

Negro Graduates: PHS Study Reports Opinions and Problems

A recent Public Health Service study on the graduates of Negro colleges gives further documentation to the long and complex annals of the American poor. "The waste of human talent, potential and actual, is nowhere more apparent than it is among American Negroes," the report states, and it goes on to illustrate how poverty affects the options of Negroes at various educational levels.

The study, which is entitled *Graduates of Predominantly Negro Colleges—Class of 1964**, was released in August. It focuses on a large sample of the 1964 Negro college graduates at 50 institutions, most of which are in the South. The study was subsidized by the Public Health Service, with the cosponsorship of the Labor Department and the National Science Foundation, and was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. The author is Father Joseph Fichter, S.J., who is now a theology professor at Harvard and who was formerly a Senior Study Director of the National Opinion Research Center, which conducted the study. Previous reports using NORC data did not focus specifically on the Negro graduate.

In his study, Fichter emphasized the influence of limited financial resources on Negro college students. Of those graduates from public Negro colleges, 35 percent came from families with total annual incomes of less than \$3000; 88 percent were from families with incomes of less than \$7500. Three-fifths of the students said they would have preferred a college other than the one they attended; one-fourth actually applied to a preferred college. The main reason for not attending the preferred college was "financial disability." Fichter commented that "it seems remarkable that the majority of Negro college graduates come from such a low economic stratum, while the parallel economic class among whites produces so few college graduates."

The study also detailed other facets of the Negro student's pre-college experience. About a third of these college graduates come from broken homes, a figure reported to be more than twice that of white students. One of every nine Negro students said that he had been deserted by one or both parents. Only 13 percent of the students said that they have fathers who finished college; 63 percent have fathers who either did not attend or did not finish high school. As far as the students themselves are concerned, practically all attended segregated high schools, and only about half had the advantage of a college preparatory curriculum. The most apparent deficiency found in the students' high school curriculum was the lack of foreign language instruction; a third of the graduates had not taken a foreign language in high school.

Partly, no doubt, due to economic need, a sizable number of Negroes found it necessary to postpone going to college. The study indicated that 22 percent of male Negroes delay college

entrance, a higher figure than that in any other group. More Negro women attend college than Negro men, although a greater number of Negro men go on to attend graduate school.

Those who wish to attract more Negroes into their disciplines or professions might do well to ponder the answers given by students about vocational opportunity. Efforts to influence the decisions of Negro students should be made while the students are young, probably before they reach college. Assessing the data he received, Fichter concluded that "Negroes plan earlier, decide sooner, and are more strongly committed to their career choice" than white students. Another point which emerged from the study is that Negro female graduates are more willing to commit themselves to careers outside the home than white female graduates.

Employment Discrimination Seen

Large numbers of Negro students said that they did not enter business, law, or engineering because they felt that Negroes could get nowhere in such fields. Of those who considered such fields for their principal careers, six percent of the graduates said that they had concluded that Negroes couldn't get anywhere in either medicine or the biological sciences, and 20 percent felt that no opportunity existed in engineering. Even more striking figures are those which indicate the

A POINT OF VIEW

Anthony G. Oettinger, professor of linguistics, and Gordon McKay, professor of applied mathematics, Harvard, and president, Association for Computing Machinery, address, "The Hardware-Software Complementarity":

... one of the reasons why computer science departments are sprouting up all over is the purely political fact that in most universities computer people have had to rebel . . . against archaic engineering schools. . . . They have also had to get out of the clutches of mathematics departments that regard anything that is not completely pure, rigorous, and formal as some form of depravity. . . . Given things as they are, computer people are driven to secession. . . . But they lose much when set up in departments of computer science. . . . Being cut off from good mathematics is very dangerous for computer science because, although . . . concerned with *applied* mathematics, it cannot tolerate *poor* mathematics. . . . But being cut off from engineering departments, computer science departments lose sight of the fact that their symbol systems have a mission, which is to make machines work, to make them work efficiently and economically as well as elegantly. Unless economic and engineering criteria are brought into the picture, sterile monsters result.

* This 262-page study (PHS Publication No. 1571) is available for 75 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

News Staff Changes

Elinor Langer has resigned from the *Science* staff to engage in freelance writing on scientific and political subjects and to work with a group of journalists in establishing a new national political affairs magazine. The new magazine, which is in the very early stages of planning, and is as yet unnamed, will be published in New York. Miss Langer will retain an association with *Science* as a contributing correspondent. Since joining the *Science* staff in 1963, Miss Langer has specialized in coverage of matters related to medical research and practice. Her contributions in this area were cited by the American Medical Writers' Association last month when it presented to *Science* its 1967 Honor Award in Medical Communication.

Newly appointed to the News and Comment staff is Philip M. Boffey, a member of the *Wall Street Journal* Chicago bureau, who has specialized in coverage of political and scientific affairs. Boffey was graduated *magna cum laude* in 1958 from Harvard College, where he was executive editor and managing editor of the *Harvard Crimson*. Before joining the *Journal* he served as a naval officer and was a reporter on the *Chicago Daily News*.

fields in which Negroes think that they will have equality of opportunity with whites. Only about two-fifths thought that they would have employment on the same basis as whites in medicine, and only about a third thought they would have equal opportunities in engineering or in research in the physical sciences. By contrast, about three-quarters thought they would enjoy equality in the military, and half thought they would find equality in high school or elementary teaching. Only 15 percent thought that they would have equal opportunity to become business executives.

Most often, the reason given for not seeking employment in certain areas was that such employment required training which was too costly. Of those who considered such fields among principal career choices, the following proportions of male graduates decided that these careers required financial resources which they didn't possess: medicine, 71 percent; engineering, 46 percent; and biological sciences, 33 percent. Of the female graduates, more than a third decided they didn't have the financial resources necessary to train for nursing, medical technology, or physical and occupational therapy.

Fichter stated that the lack of financial resources is the "principal deterrent to graduate education and further professional training" for Negroes. He pointed out that Negro students often incurred burdensome financial obligations while in college. "Their

debts, both for education and for other things, pile up in a way not experienced by white students, southern or non-southern," his study noted. Sixty-two percent of the Negro graduates owed money when they finished college, as compared to only 36 percent of white students. Although Negro students usually have greater need of financial help in graduate school, "the monetary value of the graduate stipends they do receive is lower than that of the stipends received by white students," Fichter found.

Although many Negro graduates say that they shy away from graduate work because of the cost, Fichter found that a high proportion of Negro students expressed a desire to go to graduate schools. The study states, "Hardly any Negro of either sex, compared to the white graduates, admits that he is 'tired of being a student.' If he had the money, he would go."

As to the students' perception of their own colleges, many express a good deal of dissatisfaction with their education. Many thought they would have fared better at an Ivy League school or at a major state university. Few, however, expressed a desire to attend a white southern university.

Some Optimism about Employment

Most graduates wanted to be employed in integrated organizations, not only to prove their own merit but also because such organizations offered the

most advantageous opportunities for employment. On one hand, the graduates seemed somewhat optimistic about future employment possibilities. More than eight out of ten thought that opportunities for Negroes were changing for the better in such areas as medicine, college teaching, and physical and biological research. Virtually all said that they would advise freshmen to prepare themselves for fields which were not currently receptive to Negroes.

On the other hand, more than two-fifths of the graduates thought that it would take from 30 to 60 years (or longer in some cases) for Negroes to achieve equal employment opportunity in the southern states. Three-quarters of the students thought that Negroes would have equal employment opportunity in the large northern cities in 10 years.

It may be argued that many of the students polled had an inadequate or unrealistic conception of opportunities for the employment of Negro college graduates. But, even if unrealistic, it is obvious that such a conception helps determine the choice of careers and the extent of Negro aspirations.

—BRYCE NELSON

APPOINTMENTS

H. Bentley Glass, academic vice president and distinguished professor of biology, State University of New York at Stony Brook, to president of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. . . .



H. B. Glass

Sherburne F. Barber, assistant dean and associate dean of liberal arts and sciences, City College, to dean of liberal arts and sciences at the college. He succeeds **Reuben Frodin**, who is returning to the Ford Foundation as program adviser in education. . . . **Robert L. Egbert**, professor of educational psychology and chairman of the graduate education department, Brigham Young University, to director of Follow Through, a nationwide program to extend the effects of the Head Start program into the regular school system. . . . **Louis O. Quam**, former director of the Earth Sciences Division, Office of Naval Re-