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ABSTRACT
                This study describes and assesses the basic problems
of black males who enter educational administration as a career,
showing the relationship between their cultural background and their
aspirations in the field of administration of a large city school
system. The role taken by the researcher is that of
participant-observer. The collection of field data entailed the
following: (1) a written survey (questionnaire); (2) interviews and
tape recordings, if and where possible; (3) an inspection and/or
review of the "Job Analysis Division" as a description of each
administrative position and requirements for these positions; and,
(4) a search of personnel records in order to show career achievement
and professional growth patterns. The data source was the total
population of Black Male School Administrators working in a large
urban school system. All the black administrators were surveyed and
interviewed. A search of personnel records was made to determine
career achievement and professional growth patterns from educational
beginning in the system to present. There were a total of 40
individuals in the study. Some of the problems uncovered by this
study included that of identifying racial prejudice as opposed to
normal job competition. Blacks compete among themselves for good
jobs, as well as against whites, and whites, too, must compete
against each other as well as blacks. (Author/JM)

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THE BLACK PLATEAU

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Purpose

This study is intended to survey the progress made by Blacks in the field of elementary and secondary school administration. The status of a larger gross salary represents natural appeals to those entering teaching who are upwardly mobile. On a teacher's salary scale primarily computed for many years in terms of what was sufficient for a single woman living away from home, men especially were prone to look to administration and the administrative appointments as a way of increasing income that permitted them to stay in the school system. Those considering administration as a career in education were largely self-nominated and asked for a tryout on initial administrative assignment.[1]

When differentiation in certification required for administration and certification required for teaching developed, it was in terms of being "eligible" for initial administrative appointment, rather than for being competently trained for a career in educational administration. Therefore, after going through the stages of educational growth and becoming completely prepared as a certified administrator, there is a belief that Black male school administrators normally do not think about or seem to seek many of more lucrative higher administrative positions found in the large complex of an urban school system.[2]

The Black male school administrator seems to be happiest, or perhaps most complacent, upon attaining the position of school principal.

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[1]Rouse, Donald E., "Career Aspirations of Black School Administrators in a Large Urban School System." An Unpublished Thesis in Educational Administration, Penn State University, 1973.

[2]Ibid.

This seems to have become the major goal of most Black males who become prepared and certified in the field of school administration. Thus, the principalship for Black males can be classified as a "Black plateau" in educational administration in large city school systems. It was also the objective of this research to find reasons for this phenomenon currently appearing in the urban school system, known as the Black Plateau.

The impact, particularly in the inner cities, made by greatly increased participation of Black students, and the need for more upper level Black male school administrators cannot, from a Black point of view, be over-stressed. This need is not a matter of attaining quotas, or of pacifying various civil rights groups. It is, in fact, a matter of economic "life and death" for Blacks in the United States.[3]

A simplified view of the American educational systems is one of a series of self-contained stages, with each stage a prerequisite for movement to the next. Moreover, the stages are interconnected to the extent that actions, decisions, and performance undertaken in one stage act as constraints upon actions in a subsequent stage. Thus, as one moves from completion of grade school through completion of a graduate degree, the probability of a high status occupation should be increased.

This study is designed to demonstrate the fact that the whole solution to Black equality may well depend solely on the matter of education, and the way it is administered.

A better education as a means of bettering Black income and making the more desirable positions of employment accessible, seems to be a sound

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[3]Eckstein, Otto, _Education_, _Employment_, _and_ _Negro_ _Equality_, Seminar on Manpower Policy and Program. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1968.

solution. However, getting a good education is largely dependent on one's existing income, and conversely getting a good income depends largely on one's educational status. The high cost of financing a good college education makes it difficult for lower economic groups to do so, and this is a problem that the inner city Black community must overcome.[4]

The specific area to be covered in this study was the attitudes and aspirations of Black male school administrators currently working or retired. The study demonstrates how the Black male school administrator views the school system, and his place in it. Also, in a less direct way, it indicates how he imagines his co-workers see him and what he feels are his major obstacles to further promotion up the administrative ladder. The outcome provides some indication of how to attract more qualified Blacks into the field of school administration.

Each year there are openings in higher administrative posts that are not filled by Black male school administrators because they are either unaware of them, or they feel they are not qualified or that they do not have a chance because they are Black, or for other reasons, simply do not strive to obtain them. Many of these are positions where policy can be developed. There are at least 50% of the Black administrators who fall into this category.

It is specifically to the problem of upper level promotions that this study is concerned. It has examined and attempted to evaluate the attitudes and concerns of Black male school administrators in the hope that by so airing beliefs and opinions that are usually kept confidential, it

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[4]Kiser, Clyde V., "Current Items - Indicators of Recent Demographic Change Among Blacks," Population Index, Vol. 37, No. 3.

will assist them in achieving a more objective point of view which, hope-
fully, will make it a little easier to advance, and thus reach their
fullest potential.

Method

It is the purpose of this study to describe and assess the basic
problems of Black males who enter educational administration as a career,
showing the relationship between their cultural background and their aspira-
tions in the field of administration of a large city school system. It is
hoped that such data will help to lay the groundwork for the development of
those programs needed to guide Black male school administrators into the
policy making areas of education represented by higher positions in adminis-
tration.

The method utilized to obtain data was the field method of research.
Through this method descriptive data can best be collected and analyzed and
involvement can be obtained. The researcher had an opportunity to work
with and among his peers thus gaining insight into this problem.

Through informal interviews and careful field notes, true feelings
as to the career development of the Black male school administrator as he
exhibits them, were more likely to emerge. These descriptive data were
used to develop a model which provides an opportunity for Black administra-
tors to secure information so that the school system might establish pro-
grams to combat the organizational inadequacy that the Black administrative
plateau presents.

Basic to the overall research project was the constant process of
interaction between data collection and evaluation. Just as theory

development and analysis depend upon the data collected, so do the methods of data collection. The researcher, however, spent a major portion of the time in close contact with his peers, interacting with them in order to seek a clearer picture of their aspirations in educational administration.

The role of the researcher is that of participant-observer utilizing the field method data collection procedure as mentioned before. The collection of field data employed the following:

1. A written survey (questionnaire)

2. Interviews and tape recordings if and where possible

3. An inspection and/or review of the "Job Analysis Division" as a description of each administrative position and requirements for these positions

4. A search of personnel records in order to show career achievement and professional growth patterns.

Information needed to test the hypotheses or assumptions consisted of the responses to the questionnaires completed by those Black male school administrators that were contacted. The replies were then hand scored and evaluated.

Data Source

The data source was the total population of Black Male School Administrators working in a large urban school system. All the Black administrators were surveyed and interviewed. A search of personnel records was made to determine career achievement and professional growth patterns from educational beginning in the system to present.

There were a total of 40 individuals in the study, which composed
the Black administrative population of this urban system at the plateau of
principalship, and they were chosen because they were Black, male, school
administrators in a large urban school system, and agreed to cooperate.
Their names were obtained from a publication put out by the urban school
system listing all administrative positions, the salary range each was paid,
and who held each position. All were principals either working in position
or retired from same.

A variety of data collection methods were used, including, for
example, telephone interviews with some of the participants by this
researcher, and by personal correspondence, in addition to some face to
face meetings. Through these relatively informal contacts careful notes
were made either during the interviews or immediately after, as dictated
by the situation. True feelings as to the career development of the Black
male school administrator, as he himself sees it, are more likely to emerge
during such unstructured, informal interviewing.

The researcher was not included as a respondent to the written
questionnaire, and maintained the posture of a more or less obscure corres-
pondent except that it was made clear to the participants that the
researcher-correspondent was also a Black, male, school administrator like
themselves. It was not ascertained what effect, if any, these may have had
on the responses.

Results and Conclusions

These data were used to develop a model which will give Black
administrators an opportunity to secure information. Also, they provide a

guideline for a school system to follow in establishing programs aimed at
combating the organizational inadequacies, real or imagined, that Black
male administrators may encounter as they attempt to climb the organiza-
tional ladder.

There seem to be a wide disparity between the data from the written
survey and the data from the field study. The written survey indicated
that Black male administrators aspired to higher positions and that they
had the qualifications needed to advance.

The field study data tended to support the findings regarding quali-
fications, but as to aspirations, the outlook was extremely pessimistic.
All 40 participants seemed to desire promotions; however all but three
seemed convinced that promotion for them was all but hopeless, due primar-
ily, they believed, to their being Black. They seemed so firmly convinced
of their inability to progress up the administrative ladder because of
racial bias that their aspirations appeared to be purely academic.

An analysis of the data explains the existence of a "Black plateau"
beyond which Blacks tend not to advance in any significant number. Statis-
tics gathered in the urban school system during the summer of 1972 also
support the existence of the "Black plateau." Out of 89 administrative
positions higher than that of principal, 19 or 21.3 percent are held by
Blacks, and these, 14 or 15.7 percent are held by Black males (the other
five being Black females). The Black community, on the other hand, repre-
sents about 30 percent of the population of the city. If the 30 percent
figure is used as a standard, it would mean the urban school system is

deviating from the community standard by almost 10 percent, or in numbers, approximately eight administrators short of full equality.

One possible explanation may be that there has not been enough time for Black administrators to develop and gravitate to the top administrative positions through normal channels. The civil rights movement is approximately 20 years old. Added to that the fact that in the beginning, very little progress was made. There seems a possibility that the apparent numerical existence of a Black plateau may or could be a transitional phenomenon. If so, future statistics will bear witness to the fact.

Although this study was restricted to Black male school administrators, the responses indicated that equality in the school administrative system may be different for Blacks than it is for whites. There seems no real standard.

As a result of this study, a model was developed providing an opportunity for Black administrators to secure information and help the urban school system combat organizational inadequacy resulting in the Black administrative plateau present.

The study spells out the glaring reasons why the "Black plateau" exists. The principalship should no longer be the "Black plateau" which stereotypes the ability of Black male school administrators who work in a predominately Black school system as far as pupil population is concerned. The idea that Black male school administrators are not adequately prepared for higher or even top level administrative positions is dispelled by this study.

Investigation into the cultural and social backgrounds of Black administrators produced evidence as to material and professional security

which has resulted in the "Black plateau." Regardless of the composition

of many large urban school systems, there are no Black administrators in

policy-making positions to be found in most school systems.

Some of the problems uncovered by this study included that of iden-

tifying racial prejudice as opposed to normal job competition. Blacks com-

pete among themselves for good jobs, as well as against whites, and whites,

too, must compete against each other as well as Blacks. Exactly what is the

anatomy of racism? How can it be isolated from normal job competition

where Blacks and whites are both involved? In fact, can it be isolated?

Or is a certain amount of racism can, cr should, be tolerated?

The answers to these questions pose a major problem for the aspir-

ing Black male school administrator. This researcher feels very strongly

that additional studies are needed to answer these questions.

Educational Importance

An entire new approach to educational administration as it deals

with Blacks should be initiated in our institutions of higher learning.

The institutions of higher learning should produce in number, prepared

Blacks who can create a challenge for the top administrative positions in

the complex urban systems.

Blacks in education should be made aware of the many areas of admin-

istration that carry the policy-making power and be guided so as to achieve

in these areas. Institutions of higher learning need to review programs,

and develop curriculums which break down old patterns under which Blacks

have been educated, and create a new atmosphere that will no longer hinder

the development or progress of Blacks in leadership roles.

From the model developed in this research should come a top level,
policy-making program. This program should be geared to develop administra-
tors through urban system sponsored training. This will not only open the
avenues of creativity, but will give purpose and stability to the operation
of the entire urban system.

It is felt that the "Schematic Model of Elements Needed to Overcome
the Black Plateau," that follows, points out how the relationship between
urban school systems and institutions of higher education can and must form
a jointure in developing special programs for Black educators. From these
special programs will come a "pool" of Black leadership talent. This
talent can then be drawn upon to supply Blacks for top policy making posi-
tions.

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SCHEMATIC MODEL OF ELEMENTS NEEDED TO OVERCOME THE BLACK PLATEAU