously it chooses to distinguish black from white (and the social effect of that choice), this essentially color-based approach to racial issues is problematic from the standpoint of its coherence and utility as a theory, a fact which its consistency with the prevailing prejudices has obscured. There are obvious logical constraints inherent in such a color-based causal analysis: its unidirectional (white rejects black) character, for example. The emphasis upon anal associations to darkness in particular tends to isolate antiblack racism from otherwise similar social prejudices, ignoring the regularity with which nonblacks are "prejudiced against." Not that analysts with a commitment to this theory have

hesitated to employ it liberally--as, for example, in the attribution of antisemitic attitudes to the "darkness" of Jews relative to their assailants. (It is convenient here to notice that the Ku Klux Klan despises blacks and Jews, but to ignore the existence of black antisemites.) The problem is that even with a greatly foreshortened historical and geographical perspective, it is difficult to fit a significant sample of the world's interethnic conflicts into this formulation. As a result antiblack racism is 'explained' while antiwhite prejudices or instances where color differences do not appear to be involved typically are omitted from consideration. If such narrowness achieved a gain in clarity, I suppose it would not be objectionable, but, on the contrary, it seems merely to have had a limiting effect on the imagination, as evidenced by the perseverative quality of so much of the research and writing in this area.

To continue for a moment with issues of theoretical utility: while the attempt to explain antiblack racism as a special byproduct of anality seems excessively narrow as a theoretical base, to view such attitudes as indirect manifestations of oedipal conflict seems implausibly broad. The effect of such a theoretical choice is not so much to segregate racism against blacks from similar-appearing phenomena as to connect it arbitrarily with such dissimilar matters that its more distinctive and nonsexual features (e.g., the social nature and group-relatedness of ethnic attitudes,

their susceptibility under certain circumstances to rapid change, et cetera) tend to become blurred in the interest of analogy. One is left asking why oedipal difficulties should be manifested in this way rather than in another, and why not always in this way. Moreover, one cannot help but note that much of the most intensely virulent race-related behavior seems to have been engaged in by individuals whose central conflicts would probably not be regarded as "oedipal level" under ordinary clinical as opposed to theoretical circumstances--i.e., were one called upon to treat such persons rather than to theorize about them. Similarly, notwithstanding the many attempts to delineate a racist personality type, no convincing conjunction has been shown between racism and what are ordinarily understood to be clinical signs of anal character pathology.

Indeed, to the extent that they are enlisted to explain broad social phenomena in the absence of clear bridges between individual pathology (how extensive can it be?) and the racial transgressions of the general society, the drive conflict displacement hypotheses have an "ad hoc" quality. They seem to reflect what has been referred to by Zilboorg (1947) as "the method of free speculation." He describes this mode of social analysis as "a form of pseudologic in which the individual and society [are] psychologically equated; society [is] arbitrarily endowed with an unconscious affective life and [it is assumed] that whatever one felt

justified in saying about an individual, one might also say of society" (p. 304). In order to keep the analogy between individual and social pathology going, levels of discourse are casually traversed and distinctions between differing types of evidence are obscured. For example, it is customary to supplement scant clinical material by citing the use of the conventional black-white symbolism in literature as evidence of unconscious universal correspondences--as though novels were a species of parapraxis sprung directly from the id.

By underscoring here the problematic aspects of the traditional theoretical stance qua theory, I do not at all mean to suggest that anal and/or oedipal psychosexual conflicts may not be manifested in racial views. Nor do I wish to imply that, for example, anal fantasies of soiling or expulsion may not enter into the construction of the measurable psychological artifacts of racism, fearful or aggressive behavior and attitudes. The point here is that the bare fact that such fantasies and conflicts may accompany or figure in racial hostilities cannot be taken to establish that they were the original goads.

In an unrelated context, Arlow (1982) has pointed out that one cannot judge the point of regression or fixation represented by a symptom by its content alone. He cautions against relying upon the content of a fantasy to establish its phase of origin, noting that, for example, "the phallic

phase has its own orality." Moreover, this is not simply a matter of semantics. To the extent that the traditional literature concentrates too exclusively upon particular fantasy material (however appealing to theorists it might be), and attempts to extrapolate a theory of the origins of racism from a narrow content analysis of such fantasies, it fails to identify and weight causal influences so as to contribute to a genuine understanding of the phenomena involved. The result is not only a poor guide for the organization of data in this area, but also a reduction in the prospects for extension of understanding.

Indicative of this kind of limitation is the paucity (and futility) of interventions to reduce racial conflict implied by conceptualizations of it as a species of oedipal or preoedipal pathology. This may be due in part to the pessimism engendered by this analysis. Coles (1981) speaks of the "showy kind of pessimism" that psychoanalytic social critics have tended to display "mingled with a strain of moralistic self-righteousness and arrogance that sets off a small 'us' from millions and millions of 'them!'" Quite apart from that, however, is the matter of the inadequacy of this approach to explain (still less to predict or inspire) those changes in racial arrangements on a society-wide level which actually have taken place. Nothing, for example, in the traditional analytic treatment of racial issues hints at the mere possibility that race-related customs and habits

might be regulated (and even reordered) to the extent that they actually have been by judicial and legislative decree. On the contrary, several analytic writers (see, for example, Loewenstein, 1981, also Reiser, 1961, quoted pp. 30-31, (above) have strenuously advised against even attempting to influence racial behavior through such means--a position partially dictated by their delineation of the issues involved.

Of course, increases in racial distancing and differential privileges have long been thought and found to be regulable by law. One would think that on its face such social variability and amenability to relatively remote external influences would suggest a far less direct or dependent tie to instinctual or biological imperatives (or even to very early child rearing practices) than the traditional literature assumes. Instead, the traditional approach has created such a vivid impression of the inevitability, uniformity and unchangingness over time of race-related customs and hierarchies as to verge upon the exhortative. The ultimate effect has been to make it difficult to imagine or even to recognize those deviations in the data on race which actually have been observed to occur.

2. This brings me to the question of the clinical

¹²Of course, one may assume that on an unconscious level no change has occurred, that the basic psychodynamic issues remain precisely the same and are merely being held in abeyance--not a very economic assumption, however, and one with a sour-grapes ring.

accuracy of the theoretical stances under review as indicated by the actual data which is available from other sources on children's responses to racial differences. Most of the available research concerning children's responses to racial differences has focused upon the interpretation of color preferences in prelatency children. These so-called preference studies have been cited as demonstrating that even the untutored child tends to respond to darkness and dark-skinned persons with anxiety and aversion or hostility. Accordingly, theorists have found support in these studies for formulations attributing adult racism variously to the child's inborn response to skin color differences, projections based on the body image, toilet training, fear-evoking experiences of night, and spontaneous association of unconscious impulses with the colors brown and black. These formulations all assume that the critical determinants of adult race-related behavior and attitudes lie in the preoedipal or early oedipal eras.

On the basis of some of their child-subjects' apparent familiarity with racial terminology and cooperativeness in exhibiting color preferences on cue, researchers sometimes have made conclusory statements to the effect that it is normative for a fairly sophisticated comprehension of racial categories and associated attitudes to have been established by school age. Moreover, innocently or angrily, some children have produced the anticipated associations of dark skin

with dirtiness or evil. Nonetheless, those who have investigated children's responses to racial differences most extensively have been reluctant to attribute full adult status and fixity to prelatency children's racial views, however superficially reminiscent of adult bigotry some of their verbalizations may be. For example, although her theoretical formulations gave most causative weight to preoedipal influences in the development of racism, on the basis of long-term observations of prelatency children, McDonald (1981) concluded that a true racial prejudice could not be established before latency. Her staff did not feel that any of the prelatency children they had studied could accurately be characterized as prejudiced, nor did they feel able to predict on the basis of what they had seen thus far who among them might come to be. Others have also cautioned against the prevailing tendency to regard the six-year-old's racial views as "fully fashioned" (Allport, 1954), or have suggested that even the most well-articulated notions on race in early childhood be considered to represent only "incipient" racial attitudes (Goodman, 1952; Porter, 1971).

What has prompted this caution is not, I think, sentimentality about childhood innocence. On the contrary, researchers in this area have been inclined to be unduly eager to impute sophistication to their subjects in an effort to establish continuity with manifestations of racism in adulthood and thereby to render these phenomena more

readily comprehensible. Rather, their cautiousness in this regard may stem from tacit acknowledgment of certain factors which I find to be prominent in the data gathered on children and race, though severely understressed in theoretical distillations of it.

To begin with, this research itself represents a specific selected approach to the issues involved which must be seen as an important factor influencing the results obtained. Usually criticisms of this body of work have focused on specific methodological points; the underlying conception of the issues represented by it has generally not been discussed or questioned. Thus it has passed almost without notice that in such studies the precise issues which might reasonably be considered to be critical to an understanding of the impact of racial differences on behavior and development (and vice versa)--to wit, whether, when and on what basis a child actually would choose one color or racial group and reject another--have been decided in advance. The decision as to these issues has been determined, in effect, by the design of the experiment: that is, by the imposition of an explicit rule characterizing the necessary relation between the colors and races (one is good, clean and nice; the other is bad, dirty and naughty) and by the imposition of a requirement that a choice between the two be made. In this way, it seems to me, the research typically carried out in this area tends (as does the theory) to reproduce the social situation which

was to be investigated while minimizing the possibility of actually discovering what internal or external circumstances might spontaneously have brought it about.

Given the requirements of the basic preference paradigm as outlined above, along with the general predilection in this area for studying racial antagonism apart from tolerance or empathy, researchers investigating children's responses to race have shown little sympathy toward the reluctance to make racially based choices which many of their subjects have exhibited. Nor have they been willing to accord this finding much significance in their summaries of results. Nonetheless (and here I will put aside the major conceptual problem for the moment in order to focus on specific outcomes), where available the original data collected in the course of this research reveals considerably more ambiguity with respect to the questions of racial awareness and preferences than the usual extrapolations from this material would indicate.

For example, even among children reared within a highly race- and color-conscious milieu (as well as tested within one), as most of the children participating in the preference research have been, all of the available evidence indicates that the ability to make elementary racial classifications with consistency is highly variable and does not become typical until school age. In other words, while some children may be quite precocious in this respect and may be extremely interested and accurate in pointing out who is what

as early as age three, most researchers have found that it is not until five years that a majority of their subjects can correctly classify pictures, dolls and themselves along racial (color) lines. This is, of course, contrary to the results implicitly predicted by the theoretical literature in that it appears that children are not ordinarily particularly sensitive to skin color distinctions at the time of the anal or early oedipal phase. Rather, these studies show that the ability (and desire) to classify persons racially at that age is exceptional and may usually be traced to some influence in the social environment.

These studies also indicate that the ability to differentiate people or objects by color into racial categories, when achieved, connects much more loosely and variously to the expression of evaluative preferences than the prevailing analytic hypotheses would predict. The ability to categorize racially, in other words, is not necessarily associated with a particular (i.e., negative) affect. Children who are highly aware of racial differences have been found to exhibit a range of (test-measured) views (see, e.g., Goodman, 1952). Moreover, interest in and ability to classify by color differences has not been found to necessarily precede a child's awareness that social distinctions attach to membership in particular racial groups. Apparently, children may indicate verbally that they are aware that some persons are to be treated differently, without yet being able to

distinguish accurately and reliably the persons to whom the different treatment is to apply. In sum, insofar as is indicated by the existing research, the beginning construction of racial categories and of social categories based upon race has shown neither the ordering nor orderliness implied by the traditional notion that children invariably draw their social conclusions directly from the biological one.

The third factor which seems to me to have been considerably underemphasized in extrapolations from research in this area concerns the question of preference itself. Even under circumstances rigorously geared to elicit it (including, as previously discussed, the nature of the tests themselves),¹³ antiblack biases have not been exhibited by children of the age groups focused upon with anything like the regularity or intensity implied by the conclusory statements of most researchers and theorists in this area. Moreover, where more neutral test circumstances have prevailed, the data has neither demonstrated the predicted white preference nor produced evidence of the routine association of dark skin with dirtiness or other ills (see, e.g., Laishley, 1972). The regional and temporal variations which come into view when one looks beyond the borders of American research to the

¹³McDonald (1971) has suggested that preference testing per se may sometimes suggest prejudices to the child-subject. Goodman (1952) did not point out this limitation in her own design but she did suggest that in future research it might be useful to include more neutral tools.

(admittedly few) studies conducted elsewhere, may be taken as indicative of the strength of the social contribution to devaluations of dark skin. That is, they imply the historic specificity of what has traditionally been regarded as the outcome of biological or very early developmental imperatives.

Finally, when, as an adjunct to the basic paradigm of forced choice on an externally defined basis, observations have been made of the same subjects' spontaneous play, results which diverge entirely from those anticipated by the traditional literature (or indeed by the researchers themselves) have been shown. Even those unusually "aware" prelatency children whose color preference testing results have been interpreted as highly indicative of racial bias have generally not been found to exhibit this presumed bias in their spontaneous choice of playmates or play. In fact, the most consistent finding of this line of research has been that prelatency children do not discriminate by color or race in their choice of playmates regardless of their performance on laboratory measures of hostility. Thus, whatever the assumed source of color preferences shown in the laboratory (i.e., associations to devalued body parts, parental instruction, etc.), it has proven to be at most a weak influence upon the behavior of prelatency children outside of the testing room.

In sum, the assumptions embodied in the traditional analytic literature on the childhood antecedents of racism

regarding the ways in which small children perceive the world and organize their perceptions have not been borne out by the available research data. While prelatency children may express curiosity about color differences or even under certain circumstances indicate concern, such interest does not appear to be a typical concomitant of either anal or oedipal phase development, nor has it been shown to vary with the intensity or nature of prelatency phase conflicts. Children of this age appear to have a variety of associations to darkness. And even where these are apparently negative, they do not seem inclined (or perhaps able) to act upon their "prejudices."

With this in mind, it would seem most useful to turn to the phase in which the various elements of discrimination (awareness, ability and inclination) do appear to come to cohere. In the following chapters I will discuss this process as indicated by my research with children of latency age.

CHAPTER III
INTERVIEWS WITH LATENCY-AGE CHILDREN

As I have discussed in connection with my criticism of traditional writings on children and race, preschool-age children are apt to have quite vague and unformed notions concerning their own and others' ethnicity. And this seems to hold true as a rule despite explicit instruction on this subject by well- or ill-meaning adults and, in some cases, despite powerful encouragement from the environment to 'know.' I am reminded of my four-year-old cousin's query after his mother's careful preparation of him for entrance in an interracial school: "OK, I'm black--what are you?"

Actually, we are not all that surprised by such a young child's failure to observe racial distinctions with adult-like facility and consistency. Even ardently discriminatory societies have usually implicitly acknowledged the preschool-age child's disinclination to observe its proscriptions by not requiring segregation until the advent of the socially superior child's attendance at school. Prior to that point, on American slaveholding plantations, for example, interracial play was the rule.

Nevertheless, having discarded as naive the notion that children are naive, the current academic convention is to impute sophisticated social knowledge and understanding to

the earliest years (and to explain its absence as a sign of conflict and denial). As a result it is surprising to discover the extent to which the normal child's awareness and/or understanding of this aspect (and others; see p. 130, below) of the extrafamilial social universe may lag. I recall his parents' dismay when their nine-year-old (whom they had proudly given an African name), upon meeting me for the first time, demanded to know where was "the black doctor" whom he had been led to expect. Apparently, my coffee-brown skin did not match the image he had conjured--nor was he aware, as it turned out, that the black people of whom his parents spoke with such pride included himself and virtually all of his schoolmates: "I thought they were some old people in history." Also pertinent here is the remark of a seven-year-old patient of mine who during our session on Saint Patrick's Day informed me that according to his mother, he was Irish, and asked whether I was, too. Told no, he shrugged and returned to his play, saying, "Oh, I see--Italian." In neither of these instances could the child's evident confusion have been due to my appearance per se; to any American over twelve I would have been identifiable immediately as black. Rather, beneath a veneer of sophistication, these and other children whom I encountered in an urban clinic often seemed to be considerably less cognizant of racial and ethnic differences than the adults in their lives (parents, teachers and therapists) had generally assumed them to be. Of course,

not all were so uninformed, but I found the variability and tentativeness which many of these children exhibited in their thinking about race to be striking.

Were ignorance about the accepted labels and/or confusion about the social meaning of skin color found only among black or emotionally beleaguered children, it would be tempting to attribute it (as has been done traditionally) to conflict and distress, disregarding the possible existence of (1) more neutral obstacles to an adult-like interest in and mastery of racial concepts, and (2) more universal difficulties with experiences of human difference (such as I discuss in Chapter Five, below) than can be attributed simply to the fact of being black. With this in mind I undertook an exploratory study of the thoughts expressed on racial matters by presumably normal, neither unusually stressed nor sheltered children of latency age.

This chapter describes my interviews of a small group of latency-age children whom I asked to talk with me individually about the origin of racial differences. The interviews were modeled on the classic Piagetian clinical interview format, which was used originally to explore children's understanding of physical events. The choice of this method of investigation and of the specific topic addressed reflects my wish to avoid some of the biases inherent in the traditional methods of studying children's racial views (see pp. 39 et seq., above). I will be using material from these interviews to illustrate my

criticisms of prevailing thinking on the development of racial attitudes and to support the revisions which I propose. In the chapter following this one, I will discuss the 'fit' of these ideas with broader theoretical and clinical perspectives on latency. Here I will focus on describing the interviews.

I. Description of Methodology

Basic format and rationale. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the spontaneous thinking of latency-age children about racial differences as well as their responses to certain ideas drawn from the psychological literature. The interview approach consisted of using relatively neutral questions to engage the child in a focused but open-ended dialogue, with the interviewer generally following the trend of the child's thought. In conducting these interviews it was assumed that children's thinking on this topic was not necessarily well articulated and that they might never before have verbalized largely inchoate notions. Thus the primary aim was to elicit the child's thinking and, where feasible, his implicit assumptions. Although the content of each interview was partially determined by the stated purpose and subject of the inquiry, the technique of following the lead and trend of each child's thought meant that the questions and topics covered turned out to be varied. It seemed most consistent with the exploratory

nature of this study that the interview format be sufficiently flexible and individualized to permit as rich as possible a view of what was important to the child's conceptions of racial differences to emerge.

Subject, setting and method. The interview subjects were ten children ranging from just six to nearly nine years old. All were students attending first through third grades at a private, academically competitive boys' school with a predominantly white middle- and upper-middle-class student body. The school is located in a thoroughly racially and economically mixed Manhattan neighborhood. The children who participated in the interviews were chosen by the head of their school division, who had been asked to select children from a mix of ethnic and economic backgrounds.

The interviews lasted from approximately twenty-five to fifty minutes each, depending entirely upon the gregariousness and degree of interest shown by the child. All were tape recorded.

After being introduced to the child and taking him to a quiet place to talk (usually the school library or conference room), my approach was generally to explain that I was a student, too, who was talking with lots of children as part of a study of children's ideas about people's differences in color. I went on to say that I thought that children probably did have lots of ideas about things of this sort but that we didn't really know very much about their thoughts

because usually no one asked them. At some point (right away if the child seemed at all hesitant or ill at ease), I explained that this was not a test, that I had no right or wrong answers in mind, but was really just curious and would appreciate his help. Probably in part because the school chosen was one in which there were frequent visitors and special projects, the children seemed to accept my presence and purpose readily. They helped with setting up the tape recorder and played at operating it themselves. I provided a large pad and crayons and invited them to draw or color as we talked.

The interview proper was initiated by showing the child photographs from magazines and children's books of racially mixed groups of children in familiar situations, such as in a classroom or on a playground. Using the pictures as a point of reference, questions were asked such as the following:

See these children? Are they the same or not the same? How? . . . What about their color? What about this one? (pointing to different children in the photograph)

Do you know any names for people with skin that looks like this? Why do they call them that, do you suppose? How did they get to be this color? Can it change? What about when they were first born?

How come people are different colors anyway? How did it all start? What would be your guess? Tell me all about it

After exploring the child's responses to these questions and his spontaneous statements, specific inquiry was made into those associations often hypothesized in the psychoanalytic and general psychological literature as crucial in

creating a predisposition toward racial prejudices:

Do you think it (dark-colored skin) could have anything to do with getting dirty or anything like that? . . .
What about nighttime or being in the night?

Finally, at the conclusion of the interview each child was asked what he would like to add and invited to ask questions of his own.

II. Samples of the Children's Views

What follows are excerpts from the interviews described,¹⁴ which I have organized according to the question being responded to and the age of the child. Interviewer's remarks and notations as to the child's elaborations or tone appear in parentheses.

See these children? Are they the same or not the same? . . .
Do you know any names for people whose skin looks like this
. . . or this?

N (6): The same or not? I dunno Some are white, some are black, some are light brown, some have dots on their faces I'm not sure about names [for people of different colors]

S (6): Some are girls and some are boys This girl's holding a cat Some are younger than others (What about the way they look?) Some are different colors (Yes, what?) Blackish and brownish and whitish. (Names for people this color or this one?) I don't know any names for them [apologetic, trying to help] Browns?

¹⁴Some have been slightly edited for clarity.

- F (6): They have different clothes and hairstyles . . . and some are blacks Some have bandaids on Nobody's exactly the same--unless they're twins! (And people who look like this are called?) Blacks, I think. (And these?, pointing to whites) Americans--the ones with yellow or sort of peach skin.
- H (7): Their hair is different colors. Some have polka dots on their faces (The names for their different skin colors?) I'm not sure I think it's white people and black people
- J (7): Well, they have different colors and hair. (Names?) I don't know Freckle-face? [laughs] Brown . . . I know there is one, but it just came up once so I really don't remember A white person? A colored person?
- B (7): Some have sloppy hair, they're boys and girls Not everyone is born the same White people, they call it sometimes. They call them black or browns, I think.
- B (8): Do you mean the difference between the black and white races? (Yes.) The physical differences or the social differences?
- D (8): . . . Well, they're different races, too, these kids. Blacks and whites They go to different schools a lot . . . and I think they get different jobs

How did they get to be this color? Can a person's color change?

- N (6): Because their mothers are brown or white. (Can it change?) No. [definite opinion on this gives way to uncertainty] Maybe you're brown first and then you get darker when you get older Yes, it does change, but I don't know how But I do know that when you get older you look different! (When?) In your twenties.
- S (6): It [skin color] can change for little children. (Until they're how old?) Oh, about four or three. (How does that happen?) I really don't know

F (6): He's [black child] probably been to beaches more. Some American(s) get black from being so tan. Not all of them, some are born that way Some you can't really tell. A friend of mine who's really tan looks like he would be "black," but he's not (puzzled) He [white child] doesn't look like he's been to the beach much.

J (7): It's the same as their mothers' . . . unless they're adopted! [Explains that father's color doesn't matter in determining child's complexion.] Because their mother gave birth to them.

H (7): It depends on where they're born. What country their mother comes from [Later, a revelation:] It depends on what color their mother and father are! They stay the same unless they get a tan or paint themselves. Maybe . . . they get a little lighter as they get older. (Why?) Because when you're born in Mother's stomach you're all wet.

How come people are different colors anyway? How did it all start?

N (6): I dunno (Shrugs. Unwilling to guess to "make it up." Polite but seems to wonder why I am asking such hard questions instead of telling the answers.)

S (6): Cuz they're born like that. [Explains that the first people were probably white like himself, then God made the first "browns" starting with "a brown mother".] And she had a brown child (Why did God decide to make some brown, though?) So there'd be two colors! (But why?) Two is better! (Why?) If they were all the same, everybody would just be white. (So?) That would be funny. [Frowns. He wouldn't like it; isn't sure why.]

F (6): There were cave men and monkeys getting bigger brains and smarter, more like us. They talked like this: ugh, ugh. They became sort of like natives. They were black. Some people stayed that color and some changed. I don't know why Maybe they ate different foods and their cells changed. [Abandons this idea after a while.] Probably when they got to be more like us they didn't go to the beach much In New York it's pretty cool and people don't go to the beach much so they don't get very brown.

(But what about the very dark-skinned people you see in New York?) They probably live in Hawaii and visit New York--every summer I go to Hawaii (But what about people born here whose skin is very brown or black?) Probably their mothers and fathers were born in Hawaii.

- H (7): God made something like a potion and poured it all over everybody. (When?) Before they're born. (How does he decide on the colors?) By the way their parents are. He makes them sort of the same, but not exactly. (How come he didn't decide on green or purple?) That wouldn't look normal! (Does God have a color, too?) Yes, I think so. (What?) Blue . . . or maybe green Probably he's the same color as the sky.
- J (7): I don't know! Someone just grew up and changed colors. Maybe they were white and turned to brown Maybe they got a bad sunburn. (rejects this idea; sunburns aren't transferable from parent to child) Maybe one day a mother just had a baby that was brown. (How'd that happen?) Maybe she didn't eat the right food? But if a white mother had a brown baby, it would probably keep on going. (explains it wouldn't matter what the mother ate after the trend started. Reflects that he may have it backwards: a brown mother could have had a white baby a long time ago, too)
- J (7): They come from different states. [Explains that color depends on locale of birth, but can't be more specific; that's the bottom line.] Some states just have (produce) brown people and some just have white Brown people come from Africa, too.
- B (7): Animals turned into blacks or browns or whites. (But what made them turn into one or the other?) Maybe some kind of radiation or force Nobody's sure, not even me.
- A (8): There was a monkey born in America [and] he grew to be a white person. The monkeys in Africa were black I think it depends on where the children grow. In America it would be a little lighter. But I don't know why hair grows curly (What about people born in Alaska?) If you were born in Alaska, you'd be white as this paper!

B (8): [Begins to describe evolution.] People started out black and lost their pigment. [Draws diagrams to illustrate.] Colors changed with movement to different places. [It depends on] the amount of the sun's rays and [of] pigment in the skin to protect it But I think the social differences started with slavery

Could it have anything to do with getting dirty? What about being in the night?

N (6): (Dirty?) No. (The night?) I don't know. (reflects) No. (How about these "dots"? [freckles] Maybe a bat bit him! [giggles]

S (6): [Has already made several suggestions of his own; is willing to entertain these, too.] If dirt's that color and it stays on, you could stay that color Maybe brown people stay in the dark a lot [skeptical] . . . My cousins are different colors. They're a lot taller than me! Taller than their own father! (What color are they?) They're brown and I'm sort of white. They could have stayed in the dark, maybe, or maybe they were just born like that. (Which do you think?) I think it's how you're born.

F (6): (Being in the dark?) The moon could do some things to you. [thoughtful] You can get tanned a little bit, if it's a really bright moon. (Dirtiness?) If you're dirty and never wash, it could change your color a little. (Are there people like that?) No--most people are like me.

J (7): (Being in the dark?) No. (Getting dirty?) No. See, probably if you were very dirty and had a baby, it would get sick and die eventually and that would be the end of that. [i.e., there would be no pregnancy.]

B (7): (Darkness?) No. [laughs at me] (Getting dirty?) No! (Well, before you understand things as well as you do now, what did you think when you were little?) I didn't know anything in those days. I thought people painted each other. Some days I tried to scrub it off [his white skin] and I just got red!

Well, what do you think of all this?

- F (6): You know, some people don't like the color of their skin. I know a friend of mine, he's white, and he said I don't like this color Some people just have to stick with what they are--they don't go to the beach very much [so they can't get brown].
- J (7): It wouldn't be good if everybody was white with one brown person [in a classroom]. I think it should be either all white or all brown or half white and half brown or just about three white people. [Explains it would feel "pretty sad" to be the only one of anything.] It's a little bit more fun to have someone just about like you.
- B (8): (How would you feel about it if evolution led to all colors being one again?) Not that bad. [Seems distracted and anxious] . . . I think I like the variety! It would get a little boring with no differences whatsoever. If everyone was all the same, though, the jobs would merge together and that would be good. The political differences would change
- A (8): . . . Most blacks are nice, I think Some look really strong and speak different I don't know if you can take what they say. Sometimes they look mean like . . . if they get mad at you, they beat you up. I think the ones that look mean, are mean I think blacks have the idea of risking. Maybe they have a really imaginative mind.

Is there anything you want to add or to ask me?

- S (6): Is this [points to black child in photo] your daughter?
- F (6): Next time you come back, will you talk with me?
- J (7): There's still something I don't understand. I always thought the hair [of people of different colors] would be different. [Notes that in some photographs "skin is different and hair is almost the same".]
- J (7): I can't draw white children--it's white paper! . . . I don't know what makes brown people unfriendly.

- A (8): How come blacks take so many risks? How come some of those guys talk so "cool" like they're the Fonz [a teenage hood character from a TV series set in the '50s]?
- B (8): We aren't that wealthy [comparing his family circumstances with blacks'] . . . The main differences [between blacks and whites] now are political. I'm fairly interested in politics . . . Just in general what's going on around town.

III. Discussion

These children rewarded my interest in their ideas with liveliness and trust. The material which they provided could be approached from a variety of angles: in keeping with the purpose of this paper, I shall focus on points pertinent to my critique and proposed revision of the traditional psychoanalytic hypotheses regarding children's (and adults') responses to race. With this in mind, three aspects of the data stand out most prominently; the variations in response by age, their idiosyncratic nature, and a common theme of vulnerability.

Variations by age. Despite the limited size of this subject group, there did appear to be rough variations by age between the six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds--which may be seen as indicative that a process of development is in progress. I will describe and summarize the differences among the responses of each age group.

Six-year-old S. struck me as fairly typical of children of his age whose awareness of and concern about racial

differences has not been nurtured (or, more likely, forced) by external circumstances. He participated in the interview willingly and seemed polite and at ease, but was more cooperative than curious: this subject was not (yet, anyway) of independent interest to him. Gender, not color, is the first attribute he notices; color is something he becomes aware of when prompted. He knows that he is considered white ("or kind of tan") but is still somewhat uncertain about labeling others ("browns?"). With my prompting ("could it have anything to do with--") he came up with several possible accounts of the origin of skin color differences. This seemed not so much because his imagination was fertile on this subject. Rather, being himself uncommitted to any particular theory, he was willing to consider whatever suggestions I offered. Eventually he returned to his own original idea, which seemed to him most satisfactory and plausible: God just made some people brown so that everyone would not be the same; hence, people are "just born like that."

To S. it was self-evident that "two (colors or races) is better than one"; this was announced as a matter of fact.¹⁵

¹⁵This idea struck me as an element in his thinking which circumstances might easily call into question. Some of the older children were questioning this maxim spontaneously. whether two was better than one turned out to be a common theme in the children's responses across age groups and, I think, a critical wellspring for 'attitudes.'

When asked if he knew people with skin colors which were different from his, he answered "sure," he had cousins who were brown, but more importantly, judging from his affect, "they're a lot taller than me--taller than their own father!" It appeared that even minor differences (of appearance or whatever) within his family still loom far larger to S. than do the probably much more dramatic differences without. Moreover, the dimension for comparison which most whet his affect was the comparison of boys with boys and of boys with fathers. (While one might speculate that racial--and other--differences might at some point take on an oedipal dimension for S., there is little to suggest a current discharge of oedipal conflict into racial attitudes; indeed, his formulation of a workable concept of race seems to be just getting underway.) Thus, in many respects S. is reminiscent of Goodman's most typical well-adjusted four-year-old (1952): two years later at six this child is certainly aware of color differences, but is still a bit fuzzy about the details; he assumes that these differences serve some (probably benign) purpose, but they do not seem to him to affect his interests as yet in a way which would make them personally significant. In sum, he has yet to become much involved with the drawing of major social distinctions other than gender or to discover the great utility of color differences for this purpose.

Six-year-old F., a more curious and gregarious child than S., is a little farther along in this process. For him

color is one of several identifying characteristics (though hair style and dress were most stressed) which he has intertwined conceptually with important social categories. He understands "black" to be a term referring to a variegated group which under certain circumstances may be contrasted with other groups. Nonetheless, it did not occur to F. to describe either himself or other people as 'white'--supposedly the conventional and unconsciously dictated opposite of 'black' in the psyche. F. did not use this 'adult' racial terminology at all during the interview. He sees so-called whites much more concretely (and perhaps more accurately) as people with "yellow or sort of peach skin"--and, at the same time, classifies them more abstractly as "Americans."

Although I neglected to explore this fully, it was clear that American rather than white is the socially more important category for F. Asked subsequently if blacks could also be Americans, he replied cheerfully, "Yes, some are." These had either gotten black "from being so tanned" or been born that way. Fishing for the term "whites," I wondered aloud what, if dark-skinned Americans were called blacks, one called people with yellow or sort of peach skin; his immediate reply was "New Yorkers." Interestingly, for a child so adept (albeit incorrect) at experimenting with relatively abstract classificatory terms, F. was still somewhat uncertain as to where he fit in the scheme of things. Asked how he or others would describe him in terms of his color, he looked at his

forearm for reference and announced that he was not exactly sure, "but I don't go to the beach that much."

N., a six-year-old of Japanese descent, described the Asian-looking child in the photographs as "light brown." Though aware of his own group name ("Japanese"), he, too, was unsure of how to classify others verbally. He referred to the lightest children pictured as whites and to the darkest as blacks, but was unsure "where the browns fit in." For N. (as for F.) "American" seemed to be a term with special value rather than white per se. A way to tell if someone is American was "if they're white," but one could also be Japanese and American or black and American. "American" seemed to be a sort of accolade conferred according to still somewhat mysterious criteria, with skin color serving as a rough but not infallible guide. There was no indication in N.'s responses that whiteness had any intrinsic value for him aside from this association with Americanness. (The traditional literature would assume, of course, that it was originally, independently preferred.)

In general, the six-year-olds tended to mention other physical attributes before skin color in describing how the pictured children were "not the same" even though the subject of skin color differences had been announced as the central topic of the interview. None of these children made the expected, official racial classifications (blacks and whites) spontaneously. Their descriptions indicated that they were

still thinking (and seeing) in terms of gradations of colors. That is, they had not yet adopted the polar adult system of classification. Those children who were more actively attempting to classify people into groups tended to confuse racial concepts with others (e.g., drawing a distinction between blacks and New Yorkers). At least one of the white children was uncertain of his own racial classification; another described his (white) family as a mixed group of browns and whites. As for the question of the origins of racial (color) differences, at this age the children seemed to be willing to entertain at least briefly almost any idea presented to them and to feel comfortable explaining this phenomenon (the fact of differences) with several distinct or even incompatible notions at once.

In contrast to their younger cohorts, the four seven-year-olds whom I interviewed were somewhat more alert to racial differences (i.e., more swift to point them out) and were also more astute (that is, adultlike) at classifying individuals into racial and other social groups. Nonetheless, they were by no means facile at doing so, nor confident of their own accuracy. Their tendency was still to mention other attributes before skin color, usually hair style or gender. "Polka dots" on faces continued to be more striking and more worthy of mention than a uniform complexion of any hue. When with prodding they did produce the names for the conventional racial categories, at seven they were still

surprisingly tentative: "white people, they call it sometimes . . . [and] blacks or browns, I think."

In certain respects, however, these children did seem to be more advanced than the six-year-olds--and this made a qualitative difference in their responses. For example, three of the four six-year-olds interviewed had not seemed to realize that one's basic skin color is ordinarily irrevocable. Instead, they thought either that it might not be fixed until a certain age or that it might change fairly radically with age, as well as by such means as tanning. By comparison, three of the four seven-year-olds whom I interviewed had arrived at the realization that skin color is basically "fixed" by birth with only slight modifications possible thereafter. One of these children also recalled thinking when younger that his (white) color could be changed into something quite unlike its given hue by washing or painting.

Also in contrast to the younger children, the seven-year-olds were livelier, more interested informants on this subject. Whereas one ordinarily expects younger children to be more fanciful, in this instance that was not the case. The six-year-olds seemed more constrained by what they had observed (albeit imperfectly) in reality (e.g., skin darkens via tanning) and less willing to hazard guesses, while the seven-year-olds were both more experimental in their thinking and more definite in expressing their opinions. They gave more imaginative answers to the specific question on racial

origins in particular and made many more remarks on racial differences spontaneously.

Seven-year-old B., for example, speculated that animals had turned into blacks or browns or whites as a result of "some kind of radiation or force." H. imagined that God poured liquid color over everybody before they were born and that this original color lightened somewhat as it dried after birth. J. tried out the notions of spontaneous change and sunburn to account for some people's turning brown, then decided that very early in human history a white or brown mother must have eaten something which caused her child to be brown or white (different from whatever the norm was then) and that once introduced, this color variation had persisted without regard to prenatal variations in diet. J. also offered an explanation for the appearance of Asians (after referring quaintly to a pictured child as "an Oriental person"). Stretching his eyelids into a slant with his fingers, he explained that "probably people once started to go like this If you do that a long time it stays . . . there's a 90% chance that this would happen." However, in keeping with the seven-year-old's appreciation that some things are irrevocable even before birth, he cautioned that this must be done before the mother became pregnant; afterwards it would be ineffective "because the baby's already in the stomach."

Two of the seven-year-olds spontaneously made reference

to group-related racial phenomena. In both instances these children expressed concern with the possibility of rejection by children belonging to the "other" group (here, blacks). I will discuss the implications of this concern in terms of what it reveals about the children's experiences of differences in Section 3, below). In terms of the formal aspects of the children's thinking, I see these remarks as revealing the advent of a certain sophistication in conceptualizing individuals (including oneself) as members of groups with distinctive group-related behavioral characteristics. This sophistication seemed to be composed of a readiness to draw behavioral distinctions between unknown persons on the basis of their group membership (as cued by physical appearance) and, as importantly, an ability to maintain these distinctions (cognitively) independently of the immediate situation. It was clear that in attributing certain behaviors and personality characteristics to members of other groups (e.g., "blacks won't make friends with me") these children were putting into words--and formulating principles out of--their own experiences, not mimicking adults or repeating something that they had been taught. For them a poignant (and age-appropriate) concern with acceptance by one's peers seemed to go hand in hand with a fairly stable identification of self with a particular group and a budding appreciation of ingroup (belonging and acceptance) and outgroup (exclusion and rejection) as meaningful conceptual categories.

I did not see this kind of sophistication among the younger children in this interview group. Previous studies have sometimes attributed the level of conceptual and emotional sophistication shown by these seven-year-olds to younger children but without, I think, noting adequately the differences between erratic responses to particular (often traumatic) situations or adult promptings (which are built-in features of the traditional color preference research paradigm) and the spontaneous construction of experience in social group terms on an ongoing basis. This data juxtaposed with previous research suggests that while a bright four- or five-year-old may sort people on the basis of skin color cues (though probably still very inconsistently), especially with training, not until a few years later do most children begin to do this easily and to find reason to do it spontaneously.

Thus, while the six-year-olds whom I interviewed continued to be somewhat uncertain about group assignments, slow to articulate behavioral distinctions on a group (as opposed to individual) basis, and relatively unconcerned with socio-cultural differences--at least to the extent of not mentioning them spontaneously and of responding blankly to my attempts to probe--among these seven-year-olds from the same general milieu something else was occurring. These children had still not yet fully mastered the adult-designated racial categories; they were not yet seeing things in terms of black and white. However, in the course of their accelerating

cognitive development and involvement with the world beyond their families, they did seem to be acquiring a more stable sense of themselves as belonging to a particular group with associated assets and liabilities. In turn, it appeared to be in conjunction with these developments that color was gradually becoming associated with specific expectations and generalizations about behavior. One might say that these children were en route to the construction of articulable, personally meaningful distinctions between groups of people on a racial basis.

For the three eight-year-olds whom I interviewed, the identification of self and others with particular racial-ethnic groups was much more firm and automatic. Moreover, to them the social differences between racial groups were both readily discernible, articulable, and, they clearly felt, salient to their own lives.

All three of these children spontaneously classified individuals of varying shades as either "black" or "white" in the adult fashion. They were able to invoke these concepts without the hesitation or awkwardness indicative of uncertain understanding. Unlike the younger children, these subjects knew precisely where they and others fit in the contemporary American scheme of racial divisions: they saw themselves and others as either "black" or "white" and were no longer confused by their observation of the more subtle gradations in color which exist in actuality.

In responding to my questions regarding the origin of racial differences, two of these children began to describe a Darwinian process of evolution (referring to migrations, loss of pigment, etc.) in a way which indicated a fairly sophisticated comprehension of the time periods and multiple influences thought to have been involved. Perhaps more typically the third child, A., charmingly combined standard evolutionary teachings with his own deductions (in the manner of the younger children), thus arriving at an original version of these events: "a monkey born in America . . . grew up to be a white person. The monkeys in Africa were black." This difference was due to the demands of climate--sun and heat being conducive to dark pigmentation. Accordingly, A. imagined that the children of Alaska must be "as white as . . . paper." Later, he amended his theory to incorporate his notions about pregnancy and birth--and to explain the intrafamilial color differences which he had observed: "I think it [skin color] depends on where the mother was when she first got pregnant. My brother was born in India and he's darker than me." Had he stayed in India, A. thought, his brother would have become darker still. On the other hand, he reasoned, major climate-induced changes in color must only be possible during childhood since a prolonged business trip to Southern California had produced no very dramatic alteration in his father's complexion.

In his somewhat mechanistic approach to questions of

origin and in his uncertainty about when skin color becomes an essentially permanent attribute, A.'s thinking resembles that of some of the younger interview subjects. Nonetheless, A. also displayed a grasp of social conventions regarding racial categories and a manner of approach to racial issues which seemed in many respects to be quite adult. In common with the other eight-year-olds, he clearly viewed racial classification not only as socially significant but as involving alternative life experiences and perspectives which he was engaged in observing--and imagining. A., for example, commented upon what he saw as the different attitudes exhibited by blacks and whites toward taking risks and their differing propensity for violence. (Maybe it's only one in a million who commits murders, he mused, but why do they do it?) B., a serious child with much of the scientific-mindedness and reserve often associated with latency, thoughtfully described the two groups as differing in money and power. While absently drawing boxes as though to show the compartmentalization (and/or containment?) of subtly threatening things, he began to think aloud about his own past experiences with being in a subordinate position and other experiences of comfort which he associated with racial differences. A third child, D., remarked that "in olden times" people hurt each other because of their different colors (he knew this from TV). Now, he said, the main difference he knew of between blacks and whites was that they often attended different schools. He clearly

felt that his school was a good place to be and that the black children at nearby (public) schools were at a disadvantage.

All of these older children spoke of race in terms of social distinctions between groups of people with important consequences for one's immediate experience. Also implicit in their remarks was the envisioning of a future in which one's racial and related social characteristics would play a part. Thus the faint puzzlement of the six-year-olds and the fancifulness of the seven-year-olds seemed by eight to have evolved into a form of social realism and preoccupation with decidedly adultlike concerns.

Individual idiosyncrasies. The second aspect of the interview data which struck me as especially interesting in view of the traditional hypotheses regarding children's responses to color and race concerns the idiosyncratic nature of these children's ideas. To begin with this was evident in the children's ways of classifying individuals by color. As I have described, all of the children were in the process of learning the socially consensual categories; these categories were clearly not initially perceived as uniform 'givens.' Whites were referred to variously as peach, yellow and tan people. Except among the oldest children, blacks were spoken of as though they constituted two or more aggregations (tans, browns and dark browns or blacks). Thus contrary to expectation, the perception and labeling of skin color did not seem at the outset to have been spontaneously organized around

a light and dark or black and white dichotomy. These (bright, normal) children tended to be too concrete and literal to see the world simply in terms of black and white.

Nor were the children's views as straightforward and uniform as the traditional literature would suggest in other respects. When asked to explain the origin of racial differences, these ten children produced a variety of ideas reflecting their individual observations and speculations about how the world works. Depending upon the child, exposure to light was seen variously as lightening or darkening the skin. The wetness or dryness of the skin was also seen as affecting its color, especially in conjunction with the processes of birth and aging. The womb was associated with the wet and dark by those children who mentioned a connection between color and moisture, while lightness was associated with aging. This is in direct contrast to the usual assumption by theorists that children automatically connect dark skin with aging, loss and death. Two children mentioned the possible effects upon skin color of the (unspecified) foods which the "original mothers" may have consumed. Several children viewed color as having been determined by the physical locale of pregnancy or birth. Locale was in turn usually, but not always, associated with climactic (degree of sunshine and heat) differences. One child attributed color differences to the effects of radiation or an unknown "force." He also reported that when younger he had regarded skin color as

something externally applied, like paint. Another child spoke of God's application of paintlike potions of color to the soon-to-be-born.

None of the children whom I interviewed spontaneously mentioned dirtiness in connection with dark skin color. When I suggested dirtiness as a possible way of accounting for the origins of dark skin, those children who did not reject this idea outright thought about it aloud, then rejected it after consideration. One child did reflect that if one never washed, one's skin might become permanently dirty, hence the color of that dirt; he seemed, however, to regard this as a special and unlikely case rather than as a plausible way of explaining the color differences which he had observed around him more generally. That these children did not take up the idea of darkness as a product of dirt does not, of course, establish that they did not when younger or do not still privately associate dark skin with dirt or feces. During the interview thoughts about such a relationship certainly could have been repressed or consciously withheld. However, I found little to support such an assumption in either the content of the children's statements or in their affect during our discussion.

Similarly, these interviews produced very little indirect evidence of negative associations to dark colors, such as an idealization of whiteness or lightness per se. Instead of a particular preference generalized as predicted by the

literature, these children reported idiosyncratic responses to light skin as well as to dark. An element of egocentricity did appear in some of their statements (e.g., "most people are [clean] like me" or "if people were all the same, everybody would just be white"); but this was clearly distinguishable from the predicted preference for light skin colors per se as a function of biologically influenced associations of darkness with dirt or evil. Moreover, the variety of associations and theories offered by these children in and of itself tends to undermine the notion that any one specific association commonly functions as a causative influence in the construction of children's or adults' racial views.

A common theme: Feelings of vulnerability. Despite the divergence in their notions regarding color and race, there was one clear common thread running through many of the children's thoughts on these matters. Their most spontaneous and affectively laden remarks were most often related to their actual or imagined experiences of themselves not as black or white per se, but rather as being either the same as or different from others. Strong feelings were also often associated with being or not being the same as one had been. Thus these children appeared to be most immediately concerned with what may be broadly described as the narcissistic significance of racial differences--both in terms of the experience of oneself as a coherent and cohesive entity

going-on-being, and as being either mirrored or isolated, valued or devalued vis a vis the "other," whoever that might be.

That racial and related social differences tend to have acute narcissistic significance would perhaps seem too obvious to be stated, were it not that it seldom is noted and stated except in connection with assessments of the self-esteem of the nonwhite child. Here it was clear that these issues were pertinent to the developing consciousness of self of all the children as the themes of external and internal acceptance and valuation of self appeared and reappeared irrespective of ethnic background. For example, when asked if he thought there were differences other than color between brown and "white or peach" people (his delineation of racial categories), one white child looked up from his drawing and exclaimed sadly, "I don't know what makes brown people so unfriendly!" Another child, while studying a photograph of a classroom scene with one white and several black children all gazing pensively at the camera, remarked plaintively that "on TV they say you should be friendly with everyone, but whenever I go up to a guy like this [black], they never make friends with me." He then spoke touchingly of the loneliness and jealousy which he imagined a child would feel if he were the only one of a given color in a group at school or play. A third child described a friend's dislike of his own (white) skin.

No child, it was clear, wanted to be "the only one," a state associated with loneliness and isolation. F. spoke of how much nicer it always was "to have someone just about like you." Each of those children who was unusual in some way in terms of group membership brought up this issue by asserting that he was not the only one of a kind: a child of Indian descent mentioned that there must be other Indians in the school; a Japanese child referred to his Chinese and other Asian classmates as Japanese although, as it turned out, he was aware that they were not. This child also expressed a concern with whether others ("browns") "fit in" in a picture of a mixed group of children, thus raising obliquely what may have been anxiety on his own behalf about possible isolation and exclusion. While actual differentness seemed to intensify feelings of discomfort about being like or unlike others, the most extensive comments about the potential painfulness of differences from one's peers were made by a child from the school's (white) racial majority. All the children who addressed this subject seemed to connect differentness in appearance of any sort with the possibility of an unwanted aloneness and self-doubt.

At the same time, none of the children expressed a wish that racial or color differences would disappear altogether or thought that such a change was desirable when I raised it as a possibility. It seemed to them better that everyone should not look the same. Various reasons for this were

given, ranging from a flat assertion that "two is better than one" to a description of the boredom that would ensue were uniform coloring to replace the present variety. Interestingly, the older children who commented on this idea seemed more opposed to change in this respect than the younger ones who, while not in favor of a monochromatic system, could at least contemplate the possibility with amusement or equanimity. This may have been due in part to the recency of the realization on their part that their own coloring was a fixed or central characteristic. In contrast, the degree of vehemence with which one of the eight-year-olds responded to my raising of this possibility suggested that the idea of such a change in the status quo might have been unconsciously viewed as a threat of loss of a valued and relied-upon aspect of personal identity.

Issues of the sort described above, which I am defining broadly as narcissistic, were discernible in the interview material as given; that is, they were manifest and comprehensible without any imputation of underlying conflict or pathology to individual children. Nor was there any sign of disturbance which would have justified such an imputation.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented material obtained through a relatively neutral Piagetan-type clinical interview of latency-age children on their ideas about the origins

of racial/color differences and related issues. I have discussed some of the ways in which this material bears upon common assumptions in the psychological literature about the categorical nature, fixity and derivation of children's thoughts about color and race.

I have found little support for the notion that children spontaneously tend to characterize people by color in terms of black and white, or according to a fixed symbolism, with anything like the precocity, consistency or conviction often attributed to them. Paradoxically, the black-white metaphor, with its suggestion of a comparably sharp differentiation of images and affects, fails to describe the perceptual concreteness, conceptual irregularities (as viewed from an adult perspective) and emotional openness exhibited by children confronted with the phenomenon of racial difference. Further, far from having 'jelled' by school age, the formation of a workable concept of race seemed for the younger children with whom I spoke to be just getting under way.

In sum, this exploratory study suggests that a somewhat different timetable and set of influences upon the development of feelings and ideas about race than those widely accepted in the literature may be observed by means of a more neutral paradigm than has customarily been employed. Whatever may have preceded it, a consciousness-forming process with respect to racial identity and related social issues appears to be active well into the latency phase.

CHAPTER IV
ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LATENCY TO THE FORMATION
OF RACIAL IDENTITY AND RELATED SOCIAL VIEWS

In this chapter and in the one to follow, I shall present an approach to the issue of racism which is informed by my reappraisal of the traditional literature on race and by the voices of the latency-age children whom I have interviewed. The focus in this chapter will be on the crucial role of latency in the development of ethnicity and racial consciousness. Chapter V will discuss the primacy of narcissistic concerns in determining how racial differences are experienced and expressed. Taken together, these chapters present a confluence of evidence that (1) the normal developmental processes of latency supply the critical structures for racial conflict, while (2) narcissistic anxieties imbue the experience of race with its primary affective colorings.

I. Signs of an Evolution in Racial Awareness and Understanding during Middle Childhood

After participating in the desegregation of a therapeutic nursery, McDonald (1970) remarked that not until latency does the dictionary definition of prejudice become applicable, and then gradually. Her own formal observational study of children confronted with racial differences ended just prior to this stage, and she did not explain or pursue this thought

about the changes it would bring. I have arrived at the same conclusion by a different route: through a reappraisal of the traditional literature on children's responses to race (as presented in Chapter II) and through direct observations of children of latency age (which I describe in Chapter III). When I compared the responses to race (and other social differences) found among latency and older children with those which are typical of the preschool child, it became clear to me that middle childhood does bring a substantial change.

To begin, in speaking about this with parents and educators, I have found that most will readily attest that toddlers typically overlook racial differences or greet them with fleeting interest. Similarly, and notwithstanding their theoretical predilections toward finding early prejudice, researchers working with children have found virtually no sign that their prelatency subjects actually practice social discrimination on the basis of race or color. Instead, they have reported that even those children who make prejudiced-sounding remarks during formal racial preference testing almost without exception prove unprepared or otherwise disinclined to honor established color lines on their own turf and at their own initiative. As a result (but without following this up by revising their theoretical stances), Goodman (1952), McDonald, and other observers have usually conceded that the erratic, short-lived "prejudices" which can

sometimes be elicited in the prelatency years are not really worthy of the name.

But within a few years the picture changes. Well before he enters adolescence (cf. Erikson, 1950), the typical child knows the racial currency of his area and era thoroughly. In addition, behavior with the look and 'feel' of true racial animosity can not only be easily elicited, but also sustained over time. Using symbolic equivalents of race such as team colors, experimenters have found out what has long been apparent to various (from Klan to SCLC) organizational scouts: latency-age children often make enthusiastic and reliable recruits (see, e.g., Yarrow, 1958). At first their untutored 'social activism' may consist of nothing more than stone-throwing or name-calling, but by preadolescence little distinguishes children's negative racial behavior from the 'mature' racism of adults. Expressions of aggression toward the unwanted different other range from intentional disregard through cold avoidance and contempt, to group attacks and organized violence.

Reassuringly, among school-age children one can also find an adult-like range with respect to racial tolerance. Such views extend from the simple indifference more likely to characterize the younger latency child in a racially neutral environment, through sporadic concern for the objects of injustice, to the principled and well-articulated rejection of a devaluing or discriminatory stance. In a discussion of

psychoanalysis and moral development, Coles (1981) uses a child's statement at age six and nine about her confrontations with racial animosity to illustrate the moral sophistication which latency-age children are capable of achieving--I would add: in this area, at least. Actually, all the available research indicates that, just as with the defense of racial privilege or other social hegemony, the cause of racial harmony and justice is one which the latency-age child can comprehend with very little difficulty.

As with their behavior, we can also detect changes in latency-age children's thinking about racial differences. I undertook to investigate these changes in a very preliminary way through the medium of a relatively neutral interview. Neutrality in this instance means that I tried to follow the lead of the child's thinking, encouraging him to voice his own ideas and associations, taking care not to inform him inadvertently of mine. What I found was strongly suggestive that, although racial differences had long been available to these children as a feature of their environment (at home and in their own neighborhoods even more than at school), an evolution in their consciousness of it was currently underway.

The younger (six-year-old) children's thinking about race was still tinged with vagueness and uncertainty. They still tended to speak of skin color as an afterthought--not out of shyness, I am reasonably sure, but simply because it

did not immediately occur to them as an important way in which the people shown to them in pictures were "not the same"--even though people's differences in color had been announced as the subject of the interview. When, after prompting, they did include color in their lists of differences, they tended to respond quite concretely to what they saw, speaking in terms of specific hue ("this person is light brown, this one is sort of pink," etc.). It struck me that these children were not yet accustomed to seeing, still less thinking, in terms of the culturally prescribed poles of "black" and "white." These terms are part of every adult's racial vocabulary in contemporary America. Nonetheless, far from being internally dictated, as the classical literature on race would have it, their proper usage required these highly intelligent children to make an intellectual leap. Further, when these children did use racial concepts, I noticed that they tended to confound them with other social categories whose meaning they were evidently sorting out at the same time. People of one color are called "blacks," one child explained, while others (whites) are called "New Yorkers."

I also discovered with some surprise that the difficulties which normal six-year-olds can have with racial concepts extends to describing themselves racially. When I asked, "If these are blacks and these are whites, what are you?" I found that at this age many children were still uncertain and

hesitant. Some looked to me for a hint or confirmation; others examined their forearms as though seeking a clue to a rather obscure problem. On the whole they responded as though their racial identity were not a familiar and unchanging fact about themselves but, rather, was something grasped much more tenuously: an idea which had to be rehearsed or retrieved from memory, or, failing that, deduced ("I don't know for sure . . . but I don't go to the beach that much").

In contrast, the seven-year-olds whom I interviewed in connection with this paper seemed to have taken a quantum leap in their grasp of racial concepts and issues. Not all had mastered conventional racial terminology (instead of black and white, "those are brown and those are white or peach people") or used it spontaneously. But they did seem to be much more alert to the basic insignia of racial difference, confidently pointing to skin color, hair, and facial features as ways in which children shown to them were "not the same."

Not only did the seven-year-olds have more of an eye for the relevant detail, they had also come to a realization which most of their younger classmates had not: that skin color is basically a fixed attribute from birth. They understood that it was not something that would change as a matter of course with age in the future, and considered it distinguishable from other aspects of their physical being in that respect. It occurred to me that there may be a

connection between this realization and the fact that, unlike the six-year-olds, at some point during the interview all the seven-year-olds spontaneously spoke of themselves as belonging to a racial or ethnic group. Not that they were always accurate about its label ("I'm one of the peach ones, I guess"), but they all did know that there was a specific label to be had.

Several other age-related differences were apparent. The seven-year-olds were much more imaginative and fanciful when describing how they thought racial differences had originated; a reflection, I suspect, of their much greater interest in this subject. They also went beyond speculating about past racial history to bring up the subject of cultural differences and current events. For example, each child spontaneously mentioned at least one behavioral trait which he associated with different-appearing others (e.g., friendliness or unfriendliness); in contrast, when asked to elaborate on how different groups were not the same, all the six-year-olds had tended to stay perseveratively on the level of physical appearance. Finally, the seven-year-olds distinguished themselves by being able to go beyond their immediate experience: they described not only experiences which they had actually had, but also experiences which they could imagine having with children who were racially different from themselves ("I don't know if they would play with me"). Overall, in discussing this subject, these children exhibited

that quality of "imaginative romancing" which Piaget has identified as a sign of developing intelligence in a given subject area.

The eight-year-olds whom I interviewed were functioning on a still more sophisticated level. They all spontaneously and decisively classified themselves, their classmates, and the children shown to them in drawings and photographs as either "black" or "white." Soberly or slyly, they let me know that they knew what names different-looking people were called--officially and unofficially (i.e., the "dirty words" of race). Further, having mastered the art of racial classification to the point of knowing without having to pause who--themselves included--was what, these children had come, apparently on their own, to view these designations as serious facts of life. By this I mean that they clearly saw racial differences as involving not so much physical traits as alternative life experiences, perspectives, and prospects. It was to these differences that they turned in our conversations ("Why do blacks try to talk so cool and take so many risks?" "I think the political differences are the main thing"; "They get different jobs"). Many of their associations followed the racial conventions of contemporary American society (e.g., linking blacks with poverty or crime), but at the same time it was clear that these children were not just

mulling over hearsay: they were struggling to articulate
¹⁶
 opinions of their own.

Case reports which include material bearing on the development of racial feelings in childhood are rare, but those which I have found are consistent with the notion of there being an evolution in racial and social consciousness during latency. Hodges (1981), a Hempstead Clinic analyst, refers to her black latency-age patient's move during this phase "from the perceptual categories of skin color to the cultural identities of black and white." Although this patient had been exposed to color differences at close range for most of her life, having been brought up in a white foster family, Hodges found her to be actively engaged in developing specific racial concepts during middle childhood. Moreover, as treatment (and latency) progressed, it became clear to Hodges that ethnic differences were assuming

¹⁶While the approach taken was by no means neutral, Davidson's (1976) study of the racial comments of 176 children aged seven to thirteen produced findings paralleling my own as to the high amount of emotional and intellectual activity aroused by racial differences during latency. The children in her study, who came from a wide variety of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, were required to comment on different ethnic groups while playing a game in which ethnic-looking pawns were moved across a board toward the goal of becoming "a full American." She reported a high rate of negative comments (highest, interestingly, among second graders) and a contagious excitement which mounted among the children as the game was played (in groups). One of her conclusions was that the children's ideas were still "developing," "cast[ing] doubt on the old assumption that prejudice is a trait absorbed at home as certainly and trustingly as mother's milk, and almost as early."

increased importance in this child's inner life and that new identifications partially based on racial similarity were being made. Similarly, Goldberg et al. (1975) also discuss the forging of pivotal (and idiosyncratic) associations to color and race during middle childhood in a paper tracing the psychological significance of race to three adult analysands. For additional anecdotal examples of children's responses to racial differences in a clinical setting, see the introduction to Chapter III.

What are the developmental underpinnings of the changes I have described thus far? Or, more narrowly, how do these changes fit with other developments already considered characteristic of latency? Presently, I shall speculate about how specific developmental events may work to stimulate racial consciousness and attitudes. However, before discussing causal relations, I think it may be useful to begin by tracing the broad correspondence on a descriptive level between the common forms of expression of racial prejudice as these are described in the literature on race and certain behaviors--which have nothing to do with race per se--as these are described in the literature on latency.

II. Modes of Racism, Faces of Latency

Consider, for example, Kovel's two "ideal types" of racist (1970). If these are viewed as representing modes of behavior rather than as discreet personalities, it can be

seen that the two are not at all mutually exclusive in the psychological sense of implying distinct prognoses or case histories. The same individual might choose to shun blacks (the aversive type) and favor strict segregation, yet selectively seek contact (the dominative type) in situations where that will afford him the exercise of privilege or power. In short, racial fastidiousness may coexist or alternate with aggressive, hands-on interaction. The two are found together as often as not in life if not in theory. Moreover, both of these modes of behavior are so well represented in the character of latency as to have become competing paradigms for that era.

Freud described latency as "characterized by . . . [the] erection of ethical and aesthetic barriers in the ego" (1926a, p. 114). He was referring to the formation of the superego and ego ideal, but this inner construction has an external counterpart: the trend toward increased compartmentalization of experience is regularly carried over into the child's dealings with the outside world. Thus in the developmental literature the latency child is often depicted as the classifier or collector (A. Freud, 1965). It would not be out of line to describe him as something of a juvenile Darwin given his exceptional penchant for labeling and systems of categorization. But the meticulous sorting of things according to set criteria, the careful construction of hierarchies and the search for the perfect specimen can have

a malignant side. Although these skills are ordinarily practiced during latency with baseball cards or insects, they can also be used to label, rank, and separate human beings. In essence, segregation involves just such a sorting of persons--ostensibly on aesthetic or ethical grounds--by details of their appearance, ancestry, or creed.

It appears less frequently in the analytic literature, but latency also has another well-known face, that of primitive, "dominative" group behavior. A popular literary genre is devoted to depicting this half-hidden underside of middle childhood. Its theme is the real potential for violence toward others that a lapse in (inner or outer) structure may suddenly reveal. High Wind in Jamaica (Hughes, 1957) and Lord of the Flies (Golding, 1959) are perhaps the best-known examples of this kind of work in nonpulp fiction. The primitively violent group escapades and fantasies (and fantasies of others' primitivity) of their latency-age protagonists comport with clinical observations as to the forms that aggression begins to assume during the course of this phase.

Most crucial here is the fact that latency-age children can organize themselves into groups. In fact, often their most urgent and effective "joinings" seem to be for the specific purpose of attacking or excluding others (Buxbaum 1981). In this they resemble nothing so much as junior dominative mobs, rushing to arms with a contagious bravado to stake out territorial and other claims. Whoever the mob

defines as Different is subjected to taunts or ostracism; the operative distinctions are usually based upon whatever difference is most readily presented. Social class, gender and age are common, though more subtle tests of loyalty and fitness may be specially devised. Whatever differences are chosen may also provide a basis within the group for the conferral of such privileges as latency-age children have the power to deploy.¹⁷

I also wish to mention here that special brand of humor that is associated with latency, in particular the wild enjoyment of buffoonery and burlesque (Stone and Church, 1968). These perennial forms of fun (as well as some more transient latency phenomena such as "sick" jokes) involve identifying the characteristics that distinguish one thing or person from another and exaggerating them to the point of absurdity. In the United States, we have a long and continuing tradition of racial burlesque and many celebrated buffoons--all understandably regarded with ambivalence, since we call such behavior "racism" when it is not done humorously.

¹⁷It is interesting to compare these latency phenomena with Isaac's (1933) report on the social life of a group of normal two-and-a-half- to five-year-olds. These younger children showed a lot of spontaneous aggression, with every child behaving in a hostile way toward one or another of the other at some time. But soon it was obvious to all observers that no grudge could survive very long on a group basis at this age for the children's groupings had no permanence or organization; each group dissipated long before any purpose could be carried out, whether hostile or benign.

I will draw one additional parallel. This has to do with the experience of novelty or strangeness. Novelty is often put forward as an explanation for racism. If so, its function must be a complex one: familiarity, which as Allport observes (1954) comes relatively quickly for children, is totally unreliable as a social cure. For adults, in fact, increased familiarity with the different other is just as apt to breed withdrawal and contempt as it is to promote tolerance. But this does not become true, I suggest, until a certain stage in the developmental process. For while the younger child usually takes his strangers as he finds them, by eight or nine he may be far more inventive and less easily appeased on this score. He has by then some attachment to his own rituals and traditions and he has far more and more subtle grounds for detecting and rejecting 'foreignness' or 'strangeness.' Or to put it in terms of the behavior we actually see: while the preschooler may show initial wariness toward a newcomer to his group, the latency child (or adult) is just as apt to reject a familiar who differs from himself and his chosen confreres--in effect, creating strangers by fiat.

In sum, certain forms of racism are reminiscent of common latency behaviors; at the same time, certain key features of latency mental and social life include all the earmarks of racism even when race is not actually involved. I do not contend that it is more than suggestive of a connection

between the two to find such analogues of racial phenomena in the general modus vivendi of latency. But I find that this connection grows more compelling upon further consideration of what development during middle childhood ordinarily brings. In other words, it becomes suggestive theoretically when we take account of how various specific aspects of latency would be likely to affect the experience of racial phenomena, based upon our present understanding of the impact of these particular developments on other facets of the child's experience and functioning.

III. Specific Phase-Characteristic Developments

1. Biological. Theorists interested in latency have noted that the chronological age 7+1 is so frequently mentioned in the lay literature on children as to suggest that it constitutes a milestone marking discontinuous development: something biological must have occurred to permit children who have passed this mark to assume new social roles not accessible to them when younger. The biological factor was once thought to be a change in the sexual tissues (cf. the classical theoretical postulate of a diminution in drives), but Shapiro and Perry (1976) see more promise in studies of brain development which indicate that at about this age children move from a stage in which visceral and skin sensations predominate in directing behavior toward much greater dominance of vision and audition. This fits with my

observation that in middle childhood children begin to experience the physical details which denote racial difference (such as skin color, facial features, and style of speech) more vividly.

Shapiro and Perry also note that current studies of brain function indicate that at about seven or so a maturation of the frontal lobe takes place which substantially increases the capacity for verbal regulation of behavior. In practical terms it becomes easier for the child to obey orders, his own and others'. Hence, during this period he becomes able to respond much more consistently to verbal admonitions against mixing with children from other social groups.

In terms of children's physiognomy and physique, middle childhood brings an interesting combination of change and stability. Body weight roughly doubles during the years from six to twelve (as does muscle strength in boys) and eighteen inches or more are added to height. However, aside from enlarging, the child's overall physique stays more or less the same. Meanwhile, though, there is a relatively striking change in facial appearance. This is due primarily to the loss of baby teeth and their replacement by permanent ones. The latter--as memorialized forever in "Leave It to Beaver"--are at first disproportionately prominent and large (Stone and Church, 1968).

Thus, on the one hand, middle childhood is a period of relative bodily stability: the child can see what he consists

of, what about him is unchanging, and what he has in common with or distinct from others. This fits with the finding that at about this time children begin to think of skin color as a fixed attribute, as an aspect of themselves on which, for better or worse, they can rely. On the other hand, certain changes are taking place within this context of overall sameness (muscles, teeth, size): all in some way involving the capacity for physical aggression. This may partially account for the prominence of identification with the aggressor as a phase-characteristic defense. For just as the sexual developments of adolescence inspire an upsurge in sexual thoughts and feelings, we might expect the sharp increase in aggressive capacity which middle childhood brings to accentuate aggressive fears and fantasies. We would also expect the child's comparisons of himself with others to reflect this increased aggressivity. More specifically, it seems plausible that these developments would contribute to the child's (and later, adult's) tendency to invest the experience of physical differentness, racial or other, with undertones of threat and danger.

A final biological factor which I think may be relevant to the present discussion is the fact that during middle childhood boys and girls begin to mature physically at different rates. Whether or not this was the case previously, it can now be easily observed. A significant number of ten-year-old girls have already entered puberty. Boys may be

physically stronger, but by seventh grade girls tend to tower over their male classmates. In other words, during this phase anatomical distinctions actually multiply. Hence the existence of physical differences begins to be underscored (by "Nature") in new and ever more anxiety-provoking ways.

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2. Cognitive. According to our current understanding of cognitive development, the maturation of the frontal lobe and the change to visual and auditory dominance on a sensory level, which usually occur at 7 \pm 1, are enabling factors in a broad-scale "cognitive shift" (Shapiro and Perry, 1976), which many developmental psychologists consider to be the definitive event of latency. Piaget (1952) offers the most comprehensive and immediately pertinent approach to intellectual development during these years. His map of cognitive stages designates early latency as when most children become demonstrably capable of forming categories according to rational criteria (concrete operations) and of reliably perceiving sameness in the face of apparent differences (conservation).¹⁹

¹⁸There is a substantial literature on how styles of thinking affect social attitudes, casting prejudice in cognitive terms (see, e.g., Tajfel, 1969), but for the most part it assumes, erroneously and not very helpfully, I contend, that prejudice is a direct manifestation of primary process-type thinking and that its motivational origins are prelatency.

¹⁹In one study relevant to the issue of perceiving racial sameness and differences, Kendler and Kendler (1962) found that only 12% of six- to seven-year-olds could integrate same-color, different-size figures, whereas 67% of eight- to ten-year-olds could.

This is succeeded over the next few years by a major advance in the capacity to handle abstractions, culminating eventually (it is hoped) in the ability to entertain alternative hypotheses and solutions (formal operations). These changes include an enormous increase in the ability to use symbols (Sarnoff, 1976). They also mean that the child can now master conventional concepts which previously eluded him, as well as extend his knowledge on his own by classifying new (to him) phenomena much more systematically. Overall, there is a decrease in the egocentrism of the child's thinking which Piaget likens to the move from a Ptolemaic to a Copernican conception of the universe. He sees this shift as spurred in part by maturation and in part by the child's increased contact with his peers. Obviously, many children have been exposed to their peers and to a great deal of the world beyond their families well before latency. What I understand to be occurring is that peer contact becomes much more meaningful as the cognitive changes of middle childhood permit a great deal more of the extrafamilial world to be observed, experienced, and generally 'taken in.'

To see how these changes bear upon the experience of race, it helps to consider the cognitive demands which are involved. Adults tend to view social differences, including race, as so obvious that deliberately not noticing them may be classed as a sign of worldliness and sophistication. But as shown in the clinical material which I have presented,

from the child's point of view, these divisions are not always as distinct or easily maintained. Racial concepts and issues involve the creation of what are often fairly subtle social categories which children do not experience as self-evident at first. Even "black" and "white," which we might think could hardly be more graphically descriptive, are really concepts, one comes to realize in talking with children. Moreover, these are concepts which are only loosely tied to physical units--not quite so loosely as, say, Christian and Jew, but much more loosely than most uses of these terms in other nonmetaphorical contexts would imply. In addition, such divisions by definition ignore all of those more immediate and distracting personal qualities--such as kindness or coolness, interest or charm--to which most children readily respond (and which we usually think of as guiding their thinking). Given these complications, it is perhaps not at all surprising that many children are confused about what racial group they belong to, pick one on the basis of whim or momentary appeal, or fail to see the necessity of belonging to any at all until they have achieved a certain level of cognitive complexity.

My findings regarding children's initial confusion about racial concepts and the normal clearing away of that confusion during latency are consistent with the results of other interview studies following the Piagetan model of inquiry. These show that direct probing will often reveal substantial gaps

and misconceptions in children's understanding of everyday aspects of the social (as well as the physical) world beneath a superficial veneer of sophistication. This has proved to be the case even when the subject in question was relatively neutral and nonaffect-laden (such as in the study by Furth et al., 1976, of children's ideas about how fares are set for bus riders) and even when it has been thoroughly "explained" to the child (see, for example, Bernstein and Cowan, 1975, on children's notions of how people get babies).

Yet, just as I found with respect to racial understanding, as they progress through middle childhood, children do usually fill in such gaps. To cite a few examples involving subjects which are often related to racial issues (and were by the children with whom I spoke): from not recognizing fully that lack of money can be a constraint for adults (Furth, 1978), they move to a relatively clear conception of such economic realities as profit and loss (Jahoda, 1979); from a vague, poorly differentiated notion of roles and occupations, they arrive at a relatively clear appreciation of the fact of occupational differences in status and income (Siegal, 1972); from lacking an integrated understanding of differences in status within groups and society at large, they reach the point of actually taking their peers' social standing into account when making judgments about them (Siegal, 1976). As previously, children's knowledge in these areas is acquired substantially independently of direct adult

instruction. Its greater accuracy also appears to be for the most part a reflection of the child's own development of more advanced intellectual capacities. And further, as with ideas about race, when they are not being investigated, developments in the child's thinking in these areas may take place altogether silently.

The question of how the cognitive changes which are associated with latency affect children's evaluative responses to social phenomena is a more complicated one. Naturally, the possibility of moral sensitivity is increased. Arlow (1982) has noted that the organization of an effective super-ego becomes possible when "important functions of an autonomous nature . . . attain a certain developmental level" including "advances in intellectual ability, the mastery of language and understanding, [and] a capacity for self-observation." But so is the capacity for cruelty increased. I think that overeager following of the basic assumption that cognitive development proceeds toward greater sophistication and rationality across categories has led cognitive theorists into a bit of a quandary here. For example, Piaget has assumed that the decrease in egocentrism which is observable in the latency child's thought has a salutary moral effect. Further, he assumes that the expanded peer contact which contributes to and in turn results from the child's rise in social understanding during middle childhood brings with it increased cooperativeness and fellow-feeling. These notions have been

elaborated into a hierarchical and positivistic approach to moral development which envisions a linear progression in ethical thinking toward the potential blossoming in adolescence or beyond of postconventional (independently rational) ethics. It is beyond the scope of this paper to embark upon a detailed criticism of this approach to the development of values and morality. Moreover, I prefer to approach this issue from another angle, i.e., in terms of the development of intrapsychic (superego and ego ideal) agencies, in keeping with my aim of trying to understand racial issues within the context of psychoanalytic psychology. However, I will point out the necessity of maintaining a distinction between having the ability to take the role of others and to respond to social contact cooperatively and actually doing so in any given instance. Certainly, nothing in children's responses to racial or other social differences as these have been revealed clinically indicates that their development of an increased intellectual grasp of these phenomena and related issues, including the ability to reason about them, necessarily involves a concomitant increase in moral responsiveness or empathy.²⁰

Further, susceptibility to peer influence does not mean, as Piaget tends to assume, that its direction will be positive.

²⁰The development of empathy may bear some relation to actual personal experiences of suffering, but the timing and dosage of such experiences would appear to be critical determinants of the results.

In short, while moral issues do become of increased interest to many children during latency, interest does not determine outcome. Siegal (1982) notes that by twelve or thirteen all children recognize the existence of inequality in the world, but nonetheless split on the issue of fairness.

To sum up, what is supportive to the thesis of this paper regarding the role of the cognitive changes of latency in shaping responses to racial phenomena is the emphasis which Piaget and his successors place upon (1) the development of modes of thought during this phase which enable the child to understand (and, indeed, participate in the formation of) racial and other social concepts while also serving to awaken him to social issues; (2) the recognition of peer group influence and of experience in shaping responses to situations of moral conflict (learning by doing, so to speak); and (3) the implied development of a distinctive consciousness of self as a member of a group (the move to Copernican thinking) which accompanies the decrease in egocentrism. In short, all of the basic changes in intellectual capacity which are posited as phase-characteristic by cognitive theorists fit with the notion of a developing interest in race and in all the other hierarchical distinctions which might be drawn between persons which I am positing.

3. Psychodynamic. In discussing biological and cognitive factors in racial awareness and affects, I have been

dealing mainly with some of the more objective, maturation-based spurs to differentiation along racial lines. I shall turn now to more distinctively psychoanalytic perspectives which focus upon the conflicts, defenses, and fantasies associated with latency. Obviously there are important differences between children here: "Each child brings to the perception and assimilation of the meaning of his experience with the objects in his environment the influence of his own particular, pre-existing wishes and conflicts and of his persistent unconscious fantasies [which] create the mental set in terms of which the external object is perceived, organized and apprehended" (Arlow, 1982, p. 232). But I also think that important commonalities can be identified which tend to push the experience of racial and other social differences in particular directions, affectively and dynamically speaking, so that it is in some ways constituted out of the elements of latency.

For example, in his description of the psychodynamics of middle childhood, Blos (1979) states that at this juncture (rather than earlier as the traditional literature on racism has assumed) conflict concerning the original parental objects may begin to be visited upon some (disfavored) segment of society. The "domestication" of drives which takes place during latency includes directing their discharge along socially approved lines. At a minimum this means away from the family; depending upon how broadly family is defined, it

may mean outside of the "tribe." Thus increased attention to issues of status and to group boundaries of all kinds, including any marked by color differences, would seem impelled at least in part by the necessity of finding safer paths for the expression of aggression and libido, just as we have found does occur during this phase.

The defenses most frequently mentioned in the literature as characteristic of latency include externalization, identification with the aggressor, and the reaction formations of pity, cleanliness, and shame. Furman (1980) sees externalization as the tendency to invest external authority with a harsh superego which then can be then defied, as shown in apparently guiltless aggressive or sexual behavior (as in many racial attacks). She also discusses how the latency child's struggle against masturbation leads to a tendency to project the idea of excessive and illegitimate sexuality onto others (a commonplace racial accusation). In addition, she sees partial regression to the phallic-narcissistic level as prevalent during this phase (as may be involved in racial fantasies about the relative size of the other's penis). Bornstein (1951) comments on the tendency to projection deriving from the latency child's poor tolerance of guilt.

Buxbaum (1970) uses the term externalization slightly differently, describing how when two or more latency children join together, they often use an excluded other as a whipping boy to externalize aggression which would otherwise be

directed toward shortcomings in the self. She sees latency as the phase when the practice of "hostile aggressive scapegoating"--such as is endemic in situations of racial conflict among adults--normally makes its debut. (Obviously, aside from serving to divert self-scrutiny, attacks against others for imagined wrongdoings may be used to preserve relative amity in the child's relations with actual and imagined parental objects by permitting affects which resist best efforts at neutralization to be expressed with relative impunity.)

In sum, following Arlow (1982), I would add that what we see in this aggressive depreciation of the other is that we need not search for the antecedents of racism in the anal phase simply because segregative and rejecting attitudes are involved: the latency period has its own anality.²¹

Current analytic conceptualizations of the development and nature of the superego during latency also contain several points relevant to the present thesis regarding how racial differences are handled psychologically. Schechter (1980) notes that our view of superego formation now extends beyond merely the capacity to judge right from wrong and includes the development of ethics, morality, guilt,

²¹Insofar as anal issues in the original and more narrow sense is concerned, Schechter (1980) notes pertinently that during middle childhood the whole attitude toward cleanliness and dirtiness shifts: "real" boys (men) are dirty and only girls (and "sissies" are clean. This way of viewing the matter is much more in line with typical racial fantasies.

depression, anxiety, social conscience, altruism, and the ability to put oneself in another's place. As a memorial to the temporal conjunction of the emergence of a consciousness of ethnicity with the development of these sensitivities, we have the direct infusion of the experience of racial differences with issues of legality, morality, and values. This helps, I think, to make more comprehensible such phenomena as white liberalism (a concern with principles of equality which may or may not be found in a context of genuine empathy) and white guilt (feelings of overprivilege due to having violated an internal standard of equity). More importantly, this timing helps to explain why this is one area of behavior in which, contrary to the often-cited rule, a society can "legislate morality." This makes sense if one considers that our original consciousness of ethnicity and social "place" dates from the psychological era in which the superego was sufficiently established to function as an arbiter of behavior but was still vulnerable to regression and highly susceptible to outside influences. The bad news is that the "legislator" can be in any direction--toward the creation of segregated townships as well as fair housing laws.

I shall add a few words here about the fantasies characteristic of latency. These have mainly to do with two themes both relevant to racial differentiation: savagery and strangeness. As I have described previously (see p. 121 above), in the popular literary treatment of latency, "Us versus the

"Savages" is presented as the typical rallying cry. We can assume that this theme has an unconscious determinant in the child's inner battle against enslavement by primitive wishes and affects whose taming Blos has called the quintessential achievement of latency. In any event, we do observe that throughout subsequent life, social differences of all kinds readily arouse latent (in both senses of the word) concerns over the danger of savage encroachments upon civilized territory.

The idea of the Stranger is also phase-characteristic. The Stranger may be an outsider or the child himself, as in the typical Family Romance fantasies of being a foundling or the secret descendant of a (more) noble family. A similar emphasis upon issues of lineage and concern over establishing one's own exalted origins (which requires others' degradation for contrast) is very often expressed in racial terms.

A third (and, I think, related) fantasy often mentioned in the analytic literature (and in children's books) as characteristic of latency has to do with having (wanting) a twin. The wish for a double, a someone "just like me," may be understood as expressive of wishes for narcissistic reinforcement, a wish to avoid loneliness and isolation through a kind of mirroring. Translated into racial terms, the issue here would be one of "fitting in" or, alternatively, of being surrounded by one's "own kind." I found when I discussed racial differences with latency-age children that by seven

they were beginning to be concerned with "fitting in" and, whatever he was, no child wanted to be "the only one." In contrast, the young child is more apt to assume, even in the face of contrary evidence, that everyone is "just like me."

In the next section and in the one that follows, I shall draw upon the theoretical perspectives on latency offered by Erikson and Blos. Despite their rather different orientations, both approaches seem to me readily to accommodate the ideas presented here regarding the critical contribution of the latency years to such social phenomena as racial consciousness.

4. Excerpts from Erikson on identify formation. Erikson's conception of development during this phase (1968) takes as its point of departure the observation that all over the world we find that the latency-age child is being taught the "prerequisites for participation in the particular technology of his culture" (in ours, literacy); in other words, he is actively being prepared to "enter the technology of his tribe." Although Erikson does not make this explicit, it is clear that such teachings must also have the effect of impressing upon the child the fact that he has a tribe. Erikson does say that middle childhood is when "wider society becomes significant" to children by admitting them "to roles preparatory to the actuality of [a specific] technology and economy."

On the psychological level, what this means is that the

child is being given the social makings for a new round of personality growth and conflict. He has now both "the opportunity and the life task of developing a sense of workmanship and work participation." With his new tools and widening perspective, he can (and must) go beyond immediate familial and sexual rivalries to reidentify with his parents in their capacities as "workers and tradition bearers." It is as if, Erikson notes, "the child knows and his society knows that now that he is psychologically already a rudimentary parent, he must begin to be something of a worker and potential provider before becoming a biological parent."

Critical to this stage is the child's development of what Erikson calls an enduring "sense of industry." He must learn "to win recognition by producing things, develop perseverance and adjust to the inorganic laws of the tool world" so that he can become "an eager and absorbed unit of a productive situation." In short, his infantile drives and narcissism must be so far tempered that he no longer feels that he is whatever he can imagine but, rather, that he is what he can "make work."

Erikson spells out some of the social and group psychological implications of these developments. Work brings the child (and adult) shared experiences with age mates and entry into a "communal reality." More than play alone ever could have, he implies, work makes possible a shared world view. Moreover, for the vast majority of people, this latency-based

focus upon the self as worker has been "not only the beginning but also the limitation of their identity." A few elite members of a society may go beyond such a focus, but most either choose to or must "consolidate their identity needs around their technical and occupational capacities." Further, as Erikson sees it, an orientation toward acquiring technical skill is "probably the most [beneficially] inclusive and absorbing identity potential in the world today."

The conception of "identity" which Erikson offers includes matters at the bone of self-experience as well as those close to what he calls "the social surface." In essence, he sees identity development as involving the arrival at "a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity." He presents identity as a product of the ego's synthesis of opposing elements of experience, the result of confrontation with a universal schedule of tasks and crises. In a statement very relevant to the present thesis, he remarks that over the course of development, the ego carries not only this early body image but also preserves the "social topology" of one's childhood. To illustrate this idea he describes the long-term effects upon a school-age Jewish child of growing up (fearfully) in a neighborhood among Irish and German children.

As is often the case in psychoanalytic theorizing, when Erikson turns to a consideration of how things sometimes go wrong, one can begin to see more clearly the underlying

connection between the issues which arise in middle childhood and the development of a specifically toned racial identity. In his discussion of the consequences of interference with the mastery of latency tasks, he makes it clear that there is a social impotence and frustration as debilitating in its own way as sexual impotence and frustration can be--and that these are not at all the same thing. Without a secure sense of himself as a person who can make things work, who can participate fully in the important tasks of his society, the school-age child is in danger, Erikson says, of developing a blighting sense of "estrangement"--from the unwanted and inappropriate tasks presented to him, from the society which presents them unfeelingly, and, ultimately, from himself. If this occurs, the affective outcome foreseen by Erikson is a lasting and pervasive "sense of inferiority."

By pairing "industry" with "inferiority" as the emotional concomitants of development during this phase, Erikson implicitly acknowledges that this is the stage at which children begin to have not just a self-generated sense of guilt but also a more acute experience of "the values and judgments of others outside the family" (Schechter, 1981). There is a nascent theory of narcissistic development during latency here, which Erikson does not really develop, but obviously any feelings of irremediable inferiority which arise during latency could make it more difficult for the personality to weather subsequent developmental crises and

ultimately prove distorting or destructive to the overall sense of personal identity.

Erikson explains that the social consequence of exclusion from the community of meaningful achievement (whatever the cause and howsoever "achievement" is defined within a given society) is also likely to be some form of destructiveness. One must have learned to enjoy a sense of apprenticeship in order not to need the thrill of destruction, and those who feel that they are not "partaking of the technological identity of their time" may (or may wish to) rend the entire social fabric. Not surprisingly, adolescence is apt to be least "stormy" in that segment of youth which is "gifted and well trained in the pursuit of expanding technological trends." Thus in Erikson's view the calm navigation of adolescence and of subsequent identity issues as well as the "health" of a society in many ways depends upon the successful engagement of its members with the tasks of latency.

There is no difficulty, I am sure, in seeing the pertinence of these remarks to the disadvantaged or different. In fact, ghettoized youth often exhibit exactly the kinds of self and social destructiveness (here I include the high rates of suicide and drug use as well as of illegal activity) which Erikson's notions about the internal and external consequences of a severe impediment to the development of a reliable sense of industry during latency would predict. Moreover, to illustrate his notions about the critical nature

of latency's contribution to the sense of identity, Erikson specifically refers to the obstacle-strewn developmental path of the minority race child. If such a child "finds out that color or background are the factors that decide his worth as pupil or apprentice," he states, "the human propensity for feeling unworthy may be fatefully aggravated." I would add that the more difficult it is made (and there are many ways of making it difficult) for the black child to identify with those whom Erikson describes as the ones "who know things and know how to do things" which are valued within the broader society, the more his color comes to seem to him as well as to others to be a "mark of fateful difference."

But there is no reason to assume that Erikson's analysis of how the experience of ethnicity becomes imprinted upon the ego in middle childhood applies only to the minority child. Implicit here is the notion that just as the march of developmental events leads the black child to discover and absorb into his personality the social significance of his color, the white child is led to discover and absorb the social meaning of his whiteness, too. All of the available clinical evidence indicates that just like the black child whom Erikson describes, the white child (or Jew, or whatever) is also becoming much more intimately acquainted with his social "place." After all, this is the stage, Erikson and others (see, e.g., Seigal, 1982) have stated, when all children develop "a first sense of the division of labor and

of differential opportunity." In noting this Erikson was not referring to race per se, but in fact this kind of division and differential is exactly what race means in most multi-ethnic societies. This is congruent with my finding that the eight-year-olds whom I interviewed were inclined to describe racial differences in terms of the differences which they had observed or heard about between schools and jobs. Similarly, Kurosawa et al. (1971) found through an open-ended word association interview study that older elementary school children had already come to regard whiteness above all as an economic category.

I gather from Erikson's not saying so that he was not thinking about the connection between the latency-age child's concern with acquiring a sense of industry and avoiding being adjudged inferior and the ways in which adults customarily construe differences in ethnicity and color. Yet the difference between blackness and whiteness (Arab and Jew, Irish and English, Hindu and Parsi) has very often been confidently equated with the distinction between industry and inferiority. In fact, racial arguments seem to be universally cast in these very terms with one group or individual in effect accusing the other of having failed to master the tasks of latency. There seems to be an unconscious allusion here to that period in childhood when the issues of industry versus inferiority were especially engrossing and vivid, when, that

is, the child was receiving the social equivalent of his school seat assignment and place in line.

5. Excerpts from Blos on psychosexual issues. The account which Blos (1979) offers of post-oedipal development also has a number of implications for the present exploration of connections between racial issues and latency. The seminal point in his work is his rejection of the traditional notion that adolescence involves a simple rerun of the original oedipus complex, a notion which necessarily carries the implication that affectively and dynamically speaking, not much has happened in between, that is, during latency. Instead, Blos contends that the apparent resolution which marks the end of the phallic phase is temporary and partial, at most a suspension of some oedipal issues for the moment. What we then observe clinically at puberty is the broad-scale, "noisy" resumption of a process of working through certain issues. All of this takes place for new reasons, on a new level and in new arenas commensurate with the "decisive" expansion of the ego and other changes which have occurred in the latency interim so that what we see is a fresh struggle and not simply the recapitulation of a bygone era.

Blos goes on to state that at adolescence two essential psychological tasks remain to be accomplished: the resolution of (negative oedipal) love for the parent of the same sex and the decisive formation of a sense of self as a man or a woman. He notes that we have many clinical indications to

the effect that the psychological work in these areas which full participation in adult society as well as a secure sense of individual self-coherence demands is normally begun but not concluded earlier (if then). As he points out, "Oedipal (sexually infused) love directed toward both mother and father does not burden the young child with intrinsic contradictions or mutual exclusiveness as is the case in adolescence In other words, the state of bisexuality is tolerated in the prelatency child without the catastrophic disharmony [seen] at (and after) puberty."

The second time around with oedipal issues, assuming that ongoing development during middle childhood has furnished "the structural resources that are essential for the encounter with puberty," the adolescent's efforts to resolve his ambivalencies so as to achieve "a basic inner unity" will involve direct use not so much of his parents as of his peers. In cliques and clubs he contrives to find "group objects" which correspond in some way to the "primitive parental dichotomies" of his past. This correspondence is usually based upon analogous values, standards, interests, or other abstract characteristics which the child has developed into symbols of his family matrix. Thus in his real and imagined interactions with peers, the adolescent continues what Blos describes as the progressive differentiation of qualities associated in his mind with being a man or a woman.

I would add to Blos's description that previously we

have seen all these activities--the conceptualizing of oneself as a member of a group, the formation of group-related symbols and ideologies, the concentration of energy upon peer relations, and the exaggerated differentiation of qualities--intensively rehearsed during latency. In other words, the contribution made by puberty is primarily that it sexualizes what was going on before. Viewed from this perspective, latency is indeed a period of "detente," to use Blos's term, in the sense that it brings an easing of discord in the child's familial relations. But it is also an interval for the elaboration and reinforcement of the fundamental oedipal lesson that physical differences count.

Summary

This chapter presents my views as to how responsiveness to racial differences develops in accordance with the normal developments of middle childhood. I have described how biological and cognitive developments impel the child toward increased categorization of his world and of himself while also enabling him to experience his world with greater continuity. He comes to recognize which aspects of himself and others are, for all practical purposes, fixed and unchanging, such as, for example, his race and coloring. Concomitantly, he begins increasingly to conceive of himself as belonging to extrafamilial social groups organized along gender, racial, religious, class, or other such lines. These are groups with

whose members he can see that he shares various (often, but not necessarily, appearance-related) characteristics.

I have also argued that the psychosocial and psychosexual tasks of latency (as described in the general literature on this issue by Erikson, Blos, and others) decisively shape racial and other forms of social consciousness. Confrontation with oedipal issues and movement away from the infantile intimacy with the original objects, negotiations with the characteristically harsh and erratic superego, reliance on scapegoat-evoking defenses such as externalization and identification with the aggressor--all of these phase-characteristic pressures encourage the increased attribution of special significance to even ordinary and familiar human variations. In addition, the latency-age child's customary initiation into the world of work (or Erikson's "tribal technology") inaugurates many new tests and comparisons of his personal qualities with those of others just at the time when there are strong internal reasons for attending to such differences. As a result, we see in latency a multidetermined trend toward the exaggerated differentiation of related qualities: male and female, good and evil, weak and strong, smart and dumb, superior and inferior--black and white.

In sum, the psychological ground for racial partisanship and strife is prepared by those normal developmental processes of middle childhood which both enable and encourage conceptualization of people in terms of the physical and social

differences between them. Such processes almost inevitably bring to the foreground the idea that children have differing interests and backgrounds. Thus, as a matter of course, the racially (or otherwise) different other comes to be regarded with much more interest and--often--more apprehensively.

CHAPTER V
RACISM, NORMAL NARCISSISM, AND
NARCISSISTIC RAGE

By now it will be evident that in my view it is not simply the timing of the formation of firm racial allegiances which is misrepresented in the traditional literature. The dominant analytic hypotheses on the etiology of racism also obscure and distort the key motives expressed in devaluative racial practices. The problem as I see it is that the traditional approaches to this subject have tended to ignore the narcissistic component of prejudice, although this is the very feature which distinguishes it from simple ignorance and which accounts for its virulence.

My own exploration of the connection between racism and narcissistic issues began with my investigation into the process of becoming black or white, which led to my reconceptualization of racial identity (see preceding chapter) as an aspect of the self that normally develops during middle childhood. As I have described, in the course of this work I also began to question the classical depiction of latency as a period of emotional dormancy, and to be impressed by the powerful affects generated during this phase in response to the challenges it brings to self-definition and self-esteem. In fact, it was my finding that racial identity is normally taken on as an enduring part of the own self during a period

of heightened involvement with self-related issues which brought the essential connectedness of racial and narcissistic concerns into focus for me.

Accordingly, in this chapter I shall describe how-- against the developmental backdrop of middle childhood (as previously outlined)--narcissistic concerns supply the irrational and 'wishful' aspects of our responses to race and set the emotional stage for intergroup conflict. Drawing upon observations by Freud, Greenacre, Kohut, and others, I shall argue that racism is really best understood in terms of the workings of normal and pathological narcissism. More specifically, I shall explain how recurring concerns about the value and stability of the self (rather than any particular psychosexual conflict or fixation) excite the many varieties of envy, arrogance, and fear which find a common pathway in racial aggression and separation.

The Narcissistic Core of Racism

Despite frequent lamentation in the psychiatric literature on race regarding the vulnerable self-esteem of the victims of prejudice, the broader connection between racism and narcissism which I am positing has not been explored in any depth. Yet, as I hope to show, links between feelings related to the self and racial politics tend if anything to be glaring rather than hidden and can usually be discerned on several levels at once, whether we speak of individuals or

groups, in formal clinical terms or more anecdotally. To begin with, we commonly define racism as belief in the superiority of a particular, usually one's own, race (see, e.g., the Oxford American Dictionary, 1980, p. 551). Notions regarding the own self must, of course, be crucial to such an assessment of the other's comparative inferiority. Thus, inherent in the very concept of racism is the issue of the subject's own narcissistic functioning.

To the contemporary reader who has the hindsight conferred by recent shifts in analytic theory toward greater emphasis upon narcissistic issues, such issues seem to dominate the clinical picture in those few reported case histories which discuss racial feelings. Regardless of the presenting symptoms and ongoing foci of the therapy, the race-related productions that are described all appear to involve the use of racial fantasies as a vehicle for the expression of concerns about the value and integrity of the own self. Not only do patients tend to experience racial differences as a narcissistic issue in these cases, but conversely, narcissistic issues clearly exert an independent influence upon the patient's racial experience. See, for examples of these interweavings, Goldberg et al. (1975) on racial fantasies gleaned from three analyses. Similarly, Pinderhughes (1973), Wohlberg (1975), and Grier (1970) report on patients' varying perceptions of racial differences during the course of mixed-race therapies. Winter (1974) also

offers a very pertinent account of the uses of race by normal subjects (in a self-study group) to support self-esteem, ward off self-doubt, and avenge narcissistic injury.

On the group level the conjunction between narcissistic concerns and racial dogma is no less striking. The narcissistic objectives of most racial ideologies--precisely because they are the *raison d'etre* of such constructions, I submit--are usually so clearly stated on the manifest level that little or no inference is required in order to uncover the roots of their appeal. When, for example, one race proclaims itself the Master Race or preaches White (i.e., its own) Supremacy, it openly invites the elect to enjoy a grand (not to mention grandiose) palliative for a wide range of disturbances in the narcissistic sphere. But even in much less extreme cases it is often quite clearly evident that racial claims represent global but reassuring responses to their constituents' questions concerning their own security, value, and meaning in a world perceived as potentially aloof and threatening. Whether one group designates others as nonhuman or barbarian, or soothes itself by regarding its more materially powerful rivals as morally or spiritually inferior, from a psychological standpoint the essential elements remain unchanged. Group members seek to benefit, in their own eyes at least, from a gratifying sense of the nonmembers' inferiority.

The traditional analytic literature on race takes the

present perspective into account in one particular: it holds that the major psychological danger facing those who are the objects of prejudice is wounded narcissism, i.e., diminished confidence and self-esteem. But the point which I wish to establish is that narcissistic vulnerability is the central issue for the other side as well. In other words, I suggest here that the aggressor in racial conflict battles for stakes that revolve around the status, stability, and meaning of the self no less than does his foe. Moreover, I submit, it is in conjunction with racial aggression that we see most vividly the lack of empathy, exploitativeness, claiming of special entitlement, exaggerated sensitivity to slights and irrational pride--in short, those signs of narcissistic anxiety set forth in clinical writings and in diagnostic treatises such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III (1980).

The "narcissism of minor differences" (Freud, 1918a)

While arguing that the basic premises of prejudice are narcissistic, I must clarify that I do not mean to imply that rejection of others on grounds of racial difference is necessarily a sign of serious narcissistic pathology. On the contrary, I suspect that the most important contributions to racial partisanship and strife may come from the side of normal narcissistic development and functioning. Freud actually made several suggestions along this line, which I shall discuss below.

To explain anti-Semitism, the brand of racial enmity that was (understandably) of most pressing concern to him, Freud eventually resorted to the tortuous and fatalistic analysis of specific beliefs about his own ethnic group. The resulting work, Moses and Monotheism (1939), along with selected comments on the supposed dependency of fellowship upon oedipal renunciation (see Blos, 1979, for a rebuttal), has usually been taken to encompass his views on the genesis of racial and other social tensions. However, a number of papers contain the germs of the entirely different (and less ethnocentric) approach to racial phenomena which I am advocating.

In his initial exploration of narcissism (1914), Freud addressed the issue of intolerance through references to the power of shared ego ideals to bind individuals into a group. He suggested that the very process of building group cohesion through shared values and aspirations tends to encourage group members to regard outsiders as morally and otherwise inferior. Thus, he warned, "cruelty and intolerance toward those who do not belong to [a particular group] are natural."

In a later paper explaining the readiness of some males to despise women as due to a "narcissistic rejection" of them, Freud posited that there might be a more general tendency toward rejection or devaluation of others on narcissistic grounds. At the same time he observed with interest that it seemed to be "precisely the minor differences in

people that form the basis of feelings of hostility and strangeness between them." He admitted a temptation to "pursue this idea and to derive from this 'narcissism of minor differences' the hostility which we [see] overpowering the commandment that all men should love one another" (Freud, 1918a, p. 199).

Freud returned to this thought a few years later, noting that "when men come together in larger units . . . each of them thinks itself superior to or of better birth than the other . . . [and] every little canton looks down upon the others with contempt." He went on to say that since "closely related races keep one another at arm's length . . . [we] are no longer astonished that greater differences should lead to an almost insuperable repugnance such as the Gallic people feel for the German, the Aryan for the Semite and the White races for the coloured." In these "undisguised antipathies and aversions," he concluded, we can recognize "the expression of self-love--of narcissism." He went on to suggest that social problems begin when under this influence the individual "behaves as though . . . any divergence from his own particular lines of development involved a criticism of them and a demand for their alteration" (Freud, 1921, pp. 101-102, emphasis added).

In an article attempting to clarify the concept of narcissism, Moore (1964) summarized Freud's position as follows: "Antipathy to strangers, to those who are different,

is based on the notion that divergence from self implies criticism and demand for alteration of the self, therefore offending narcissism. This intolerance disappears when a group is formed on the basis of a common quality among its members who then identify with each other." It would be more accurate to say that this intolerance is redirected, for, as Freud observed, those who are narcissistically bound together require others to "receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness."

It should be noted in view of the present argument that in the comments quoted, Freud is concerned with some of the concomitants of normal, unexceptional narcissistic development and functioning. From a developmental standpoint, the implication of his remarks could be spelled out as follows: questions of sameness and difference take on added interpersonal and intrapsychic significance in the ordinary course of events with the advent of group awareness and involvements and with the development of the ego ideal (note the implicit reference to latency). Within this framework of heightened attention to the interpersonal surround, the individual's responses to others whom he perceives as unlike himself will be more directly shaped by his contemporaneous conscious or unconscious estimates of his own "ego-interests." At this point three intertwined factors will come into play: (1) recognition that intra-group differences may threaten the integrity or status of the tribe with which the individual

identifies (hence a wish to deny them); (2) recognition on some level of the usefulness of intergroup differences in facilitating those psychological mechanisms which involve getting rid (in fantasy, at least) of unwanted aspects of the self (hence a wish to exploit them); and (3) the fact that in arriving at a more discriminating and critical view of the world and of himself, the individual becomes more vulnerable to feeling that he is being discriminated against and criticized. Thus the individual's tendency will be to seek greater homogeneity among his associates and at the same time to exaggerate his differences with those to whom he is not, he discovers, to be 'narcissistically-bound.'

We might speculate a bit on why, as Freud points out, what would objectively appear to be minor differences prove so frequently to be the most irritating. Major divergences from self are in many instances not only accepted but appreciated: to love and care for creatures from an entirely different species often seems easier than to tolerate the mere existence of fellow humans whose features or customs differ by fractions from our own. The answer, it seems to me, lies in the fact that exaggerated differences enhance the efficacy of self-sparing fantasies (see above), whereas "minor differences" are only a step away from those superficial likenesses which are apt to interfere with the untroubled subjection of others to censure and the cultivation of a sense of one's own superiority.

The social impact of the need for mirroring

The notion that divergences from self are apt to be experienced as narcissistically wounding insofar as they are felt to suggest some personal deficiency anticipates the complementary observation that mirroring of the self is ordinarily experienced as confirming of its reality and value.

Greenacre (1958) explored this idea in a paper tracing the origins of certain common social responses. Focusing on mirroring (in the literal sense of reflecting back one's own image), she observed that association with persons of similar appearance seems to provide a welcome "reinforcement of the sense of the own body." One has only to travel in a foreign country and to experience the sense of relief found in meeting a fellow countryman who then appears to be one of one's "own kind" to realize that "the average individual is in need of at least one other person, similar to himself, to look at and speak to, in order to feel safe in his own identity." Moreover, because we seek the "continual reinforcement of the sense of the own self gained in the 'taking in' of a similar person," Greenacre felt that for most people physical appearance "remains exceedingly important," spreading "its influence into emotional and supposedly intellectual attitudes." Greenacre linked this phenomenon to the preoedipal buildup of the body image according to the body surface through the combined agencies of vision and touch. I disagree with her notions about the origin of the wish for

similar-looking companions, for it is not, after all, the preoedipal child who requires visual sameness to self in order to develop internal security or to maintain a favorable narcissistic balance. Appropriate mirroring of the infant's communicative behavior helps to establish attachment (Stern, 1977) and works, we assume, to create a positive self-experience, but actually being the same in the sense of looking alike is irrelevant. In other words, the infant seeks attunement, not exact replication. Later we become more literal so that looking the same comes to stand for the earlier intimacy of feeling as one.

But the important point is that eventually birds of a feather do begin to flock together, or, at least, that is the common tendency. Basically, Greenacre sees at work here a "primitive" kind of "self-appraisal" based upon awareness of the own external attributes which leads to the seeking of reinforcement, reassurance, and comfort in association with others who appear similar. Without ready access to a similar enough other, she notes, one "feels first an intensification and then a diminution of the sense of self." I would add that individuals vary rather widely in their tolerance for such sensations, and that such tolerance in turn tends to depend a great deal upon the specific circumstances. When unsought, the feeling of being not quite oneself is apt to be most disturbing, yet through voluntary exposure to different substances, ideas, and experiences, most people sometimes

(and some all the time) seek this very novelty. The degree of control and voluntariness of one's exposure to the different person (place or thing) obviously helps to determine whether this experience is felt as pleasurably 'broadening' or unpleasantly disorienting. This is not by any means an argument for gradualism in changing race relations, but it does suggest that attention paid to factors which enhance the participants' sense of voluntariness and control may avoid arousing unnecessary resistance.

Greenacre brings up another important and generally ignored point having to do with the experience of auditory mirroring and likeness to self as generally pleasing and confirming. To be with others who speak with the same nuances of meaning and expression and who use the same tones and inflections as one is accustomed to use and to hear is directly reinforcing to the sense of self and to a sense of shared reality. This influence could be traced to infancy, for, as suggested by Englestein (private communication, 1982), language--the mother tongue--is "the amniotic fluid of postnatal existence." However, from the point of view of the present thesis, what seems most significant is that the auditory connection to others and its importance to the sense of self actually increase during childhood. With his developing mastery of and reliance upon language, the child grows ever more discriminating in his tastes, as it were, regarding sounds. Eventually a fairly specific accent comes

to stand for the shared values (and value) of the group that employs it. Correspondingly, during the school years our normal narcissistic attachment to the sound of our own and like voices begins to foster distinctions between and divisions among groups. Then, when for the first time a common language is required, children's voices are also becoming more mature and distinctive. It is at this juncture that we (and they) typically begin to perceive children's speech not as racially neutral but as 'sounding' black or white.

The preservation of unrepressed pleasures

There is an additional factor which I think must contribute to racial tensions at least as strongly as that wish to avoid criticism and to find reinforcement for the sense of identity which Freud and Greenacre described, respectively. This has to do with the desire to preserve those pleasures which are associated with one's own cultural background, the festivals and rites of childhood, public and private, formal and informal, which are not opposed by conscience and so need not on that account at least be foregone or repressed. The philosopher Lin Yu-Tang asked, "What is patriotism but the love of the good things we ate in our childhood?" (quoted in Eliot,). Similarly, it seems to me that certain aspects of racism owe their tenacity to the fondness for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and practices which have been

(usually in gilded form) carried over in memory from bygone days. Such pleasures will often be bodily based, such as the enjoyment of certain forms of food, music, or movement. But in any event a clinging to these cherished aspects of the past may often prove to be sufficient to support a lasting preference for intimate association with those of a similar background and to blind one to all competing charms. Threats of loss of such valued anchors to the self awaken anxiety and reinforce a disinclination for change.

It goes without saying in this company, I should think, that the golden age which I describe and which these more moderate pleasures evoke need never have actually existed in reality. Intrusion upon valued fantasies may arouse all the revulsion and resistance associated with actual loss. Moreover, the stranger--strange by virtue of his different and unhallowed ways of being and doing--can only be felt as a harsh intruder in this context of treasured self-enhancing traditions and reveries. Meanwhile, the old foods, the old neighborhood, and the old power arrangements (especially the old ways in which you were subordinate to me) grow more dear as they are gathered up into the sense of self as cherished forms and memories.

Racism and Narcissistic Rage

Thus far I have described contributions to belief in racial superiority and separatism which can be traced to the

workings of normal narcissistic development and functioning, especially as these are articulated during latency: the wish to preserve unrepressed pleasures which derive from a particular cultural context; the reliance upon finding obvious reflections of one's own self in others in order to preserve a sense of well-being and security; and the experience of divergence from self as disparaging or critical so that one prefers the ego-boosting effects of relative homogeneity. It seems to me that, taken together, these factors account for a very impressive array of racial phenomena and that we need look no further than to such common influences to make sense of the common garden varieties of discrimination and distrust, i.e., that rather high level of background racism which, especially in heterogeneous societies, constitutes a significant part of the psychopathology of everyday life.

But while clannishness and lack of regard for the different object whose ambitions and aspirations are felt to encroach upon one's own is the kind of limited lapse that may be found in otherwise "good" people, how can one explain that total absence of empathy which finds expression in active exploitativeness and complete disregard for the personal integrity and rights of others--even to the point of murder? I suggest that where there is such extreme devaluation of the different other, as in lynching or other forms of racial terrorism, we are in the presence of narcissistic rage.

In his seminal outline of the dynamics of pathological

narcissism, Kohut (1972) points out that the central issue in this phenomenon is not so much appearances per se, but power-- especially the power to control others in the environment so that they seem to reflect and glorify rather than threaten the grandiose self. Thus Kohut's prototypical narcissist, much like the dominative or overt racist described by Kovel (1970), seeks the power to recreate the world in his own idealized image. He may achieve this result by expunging troublesome others or by relegating them to the position of satellites and inferiors. To a white who feels this need, a black out of place is a dangerous flaw in his narcissistically-perceived reality.

Kohut also notes pertinently that the worst violence between men is often accompanied by "boastful and idolatrous convictions" regarding the self. Such expressions of pride and rage are, he explains, the behavioral manifestations of a seriously disturbed narcissistic equilibrium. (The experiential manifestation of a disturbance to narcissistic balance is shame.) Racial violence involves boastful convictions regarding the self almost by definition.

As injuries which are apt to provoke narcissistic rage, Kohut names ridicule, contempt, and conspicuous defeat. Such injuries need not be actual; their mere anticipation may provoke violent preventive attack. I would add the obvious point that such retaliatory behavior is likely not to be against the feared aggressor directly but, rather, against a

target perceived as more vulnerable. Hence the special vulnerability of a racial or other minority to vengeful attack by a narcissistically vulnerable majority. Of course, the degree of aggression actually expressed toward the different other will depend not only upon the immediate narcissistic balance but also upon such factors as the structure of the ego and the permissiveness toward such violence which is exhibited in the surrounding society. This is what is meant by a racial "climate."

To add one further thought on the connection between racism and narcissistic rage which draws upon both Freud's and Kohut's formulations: some of the prevalence and vehemence of racism derives from the fact that actual racial differences happen to be sufficiently vague and open-ended to provide a most convenient symbol or substitute for others which may be much more deeply upsetting. In other words, concern about racial differences may serve as a vehicle for expression of other, less conscious anxieties about the body or self in general. To my mind, gender differences are the best case in point: if, as Freud has suggested, differences of any kind imply criticism, gender differences--which are both much more definite and, in many ways, definitive of the self--imply criticisms which are far more drastic and narcissistically disturbing. Thus, while in many social contexts an adult may safely voice extreme fears of mixing and contamination in racial terms, if he were to express a

comparable anguish over the dangers of contact with the opposite sex, he might face inner panic as well as social ostracism. In other words, the overt and violent expression of racism may serve to forestall an unbearable revelation of profound narcissistic anxiety.

Summary

Against the developmental backdrop of middle childhood, the crucial impetus toward prejudice from a dynamic and affective point of view lies in the narcissistic realm. In other words, once the basic biological and cognitive 'where-withal' is in place, narcissistic issues (which have particular foci and resonances during the critical latency phase) structure our views of race and other social differences. Thus, while conflicts from any developmental era may be expressed through racial behavior once it has been stimulated, the fortunes of other racial groups, insofar as they are under our control, tend to rise and fall (sometimes paradoxically) with the immediate vicissitudes of our own self-experience.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The traditional psychoanalytic literature on antiblack racism takes as its point of departure interviews with adults, which it uses to speculate upon children's responses to racial differences. It assumes continuity between the two from infancy on and attributes primary etiological importance to early negative associations to darkness. Thus the literature typically attributes racism to a primordial fear of night or to anal psychopathology. A perceptual similarity between dark skin colors and feces or night has been assumed to bias children and adults against them.

The existing research on children's reactions to race consists largely of so-called preference studies. These undertake to elicit and measure children's skin-color biases. Despite ambiguous and contradictory results--including consistent findings of no bias in the spontaneous play of preschool subjects--these tests have frequently been cited as confirmation of the dominant analytic hypotheses.

In this paper I have undertaken to reappraise and revise the analytic hypotheses on racism with respect to the two fundamental questions of timing and etiology. I have suggested that the latency period--the "neglected child" (Donellan, 1980) of psychoanalytic theory and the one phase whose impact upon racial phenomena has been overlooked almost

entirely--is in fact the critical period in the development of racial consciousness and views and that latency issues are the critical influences. I have particularly stressed the special prominence of certain self-esteem issues during latency which, I submit, have a lasting connection with and bearing upon racial feelings. In effect, I have suggested that latency forms the critical psychological stratum for the social sense of self (as black, white, Christian, Jew, middle class, poor, etc.), which is then referred to as normative throughout life.

In addressing the premises of the traditional literature directly, my basic argument is that color per se is not an important etiological agent in racism, nor is any particular color (e.g., black) pathogenic. There is little to support the assumption that a simple perceptual-based association between dark skin and feces or the darkness of night not only predisposes others to devalue it, but also predisposes dark-skinned persons themselves to low self-esteem. Rather, it is an anxious preoccupation of the environment with the dark child's 'inferiority' which may cause a distortion of the body image and serve as a negative organizing experience in the mental life of that child.

In addition, I contend that the traditional translation of racial issues into drive-defense terms is artificial and lacks any feel of either clinical or social validity. Most such behavior is not ego-alien, and the role of repression is

minimal. Moreover, all the while that they have been relying upon conflict-related hypotheses to explain racial attitudes, researchers and theorists alike have been describing that which is to be explained as the intentional infliction upon the different other of one or another kind of narcissistic injury.

My critique of the traditional analytic approach to racism and reformulation of the relevant issues is grounded upon the convergence of diverse kinds of evidence. In addition to a re-examination of the data from the major studies of children's responses to race, these include my own interviews with children of latency age. These interviews, which consisted of Piagetan-type inquiries into children's thoughts about the origins of racial differences, have been used here to support and illustrate my thoughts about the school-age child's grasp of race as a physical and social phenomenon. This material in particular (and in conjunction with my own clinical experience with this age group) initially alerted me to the rapid development in responsiveness to racial differences and other similar social phenomena which takes place during this phase. Additional theoretical and clinical support for the views espoused here comes from the general literature on latency (especially as represented in Erikson and Blos, et al.). Further, my analysis of the process of racial identity formation and of the crucial contributors to racism draws upon the writings on normal and pathological

narcissism of Freud (1914, 1918a, 1921), Greenacre (1949, 1958), and Kohut (1972, 1977). Proceeding from this material, I have come to the following conclusions:

1. Racial identity is best conceptualized as an aspect of the self that normally develops during middle childhood with the advent of certain biocognitive "enablers" and with strong assists from the psychosocial and psychosexual events which typically characterize latency. There may have been some awareness of racial characteristics and activities beforehand (social trauma and other developmental interferences favor precocity), but this is normally the critical phase for the taking on of the own race as a part of the self--and as a part that is not only enduring but indelible.

2. Although this development may proceed silently, by use of a relatively neutral paradigm (rare in this field), it is possible to observe certain aspects of the relevant processes in vivo--e.g., the child's arrival at an appreciation of skin color as a relatively fixed racial characteristic (just as other attributes such as gender have previously achieved this status); the progressive alignment of his own verbally expressed racial categories with standard adult ones (the reorganization of the manifold creams, pinks, tans, and browns which children initially perceive into the fixed extremes of black and white); the gradual cohering of the child's interest in and understanding of the social aspects

his future prospects); and finally his increasing application of imagination and inference to situations involving race (so that he may come to see people who look different from himself as different kinds of people).

3. The development of race-related narcissistic investments is a normal concomitant of the child's coming to see himself as a member of a specific racial group (and not as a member of others) and as having a specific appearance and custom-based sociocultural identity. That is, as he takes on a specific racial (religious, class, tribal, etc.) identity as part of himself, his narcissistic investments are extended accordingly so that he is at once both vulnerable and fortified on a new front.

4. At the same time, the tasks and issues which are normally central to middle childhood--the consolidation of gender identity in preparation for the onslaught of puberty, developing effectiveness in accomplishing work (i.e., school) goals, achieving a position among peers, and establishing dominance over impulses by means of appropriate inner controls--all bear in their own way upon self-esteem. In other words, just as racial experience is moving in from the periphery, latency also brings more general self-esteem issues once again to the forefront. In a sense, the fate of infantile narcissism is partially reopened during this phase, but this time for renegotiation in the context of the child's

newly extended transactions with peers and with the wider society.

5. Finally, since narcissistic issues, especially as these are articulated during latency, supply the essential contents of racial phenomena, analysis of these issues offers the "most serviceable angle of approach" (Freud, 1893) to an understanding of the etiology of racism.

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