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A Pilot Study on the Career Advancement of Black Graduates of Predominantly Black versus Predominantly White Colleges

Clement B.G. London

Fordham University, New York City, New York

“This pilot study compared the career advancement of 26 black graduates of a predominantly black Lincoln University (PA) Class of 1970, to that of 14 graduates of the same year from predominantly white institutions.”

This pilot study compared the career advancement of 26 black graduates of predominantly black (PB) Lincoln University (Pa.) Class of 1970, to that of 14 black graduates of the same year from predominantly white (PW) institutions. The purpose of the study was to look for differences between the two groups on educational achievement, occupational achievement, and career advancement behaviors and perceptions.

Educational achievement between the two groups appeared to be comparable as majorities of both groups got advanced degrees. About one-fifth of both groups obtained doctoral-level professional degrees.

No institutional differences on occupational achievement were revealed on variety of occupations entered, except that PWs more often entered the field of education. About half of both groups received help from their college placement offices whereas PBs on the other hand, appeared to change jobs more frequently.

Relative to advancement behaviors, PBs more often used active strategies as means of getting most recent promotions and changed employers as the means of getting promoted more often than PWs. Both groups used passive strategies in getting first promotions, most often getting graduate training.

In advancement perceptions, PWs saw more congruency between their occupations and education than did PBs, but both groups saw congruency between initial and present occupational positions.

Both groups also felt that they would advance in both pay and responsibility and saw racism and family constraints as impediments to career advancement. They both saw salary constraints as facilitators of advancement but the PBs saw affirmative action as a facilitator more often than the PWs saw advancement of spouses and friends as facilitators. Finally, college was uniformly seen as helpful to later career advancement through skill development.

Prior to making comparisons, it was found that the group from PW institutions had proportionately more females and education majors than the PB group. PBs had slightly higher socioeconomic status. Because of the size of the sample, it was not possible to

control for all of these differences. Therefore, the reader is cautioned to keep these sampling biases in mind when interpreting study findings.

Nevertheless, we feel that useful directions for a more focused study have been uncovered.

PRESENTER

Clement B.G. London, is Professor of Education at Fordham University Graduate School of Education at New York City, N.Y., Department of Curriculum and Teaching. He received his Ed.D. from Columbia University, New York City, N.Y. He has published numerous books including, "Three Turtle Stories," Jersey City, N.J.: New Mind Productions, Inc. (1993) and "Parents and Schools," New York/London: Garland (Co-authorship with Dr. Angela Carrasquillo) (1993); written articles for journals such as, "Education," "Journal of Ethnic Studies," and "Blacks in Higher Education"; and has written chapters in books such as "Thinking and Literacy: The Mind at Work in the Classroom," New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Publishing, pp. 191-207 (1995).