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The Educational Condition of Black Males in Florida: An Exploratory Study

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THE EDUCATIONAL CONDITION

OF

BLACK MALES IN FLORIDA

An Exploratory Study

FLORIDA INSTITUTE

OF

EDUCATION



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Jacksonville, Florida 32216

**THE EDUCATIONAL CONDITION
OF
BLACK MALES IN FLORIDA**

An Exploratory Study

September 1985

**FLORIDA INSTITUTE
OF
EDUCATION**

PREFACE

The educational condition of black males in Florida has been a major interest of the Commissioner of Education, the Board of Regents, the Division of Community Colleges and local educational agencies. In response to that interest, the Institute of Education conducted an exploratory study of the issue. This report describes the purpose and procedures of that study, as well as its outcomes and recommendations.

The design of the project came mainly from a distinguished panel of experts who viewed the educational condition of black males from a national perspective as well as from the framework of their respective disciplines. Drs. William C. Brown, Edgar Epps, Asa Hilliard, R. Grann Lloyd, and Leedell Neyland – all recognized scholars who happen also to be black males – dedicated a great deal of time to the project serving as the panel of experts.

Don Gaffney, an Institute Staff member, directed the day-to-day, six-month-long operations of the study. He conducted the necessary research, held hearings and coordinated the expert panel meetings.

Dr. William Wharton, the Institute's Director of Research, assembled the document and verified data. Dr. Jose Rosario, the Coordinator of Research, assisted Dr. Wharton in reviewing and editing drafts.

This final volume should in no way be viewed as a definitive portrait of the educational condition of black males in Florida. We are sharing preliminary results of an exploratory look at a highly complex phenomenon that needs considerably more attention than could realistically be given in a six-month period. This document is merely a prelude to what we hope will be a much longer and more penetrating look at this serious problem.

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL CONDITION OF BLACK MALES IN FLORIDA: PROBLEM, PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES

The Problem

Black male students in Florida occupy the lowest strata of academic access and attainment and the highest incidence of academic exclusion and failure. They exhibit lower success rates than do their non-black male and all-race female counterparts on such measures as high school graduation, undergraduate enrollment, degree attainment, graduate program admission and professional credential acquisition. Conversely, black male students in our state have higher rates of suspension, expulsion, corporal punishment and premature school leaving ("dropping out") than do other students in the system. These academic problems contribute not only to the high unemployment and underemployment rates noted among the black men in our state, but also exacerbate a host of societal problems associated with the black male population, of which crime and delinquency are perhaps the most disturbing.

The recurring pattern among achievement indicators identifies black males as the student group whose needs are least served by the educational system. Although many individual black males successfully negotiate the public elementary and secondary school systems, the negotiation of those structures by the aggregate black male population is often marked by failure and the truncation of educational experience. Not surprisingly, black males who do not succeed in negotiating the ladder of educational achievement may develop less than positive conceptualizations of themselves and be unable to contribute to the general society what their beginning, innate potential may have promised.

It is not enough simply to repeat the oft-heard criticism that "our schools are socially middle-class structures transmitting middle-class values by middle-class teachers." Schools retain significant power to screen and control the future life chances of all those who attend them. Black males also find that the quality, organization and policies of the schools they attend significantly affect their academic achievement, their view of self, and their subsequent economic and social disposition. The disappointing scores achieved by black male students at all levels of education, the apparent reduction in the number of black males participating in higher education, and the lack of academic success proportionate to their number at every level of education in Florida — all these have contributed to the sense of alarm felt by academic, economic, and political decision makers in our state.

Purpose and Procedures

The Florida Institute of Education exploratory study of the educational condition of black males in Florida focused on data, public testimony and expert opinion gathered and analyzed in an effort to identify causes of the markedly low academic access, achievement, and program completion exhibited by black male students within our state's system(s) of primary, secondary and postsecondary education.

Paying particular attention to the achievement level of the black male student, the study addressed four specific objectives:

1. to define the problem associated with black male student performance in the State of Florida;
2. to identify causes of the markedly low rates of academic access, achievement, and completion exhibited by black male students;
3. to identify strategies, policies, and actions that will improve black male student performance; and
4. to make recommendations to academic, political, and economic decision makers in the State for improving the performance of black male students.

To accomplish these objectives, the Institute implemented a multi-method approach consisting of four specific strategies. These included:

Review of the Literature. Institute staff conducted an in-depth review of the literature bearing on the educational status of black males. Included in this review were library references, government documents, institutional reports, and statistical summaries.

Expert Testimony. A panel of experts representing various fields of study was assembled to conduct a preliminary exploration of the issues. It was felt that through their differing perspectives, the expert panel could provide a wholistic view of the problem. Panel members included:

1. Dr. William C. Brown, Director, Institute of Higher Educational Opportunity, Southern Regional Educational Board in Atlanta, serving as educator;
2. Dr. Edgar Epps, Professor, University of Chicago, serving as sociologist;
3. Dr. Asa Hilliard, Professor, Georgia State College, serving as psychologist;
4. Dr. R. Grann Lloyd, Research Professor of Economics and Director of Business Studies, University of North Florida, serving as economist;
5. Dr. Leedell Neyland, Vice President, Florida A & M University, serving as historian.

The expert panel met for a working retreat/brain-storming session on February 2-3, 1984, at Amelia Island, Florida. During that time, the dimensions of the problem were explored and preliminary research data were supplemented by information supplied by the experts. The panel also compared the statistics of Florida with those on the national level.

Regional Hearings. As a consequence of the sessions with the expert panel, it was decided that hearings on the educational condition of black males should be held throughout the state. These hearings were held at five Florida urban community colleges:

Dates	Host Institutions
March 15, 1984	Broward Community College
March 16, 1984	Miami-Dade Community College
March 23, 1984	Florida Junior College at Jacksonville
April 12, 1984	Hillsborough Community College
April 19, 1984	Valencia Community College

Invitations to each session were sent to area school superintendents, community college and university presidents, and others who were interested in the subject. Participants were asked to address four questions:

1. What is the level of black males in our schools?
2. To what do you attribute the reasons for black males performing so poorly?
3. Are you aware of any programs or activities in your community or elsewhere that are designed to help black males improve their performance?
4. What intervention strategies should be instituted to improve the educational status of black males in Florida?

At least one member of the panel of experts was present at each of the hearings to provide an overview of the problem and to suggest how it should be addressed from an expert's point of view. Following the overview, testimony was heard from the various invited guests (representatives from the Urban League, State University System, NAACP, community colleges, criminal justice system, military, various economic development councils, political arena, as well as concerned citizens and students). Questions were then taken from the various individuals in the audience: students, educators, parents, and anyone concerned about the status of the Florida educational system in general. Each hearing ended with a press conference and an announcement of the schedule for future hearings.

Synthesis and Recommendations. The panel of experts was convened again in Jacksonville, Florida after the final hearing was conducted in April. After compiling and analyzing all data received from the consultants, the hearings, and the literature, the panel sought to identify causative factors associated with the educational status of black males. Setting forth recommendations for improvement and corrective action was the final step.

OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY: A FRAMEWORK FOR CHARACTERIZING THE EDUCATIONAL CONDITION OF BLACK MALES IN FLORIDA

Four Issue Clusters

Although there exists a rich literature on the subject of the education of minorities in general, and of blacks in particular, the study of the education of black males as an academically "endangered population" has not generated the volume of research typical for other special populations within the educational system. Our examination of a variety of government studies, scholarly research, and testimony has resulted in outcomes suggesting a framework for characterizing the educational condition of black males in Florida. This framework can be described in terms of four *issue clusters*:

I. Capacity

1. pre/postnatal experiences
2. maturation and physical development patterns
3. psycho-social development patterns

II. Knowledge

1. family acculturation and socialization patterns
2. modeling and referencing opportunities
3. measurement and norming experiences

III. Opportunity

1. academic exclusion patterns
2. scholastic participation patterns
3. educational financing patterns

IV. Experience

1. family-community experience
2. school-peer experience
3. work-society experience

Issues of Capacity

Individuals develop abilities or competencies to cope with problems and generate ideas and concepts through the acquisition of material things (an adequate income enables one to cope with the problem of inflation, for example) and intellectual skills (a knowledge of history, economics, geography, etc., enables the effective citizen to make rational political decisions). This *intellectual* and *material power* can be termed *capacity*. A child's initial capacity is developed or diminished through the application of the parents' intellectual and material power to the circumstances of his birth. If, as we have found, black males are more likely to be born into homes with insufficient power to provide the requisite medical, nutritional and intellectual nurturing, if they are more likely to receive inadequate *day care*, if they are subject to *pedagogical neglect* and *exclusionary academic policies*, then their initial capacity, their potential, no matter how great as children, may be so diminished by the cumulative effect of these nested issue clusters that their potential will rarely be translated into real achievement. In the specific case of black males this pattern is likely to repeat itself to the detriment of succeeding generations of black families. However, the pattern for black females is identical. Thus, black male-female differences cannot be attributed solely to family circumstances of power.

Experience is a factor to consider when we measure *achievement*, whether we speak of the score "experienced" by a black male assigned to an EMR class or the GRE number earned by a black male applicant to a Ph.D. program. Experience, the *fact* of black male educational attainment and economic status, is an outgrowth of *opportunity* and the accumulation of *knowledge* beginning with infancy and continuing throughout life. One's *capacity* to achieve, to grow and to prosper, then can be seen as the sum of one's accumulated knowledge plus one's *opportunities* to expand that knowledge. Finally, the experiences one is of-

ferred to apply what one has accumulated in the way of skills and knowledge to real world situations that increase one's capacity and, in turn, the capacity of one's children, is added to turn *potential* into *achievement*.

The capacity to learn and to retain learning is one of the earliest of the human skills one acquires and one of the most difficult to assess. The controversy continues over the meaning, measurement and primary source of human intelligence, with the adherents of "nature" arrayed against the supporters of "nurture." Although there are still those who cling to the notion of race and race-based intellectual capacity, most scholars by the end of the sixties were convinced of the crucial role of the learning environment, including the school, in developing in children what educational researchers call "intelligence." As Weinberg (1977) put it,

Inequalities of intelligence once equated with racial or class affiliation began to disappear in these new studies. Performance on the IQ test was found to express not genetic inheritance, but cultural and social opportunity. IQ disparities between white and black shrank sharply as researchers learned to take into account the children's mind-set during testing or the quality of the learning environment at home.

The capacity for learning and the potential for meaningful and fulfilling employment was seen as the end result not only of the interplay of genetic factors. Factors involving the social and economic environment of the black child had a role as well.

Much has been made of the effect of "father-absence" and "matriarchal-dominance" on the quality of the home learning environment for black and poor youngsters. In the eyes of some observers, the growing tendency of black children, particularly, to come from homes in which the head of the household is female, has contributed to a decline not only in their self-esteem, but also in their ability to succeed academically and economically. Some research suggests there is no consistent race difference in self-esteem, nor do black males have lower self-esteem than black females. Reginald Clark's recent research indicates that the absence of the father is not the key variable in predicting levels of achievement of black children. The quality of the home environment is the key factor (educational level of the mother, occupancy of the mother, stress on educational excellence, availability of adequate parent surrogates, ability to help child develop vocabulary, etc.). In other words, competent mothers can provide effective home environments for their children in the absence of the father. Also, father surrogates (uncles, grandfathers, big brothers, ministers, etc.) can fulfill the role of the positive male role model. The major weakness of the female-headed, single-parent family is economic: they simply have less money because of gender discrimination in employment as well as other structural barriers. Thus, if economic status and quality of home environment are controlled, there is no independent father-absence effect. Another researcher comments:

The absence of significant differences in general self-esteem between black boys, and either black girls or white boys, further suggested that whatever academic liabilities black boys suffer may already be compensated for by their perceived social assets. . . . Specifically, given preponderance of athletes and entertainers over academically successful black role models that these boys are exposed to through the media, one must wonder if these boys are in fact being led to the unrealistic view that nonacademic pursuits are higher probability roads to success. This possibility becomes even more tenable when one considers that they are likely to be exposed to educationally unsuccessful male models in their real world. (Hare, pp. 208-9)

While writers differ widely in interpreting the effects of family circumstances, a number of researchers are of the opinion that the plight of the black family is a result of factors intrinsic to the historical experience in America, and most now see the black family structure as being most often dictated by economic considerations.

The black family is experiencing serious deterioration because of the inability of black males to function normally as providers for their families; thus, the resulting increase in the number of black families headed by women, with one out of two black children living in poverty. In this regard, it is significant to note that of the 8.8 million black men who are of working age, more than 4 million are not even in the work force.

The problems resulting from this situation are not only undermining the stability of the black family but are imposing enormous social costs on the nation as a whole.

When father-absence, poverty and the social milieu of the deprived neighborhood are added to the well known effects of underage mothers and inadequate pre- and postnatal care on the academic and social potential of children, a picture emerges of an extremely troubling future for black males and females and for those who would depend upon them for economic and political security.

The picture becomes even more complicated if we include the staffing patterns of public schools, which tend to limit the potential for a black male student to interact positively with a black male role model – especially at the elementary level. Role models are most significant during childhood development. Yet, we find that black male role models are often absent from homes and schools either because a high number of black families are headed by females or because there are not sufficient black males heading our schools or teaching in them.

Working against the resolution of this problem is the fact that educators themselves remain uninformed of the gravity of the status of the education of black males, the causative factors, and, to some extent, the research on this topic. Lastly, there is a need for more empirical research, and wider publication and dissemination of present knowledge. Both blacks and whites have insufficient data about the plight of the black male and how to improve his status.

Issues of Knowledge

If we begin with the notion that intelligence is "an innate ability to learn or to understand or to deal with new or trying situations," then one must be given the *opportunity to experience* "new or trying situations" before one can learn or acquire knowledge. While educational achievement may be measured by testing the depth and breadth of one's learning, the measurement of one's intellectual capacity, one's innate intelligence, can only be defined in terms of what one has learned from what one has been given an *opportunity to learn*. Learning or the acquisition of knowledge – that sum of experiences that can be observed and measured – begins with infancy and continues throughout life. If opportunities for learning and enriching experiences appropriate to one's age and level of maturation are not provided by one's family, community, school, or society, then one's chances of acquiring the experiences necessary for achievement are limited.

Knowledge can be seen as the accumulation of successful learning experiences. These experiences begin in the home while the child is still in infancy. Knowledge is expanded by contacts with knowledgeable, significant others whom the child may take as models, and with exemplary occupational and peer groups which the child may adopt as "references" as he attempts to negotiate the labyrinth of learning. The absence of male role models begins for deprived black males with the absence of the father in over one-half of their homes. It is continued by school staffing patterns that largely rule out adult male role models until the child reaches the secondary school level. For the black male, the situation is exacerbated by the paucity of black male teachers, administrators and authority figures at all levels of education. The discrimination faced by adult black males is visited upon young black males. The cumulative effect of the hiring and firing patterns in our schools is to deprive young black males of opportunities to increase their store of knowledge through interaction with caring and concerned adults of their own race and gender. The low academic achievement of black males can, in part, be attributed to a continuing pattern of discrimination. The "... source of black-white differentials in achievement," argue Hauser and Featherman (1974), "... is not primarily the greater prevalence of impoverished originals among blacks, but the cumulative effects of discrimination by race at every stage of a man's life."

According to Gary (1981), females account for over 80 percent of all teachers at the elementary level; and about 10 percent of this number are black. Less than two percent of the male elementary teachers are black. Of the approximately 54 percent male participation rate at the secondary level, black males account for an estimated three percent. When teacher aides are considered, the male/female and black male/female imbalances are even sharper. Over 95 percent of all teacher aides are female, with black females representing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, we find that the present curriculum is not bias-free; inequity in the presentation of curriculum content attests to this. Educators remain uninformed about the proven benefits of coaching blacks for nationally standardized tests, despite the significant gains made in scores among blacks who have been coached. An overall outcome of ineffective schooling is an insufficient pool of black male high school graduates who are prepared to enroll in higher education – particularly in scientific and technical fields. It is not surprising, then, when we find that black males are the lower academic achievers in the educational system.

Issues of Opportunity

In order for one to accumulate the experiences that lead to advancement and progress, one must have the opportunity, the chance, to acquire those experiences. Barriers to experience for the black male include not only the social residue of prejudice and discrimination, but also government policies that fail to address the need to expand black access to enriching experiences in both aggressive and affirmative ways. Practices (such as disproportionate school suspensions) that end in the direct exclusion of a significant portion of black males from valuable and enriching academic, economic and social experiences add to the diminution of capacity that is *underachievement*.

The major issues nested within the issue cluster of *opportunity* concern the pattern of exclusion (suspension, expulsion and punishment) associated with the black male student population, the pattern of scholastic participation/attainment (track placement, high school completion rates, undergraduate and graduate degree attainment, and professional credentialing) and the issue of providing adequate and appropriate funds for the education of deserving and persistent black male students.

In the case of suspension, Gary (*op. cit.*) notes that black children in elementary school are suspended three times as often as white children and for longer periods of time. They are also twice as likely as whites to be suspended in the secondary grades. Low socioeconomic status and female-dominated households are positive correlates of school suspension (p. 205).

Yet, suspension is not the only factor. Black males also are subject to the imposition of corporal punishment at rates that are disproportionate to their percentage of total public school enrollment. Gary also reports, for example, that while blacks constitute only 16 percent of total school enrollment nationally, they are almost twice as likely as whites to be suspended, to be expelled and to receive corporal punishment (*Ibid*). Issues of justice and equity aside, these patterns of exclusion present another formidable barrier to black male academic success.

According to a 1984 study by the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC), black participation in public postsecondary education is steadily declining. While blacks comprised less than 9 percent of university undergraduate enrollment, this was a two percentage points decline from 11 percent in 1977. Black graduate enrollment declined from 7.4 percent in 1977 to 4.4 percent in 1983. A diminishing pool of high school graduates who are prepared to benefit from post-high school education, coupled with an increasing emphasis on quality, highlight the growing difficulty in providing further access to a larger proportion of minority and disadvantaged students (PEPC, 1984, p. 304).

The barriers presented by inadequate funding for black students wishing to pursue advanced studies are well documented. Of 422 National Science Foundation traineeship awards, blacks received two; of 725 National Science Foundation fellowship awards, blacks received 243; and of 10,206 institutional research assistantships, blacks received 156. Blacks who received their doctorates reported that they were generally more dependent on their own earnings while enrolled as advanced graduate students than were whites and international students.

For the most part, financial aid policies are unresponsive to the needs of low income blacks; and financial incentives to encourage black males to continue from two-year to four-year institutions are too few. Supplemental funds for the completion of undergraduate, graduate, and professional study in a normal time frame are critical for the black male. Few black males with the potential for leadership are given the opportunity to receive the type of professional development which would qualify them for appointment to administrative positions.

Issues of Experience

This final issue cluster serves to summarize the impact of the foregoing patterns: family-community experiences, including the pattern of single parenting extant in the lower-class black family, the absence of male role models and the persistent economic depression of the large segments of the black community combine to suppress both ambition and academic attainment. School experiences for the black male child in Florida are profoundly affected by the history of the desegregation process. Suspensions and expulsions of black males appear concurrently with the process of desegregation; and black teachers and administrators disappear as schools are reorganized to accommodate the requirements of racial balance. As Porter and Neyland (1977) observed,

The struggle for desegregation in public schools had both liberating and debilitating effect on blacks in Florida. As desegregation proceeded with all deliberate speed, blacks soon discovered that they were almost always the losers. It was the black teacher or principal who lost his job when desegregation occurred; it was the black school that was closed when a county desegregated its schools; it was the black teacher who was most frequently victimized by laws and ordinances designed to prevent him from exercising his professional rights and privileges.

The experiences of black males in the world of work and the society of ideas have been characterized by prejudice, failure and, in many cases, resignation. Of the 8.8 million black men who are of working age, more than 4 million are "discouraged workers"; that is, they no longer have any hope that they will find suitable employment and have dropped out of the labor force. Of the 26,000 inmates in Florida's prisons, over 46% are black males; yet black males constitute only 6.5% of Florida's population as a whole (Wainwright, 1984).

The PEPC report (*op. cit.*) aptly describes the crisis Florida faces when it views the condition of black male academic attainment and progress:

Florida is at a critical juncture in its efforts to increase and to enhance the participation of minority and disadvantaged students in postsecondary education, and the stakes are high. [Quality]. . . education will be required for the vast majority to function in a society increasingly based in information, technology and, most of all, on the ability to learn new ideas and skills. [Many]. . . racial and ethnic groups of [Florida's] population [however] are disadvantaged with respect to the preparation and motivation to participate in education after high school.

A good education is viewed as the primary route to economic stability for American families, however, the black male is not obtaining this foundation and as a result is employed in lower-paying occupational categories. The high number of unemployed black men and its concomitant problem produce instability in the home as well as impose tremendous social costs on the entire nation.

Communication media are yet another factor working against productive experiences for black males. These present very few positive images of the black male, but many negative images. Mass media, a major influence in the educational process, contribute to the development of low self-concepts in black males – particularly for low academic achievers. School publications, textbooks, and teaching materials also reflect an under-representation of and an insensitivity to blacks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings suggest fourteen recommendations to be considered by academic, political and economic decision makers in the State of Florida for improving the educational performance of black male students. These recommendations (numbered serially) can be organized and discussed in terms of the issue clusters discussed in the previous section: capacity, knowledge, opportunity and experience.

Recommendations Related to Capacity

Related to capacity, there are three recommendations:

1. The *Commissioner of Education* should work with the *State Board of Education* and the *Legislature* to provide incentives for attracting more black males into the educational profession as classroom teachers, administrators, and other highly visible, status positions in education. Such a program should begin at the elementary level and provide support through college and graduate programs. Care must be taken to identify, recruit, train, employ, and retain strong, positive, black male role models at every level of the educational structure in Florida's schools, colleges and universities.
2. *Each school district* should be required to show evidence annually of an increased number of black male role models at both the instructional and administrative levels who, through leadership and interaction, can positively affect the academic and social development of the black male student. Bright black male youth with leadership potential should be provided support for a college education to develop their maximum human potential and as a result to become role models for others to emulate.
3. The *State Department of Education* should review the literature and study the matter of equity in the media, the schools, and among major competitors so that educationally sound guidelines can be established for commercial mass media programming (TV and movies, comic books). Such guidelines should be taught as a part of the regular school curriculum, and advocacy activities should be undertaken to change media portrayals to provide a more healthy climate for children.

In considering these recommendations, it is important to recognize that over half of the black male children under age 18 live in single-parent homes headed by females. Most elementary school and secondary school teachers are female. It is therefore possible for most black male students to get well into high school without developing a relationship with a male teacher or administrator of any race. The odds are even greater that access to black male role models in educational institutions will be significantly limited.

The absence of black males as role models in the public schools has an adverse impact. Black males drop out of high school at a higher rate than any other group in Florida's schools. They enter and are graduated from college at a lower rate than black females. There is a dearth of black male models in the communities of our State. The provisions of a corps of well-educated black leaders in each community is important to the development of positive self-concepts among the masses of black male youth.

Black males have few positive role models presented in the mass media. Black male images are frequently defamed, contributing to the development of low self-concept among black males. Black people have little control over the inclusion or exclusion of these negative images. White children have a balanced set of images (comedy, adventure, heroic, dramatic, etc.) from which to choose. Mass media, while largely serving a commercial function, are nevertheless major influences for many low academic achievers. Television plays *the* major part in the educational process for many children. An educational agency cannot ignore this influence if the agency is to be responsible for the real education of children.

Recommendations Related to Knowledge

There are also three recommendations related to knowledge:

4. The *State Board of Education*, the *Commissioner of Education*, and *State Legislature* should collaborate to establish assessment centers throughout the state so that an independent "second opinion" can be given when parents believe their children have been "labeled" inappropriately. Such centers should be established to function in keeping with the spirit of the report of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Study Panel Report, *Placing Children in Special Education: Strategies for Equity*. The essence of this report is that assessment could be justified only if it resulted in improved instructional outcomes for children. Moreover, these assessment centers should be established and modeled to meet the high academic and professional standards suggested in the NAS report, *Dynamic Assessment and Instrumental Enrichment*.

5. All *black community organizations* should expand their roles and spheres of influence as rapidly as possible to take charge of the socialization of black children. Churches, clubs, new organizations, etc., need to do some deep reflection on the design of an ideal socialization process, and to plan so far as is practicable to implement such designs.

6. The *State Board of Education* should commission a two-year study of the low status of black males, its impact on the black family, and ways to improve the status. Also, the *Governor* and the *Commissioner of Education* should work with the *State Board of Education* and the *Legislature* to provide mechanisms to disseminate the latest and the best information on the education of black males to schools, colleges, universities, the black community, and the population in general. Such a mechanism for providing this service could be a Center for Technical Information housed at the Florida Institute of Education.

Not long ago a federal court upheld a ban on California's use of IQ tests which are said to be both racially and culturally biased. IQ testing does not have the recommended "instructional validity" in that it is tied to classification — not to remediation. Assessors of performance can label students, but access to second opinions is necessary. There are not sufficient assessors who have the sensitivity, knowledge, and ability to establish rapport with black males in each school district. The incidence of need for such "second opinions" should be sufficiently low that it would not be economical for each district to have one. Present modes of funding actually provide incentives to have large EMR (educable mentally retarded) populations (mostly black males). Therefore, to have assessors hired by the "beneficiaries" may lead to bias.

Effective socialization can be accomplished partly by agencies outside the community. However, much of the outside agency socialization (mass media, schools, recreation, etc.) is neutral at best and negative and destructive at worst.

The black community has lost a great deal of control over the socialization of its children. Improvement in the actions of other agencies outside the community is not enough. There are some things that can only be done if the community does them for itself.

Relatively little empirical research has been conducted on the problem of the education of the black male. The problems associated with his plight have been attributed largely to factors of a general rather than specific nature. What the research has shown has not been widely communicated nor has it been applied. Concerted efforts have not been expended to inform blacks about the nature of their plight and about avenues for recovery.

Recommendations Related to Opportunity

In the case of opportunity, there are four recommendations:

7. *Governmental agencies* and *private employers* should respond positively to the need to provide better jobs or work opportunities for black males, as well as to the urgency attached to upgrading blacks in the job they now hold.

8. The *Commissioner of Education*, supported by the *State Legislature*, should take the leadership to insure equity in access to coaching for nationally standardized tests. This means that funds must be provided and educators must be informed about the benefits of coaching.

9. The *Commissioner of Education* should encourage *local school districts*, through a series of financial incentives and/or recognition awards, to provide evidence of academic progress among black males on an annual basis as measured by improved curriculum, increased retention, special support systems, records of coaching and academic equity, and improved scores in the variety of standardized tests required by the state and local school district.

10. To reverse devastating trends in academic performance, *schools* should be rewarded for setting and achieving definite academic goals with reference to black males. Examples of such goals might include, but should not be restricted to the following: an increased number of black males who can compete successfully in the college preparatory track; the establishment of special developmental skills clinics, workshops or services related to the college preparatory sequence; the increase in the number of graduates with the requisite GPA's and test scores for full admission to a university in the State University System; and other approved motivated methods. The types, amounts, and/or quality of the incentives would be determined by the *Commissioner of Education*. To assure that all students will have access to the same quality of educational experiences, the *State Department of Education* should make certain that the curriculum in predominantly black schools does in fact meet the same standards as the curriculum in predominantly white schools. This, of course, will require that facilities, equipment, supplies, and instructional materials be equal to those enjoyed by majority schools.

Currently black males lose approximately \$6 billion annually in wages because they are employed in lower paying occupational groups than their white counterparts in the labor force. The magnitude of this loss would increase substantially if one added the loss of earnings resulting from the clustering of black males in the lowest paying jobs in specific occupational categories. Moreover, not only do jobs generally reserved for black males pay substandard wages, but they have the following characteristics: menial and unpleasant work assignments, very low status, little opportunity for real assignments, and little or no job security. Therefore, upgrading the jobs (work opportunities) available to black males and extending employment opportunities for them at all levels in all occupational categories is probably more important than the present preoccupation with black male unemployment.

Current data reveal that black male students are performing at a poorer rate than white males, white females, and black females in practically all school districts. Poor academic performance negatively impacts upon attendance and school behavior, increases the dropout rate, leads to questionable and disproportionate assignments in non-academic specialized programs, and contributes to the increasing decline of graduates from high school through the graduate levels.

In its quest for quality education in the public schools, the State of Florida has adopted a basic curriculum for all schools; but black males have not been recognized as a specific population-at-risk.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that coaching works to raise scores dramatically (see, for example, Federal Trade Commission 1979, 1981; Messick, 1981; and DerSimonian and Laird, 1983). Yet, public schools generally do not provide extensive coaching, if they provide any at all. White students, because of higher income, have greater access to and are greater users of commercial coaching. But black students, because of lower income, have the least access to this coaching, even though blacks who take nationally standardized tests make significantly greater than average gains if coached – from two to three times the gains of white students.

Recommendations Related to Experience

There are also four recommendations related to experience:

11. The *State Board of Education* and the *Commissioner* should take the leadership to guarantee curriculum equity in the schools by conducting a systematic and comprehensive review and revision of the curriculum and curriculum materials as is appropriate. The goal of such an effort should be to insure that racism or defamation of black images does not exist and that opportunities for the natural inclusion of positive images are not lost. For example, the Portland Public Schools have mounted such an effort in five K-12 curriculum areas. Their math and science curriculum document (scope and sequence) is exemplary.

12. The *State Department of Education* should make certain that predominantly minority schools are not assigned a disproportionate number of teachers with the least credentials, experience, and assessed competence.

13. The *State* should make grants available to minority students to avert the decline in black male enrollment at the college level. The State should provide financial support to fill the void in the education of black males created by the elimination or reduction of federally funded programs.

14. The *State Commissioner of Education* should commission a study of black male administrators in the state which includes an identification of the progression or upward mobility path for black males who show leadership potential.

These recommendations also take on meaning when we recognize that the present curriculum is not free of racial bias. Highly significant black participation is usually omitted, sometimes resulting in false pictures of the real world. Many residuals of inequity in curriculum content are present in teaching materials, films, and textbooks.

Teacher preparation, competence, and experience have significant impact on the quality of instruction and, ultimately, the quality of education schools provide. Thus, the State Department and local school districts have the responsibility to insure equality in the assignment of teachers.

Certain federally funded programs, which over the last several decades contributed significantly to the education and upward mobility of minorities (including the black male), have been substantially reduced or eliminated. Should the state fail to respond to the need for programs such as these, the result will be to close out of the educational pipeline many upward mobility opportunities for a large number of black males. Further, many of those who are excluded will be destined to become wards of society as welfare recipients or, possibly, prison inmates. Of the 26,000 inmates in Florida's correctional institutions in 1984, over 46 percent were black males. Yet black males constitute only 6.5% of Florida's population at large.

Black families have been severely penalized by the reduction in funds which support the Aid to Dependent Families (ADFC) Program. Between 1981 and 1982, approximately 660,000 families, a large number of which were black, had their ADFC benefits reduced or totally eliminated. In many cases, this also meant losing Medicaid coverage and reduced benefits for women pregnant for the first time. In addition, working ADFC recipients lost assurance of quality child care. The significance of this lies in the fact that the mortality rate among black males is already the highest among white and black males and females. Hence, if financial support is not provided to assure minimum health care, the mortality and mental deficiency statistics for black males will continue to be conspicuous.

There is clear evidence that the elimination of Social Security educational benefits and the reduction of federal student financial-aid has adversely affected black college attendance. This is especially significant as it pertains to black males, because traditionally, when the lack of funds forces black families to make a choice between sending a son or daughter to college, the daughter has been favored.

Too few black males with leadership potential are given the opportunity to receive the type of professional development which would qualify them for administrative positions. The assignment of black males with leadership potential to positions of low visibility contributes to a sense of their absence, militating against accessibility to them as role models. Positions such as "assistant" and "assistant to" are routes often leading to nowhere.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Florida Institute of Education's study of the educational condition of black males in Florida should be seen as a *beginning*, not an end in itself. We will have accomplished our purpose if this report is read in the light of what it says as well as in the light of what it *cannot* answer.

We can say, for example, that:

- (1) Black males in Florida schools are not achieving academically on a par with their racial and gender counterparts.
- (2) Black males in Florida are under-represented in positions of authority.
- (3) Black males in Florida schools are the recipients of a disproportionate share of school disciplinary actions.
- (4) Black males in Florida make up a disproportionate share of the prison population.
- (5) Black males are disproportionately represented among the unemployed.
- (6) Black males are disproportionately represented among the underemployed.
- (7) Black males are underrepresented in the tally of high school graduates, college entrance, degree recipients and professional and graduate school credential holders.

Questions still needing answers include:

- (1) What is the relationship between conjugal power structure and black male achievement?
- (2) What is the relationship between "positive" modeling experiences and actual achievement?
- (3) What is the relationship between the maturation of self-image and the media portrayal of stereotypic image?
- (4) What organizational configuration is needed to insure maximum effect of program initiatives?
- (5) How can the educational plight of the black male in Florida be described to appropriate stakeholders in an effective and empathetic manner?

In sum, the condition of the black male's educational experience in Florida seems to be this: While there are a number of black men who succeed in translating their potential into achievements that we all admire, they are too few. There are far too many black males who begin life confined by problems of poverty and end life within the confines of prison. There are far too many black men who leave or are "pushed out" of schools and colleges, graduate programs, and professional schools. There are far too many black males who find themselves unemployed or underemployed after leaving high school. Many find difficulties put in the way of their ascent up the career ladder. The problems of black men are visited subsequently upon black families and represent a major contribution to their diminution.

Our findings indicate that there is a complexity of factors that contribute to the scholastic situations of black males in Florida. Our study has attempted to illuminate a few of those factors and to point the way for further investigations. There is no doubt that the state multi-faceted attack on this problem may serve to halt and reverse the present squander of black male potential. There is also no doubt that this problem is deserving of our most sincere consideration and our most serious effort.

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