THE COLLEGE TRAINED NEGRO WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES
POST OFFICE IN A SOUTHERN CITY

A THESIS
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rewards of an occupation are generally used to satisfy the basic fundamental needs of life. Work may be defined as regularized recurrent experiences directed towards rewards for services rendered. In our society, the possession of a specific occupation, the virtues of hard work, thrift responsibility, steadiness of working habits, keeping a regular job, and various bourgeois patterns of business are all high values. The needs for recognition and security are developed in the earliest years; consequently, they are associated with getting a job and keeping a job. The high prestige value of a good position that pays well stimulates the aspirations of most people.¹

In our society, the kind of work in which a man engages often reflects his personality and dictates his social status. The personnel of a given vocation tend to develop their own occupational egocentrism. Associated with this is a sense of social distance with respect to members of other vocational groups.

A job may be rewarding in several ways. There are three types of income which one might receive for his services, namely: money, income, real income, and psychic income. Money income may be defined as the cash which one receives for his services. Real income may be defined as the purchasing power that an individual has, that is, how much he can buy with his money. Some places, the cost of living varies; therefore,

men in different locales might be making the same salaries but their purchasing power will not be the same. Psychic income may be defined as the prestige, the degree of satisfaction which one receives when performing a given task.

In the past and even at the present the Negro worker has been concerned primarily with the monetary returns of a job. This concern for money is summed up clearly in the words of an ex-teacher. When he first entered the postal service, he said, "I thought that I would never have the desire to teach again because I could never envision a teacher's salary surpassing that of a postal clerk. Had I had the foresight to see this I would still be in the teaching profession doing something that I could enjoy and making use of my training." Because of this early disregard of morale incentive or psychic income, the Negro postal worker is confronted with serious problems of occupational adjustment. Life in the post office is not integrated with life outside. In many cases, the postal clerks' work identity fails to mesh with or meet the specifications of other strongly held identifications, such as those growing out of his educational orientation. Many of the postal workers evidently suffer from considerable mental conflict, that is, between a desire to retain a permanent and fairly-well paid job and a job that would be satisfying and challenging with lesser fringe benefits. This can often result in frustrations which might produce neurotic behavior.

The effects of a clerk's work may be summarized in the words of Herbert Bonner, as he summarizes the effects of machine production.

By virtue of the repetitive monotony of machine productions, most workers become psychologically impoverished, since their work seldom
calls for more than a mechanical manipulation of a minute segment of the total productive enterprise, they have practically no reason or opportunity for developing constructive imagination, inventiveness, and sensitivity to the personal and social value of their labor. Their personalities are fallen and one-sided. The employee and employer, accordingly, fail to develop their full human potentialities. Neither can fully comprehend or sympathetically appreciate the place of the other in the total productive scheme.1

The postal worker is seldom an individualist. More than in any other vocation he is, in most respect, a meek conformist. If he is not meek when he enters the postal service, he soon becomes so, or he does a great job of pretending. It appears that he is beginning to realize that there is more to a good job than the pay check. This could be the root of his frustrations.

Purpose and Methodology. — The purpose of this study is to describe and point out the social characteristics of the Negro postal worker and to shed some light on the question as to why so many college trained men seek employment in the postal service. This study shall be centered around the following questions and statements.

1. Who is the Negro postal worker?
2. What social class does he ascribe to?
3. What is his background?
4. What are the prevailing attitudes held by him, his family, and his immediate friends toward the postal service as a career?
5. The postal service as a career has declined tremendously in prestige as a job for the college trained.
6. The higher degree of education the higher the frustration; hence, there is a high degree of correlation between education and frustration.

7. There is a great desire for vertical mobility.

The data collected for this study were in the form of fifteen unstructured interviews. The interviews were conducted in the homes of the employees. The interviews lasted from a minimum of thirty minutes, in some cases, to a maximum of two hours in others. In addition to this the technique of participant observation was employed. The investigator visited the homes, churches, social functions, and worked along with the subjects under observation. Many informal conversations were held and later recorded.

For investigative purposes, this study of the Negro postal clerk is restricted to the distributional clerk on the afternoon tour working in the inomint letter section. This study does not necessarily reflect the characteristics of all postal employees, but it does shed some light on the behavior patterns, of a specific group in a southern city, which might be applied to similar groups working under similar circumstance.

The Literature. — Before undertaking any occupational analysis it would be a good idea to refer to Caplow's book -- The Sociology of Work. In this book he makes an attempt to answer questions like these -- What are the effects of the working conditions, rewards, and habits upon the institutions of the family? What are the typical forms of occupational segregation? What are the effects of such segregation upon general society? How are the social roles appropriate to each occupation created and sustained? What social processes determine the evolution of occupational grouping and the distribution of population among them?

Caplow also states that occupational position is an important factor
in determining individual prestige and allocating social privileges. He states that attitudes towards work are seldom the workers personal reactions to an environment. The norm of occupational satisfaction seems to be rather exactly defined in each occupational group; scholars are expected to be more satisfied; the manufacturers and policemen more than post office clerks. Research in Industrial Sociology has partly explained the origin of these norms. In many cases a man's occupation will determine how he will be received in any company, and the status that will be accorded. Where the expectations are definite, he is likely to assume the appropriate personality traits. In short, an occupation more or less stereotypes the worker and the stereotype itself is the most important agent for the conditioning of roles.

Form and Miller state that there are three developmental phases that commonly mark occupational careers. They are the initial, trial, and stable work periods. They define the periods as follows:

1. The initial work period — Any job, full or part time, that an individual holds up to the time that he completes his formal training. The jobs are often, after school jobs, and summer jobs taken only as stop gaps until the completion of an education. Occasionally, the jobs become regular; but as a rule, they are temporary.

2. The trial work period — This period usually occurs after the completion of formal training. This is the time that the prospective worker is "shopping around." In many instances he is not really sure of what he wants and in many cases he can not find immediate employment in his chosen profession and he is virtually forced to seek out alternatives. Then in some cases he may have to go through a series of training jobs, leading up to what he really wants. This trial period usually lasts from a few days to three years.

3. The stable work period — A stable job is considered as any job on which a worker has spent three or more years. It is assumed
that the worker has found a relatively permanent job, and that he has settled down." He has developed some roots in the work plant and in the local community.

Form and Miller conclude that:

1. Occupational security is associated with the white collar and skilled workers. Occupational insecurity is associated with semi-skilled, unskilled personal service and domestic worker.

2. There is an association of the social background of a worker with his subsequent occupational history.¹

Robert E. Clark has made a study of psychosis, income, and occupational prestige. His study was an effort to determine statistically the relationship existing between occupational psychosis rates and the ranking of occupations by income and prestige. It may be assumed that various occupational groups differ with respect to certain traits which have a bearing upon the likelihood of a person becoming psychotic. There are many factors that might influence or determine which occupation a man might choose to seek employment in. At the same time some of these same factors might be the basis for those men becoming psychotic.


CHAPTER II

THE NEGRO POSTAL WORKER

Requirements. — The requirements of such a job are relatively low, that is, from an educational standpoint. One must be literate and a citizen (male or female) without a criminal record. The minimum age is eighteen. One's health must be fair. Many of the employees enter the service by Civil Service examinations. The tests are general in nature and a score of seventy is considered as passing. Many are hired on a temporary basis and remain indefinitely. After three years of employment they are considered for a career status. Many transfer from other Civil Service jobs. Some enter through political patronage which is not a common occurrence.

Duties. — The 84th Congress describes the duties of a distributional clerk, level four, as follows:

Basic function. — Separates mail in a post office, terminal, airmail field, or other postal facility in accordance with established schemes, including incoming, or outgoing, or both.

Duties and responsibilities. — (a) makes primary and one or more secondary distributions of incoming mail by delivery point based on the knowledge of the distribution scheme established for that office.
(b) makes primary one or more secondary distributions of outgoing mail for dispatch based on knowledge of the distributional scheme prescribed by the Postal Transportation Service. (c) In addition, may perform any of the following duties:

1. Maintains records of mails
2. Examines balances in advance deposit accounts.

3. Faces and cancels mail.

4. Ties and inserts facing slips.

5. Opens and dumps pouches and socks.

6. Operates canceling machines.

7. Records and bills mail that requires special service.

8. Renders service at public windows.

In this particular office a clerk is required to learn six schemes — five primary and one secondary. A minimum score of ninety is passing the first scheme examination; but, there after the minimum passing score is ninety-five. An employee is allowed two chances to pass his scheme examination. He is subject to dismissal upon the second failure; however, there are some exceptions. A scheme is more or less a codified method used for distributional purposes. The city is broken down into zones. The clerks must memorize the specific streets that make up a designated zone. This constitutes a primary. For each zone there is a secondary scheme. The carriers who work the streets in a particular zone are given individual numbers. The clerks must associate these numbers with certain streets and numbers and distribute the mail accordingly.

Negro clerks do not perform all of the duties of a postal clerk as described by the 84th Congress. This especially true with reference to the night tour of duty. Their duties consist chiefly of distributing, facing, canceling mail, and opening and dumping sacks and pouches.

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1 84th Congress, Definitions, Coverage and Exemptions, S. 2061, (June, 1955).
Pay.—Regular employees are paid an annual salary whereas substitute clerks are paid on an hourly basis. The wages for first year substitute clerks are $1.82 per hour plus an additional 10% for night work. His (sub-clerk) hours are irregular and they are usually dictated by the mail and the whims of the supervisor in charge. The regular employee works a 40 hour week. Although the sub does not have a guaranteed annual salary in most cases his earnings surpasses those of a regular employee. Below is the regular employee's pay scale.

TABLE 1
THE ANNUAL SALARY OF REGULAR CLERKS FROM 1955 - 1958

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 yrs.</td>
<td>18 yrs.</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M.</td>
<td>3660</td>
<td>3785</td>
<td>3910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4035</td>
<td>4160</td>
<td>4285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4410</td>
<td>4510</td>
<td>4610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4710</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.M.</td>
<td>4026</td>
<td>4163</td>
<td>4301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4438</td>
<td>4576</td>
<td>4713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4820</td>
<td>4916</td>
<td>5071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usually the regular employee's gross earnings are larger than the table shows. This is due to the over time that he puts in which is usually around Christmas time.

Other benefits are in the form of vacation and sick leave. Each employee with credit for one year service receives 13 days sick leave and 13 days annual leave. This leave can be accumulated over the years. Annual leave can be accumulated to a maximum of thirty days. With credit for three years of service an employee receives 21 days of annual leave. Each employee has an option on federal insurance. Entering, he can make $4,000
worth of life insurance which will cost him one dollar per pay period which is every two weeks.

Marital Status. — A very high percentage of the employees were married before they became postal employees. Of the fifteen personal interviews, thirteen were married and two were single. Such a high percentage might be hard to relate to the group as a whole, but it is indicative of the fact that most of the men were married before they came into the postal service.

The majority of the postal employees are veterans. Many of the men came into the service after they served their military obligations, which suggests that they were at the age when most men marry, this is especially true of veterans of the Korean conflict. Many of the men list marriage as the main reason for being in the postal service. They indicated that they needed a job to support their families.

Educational Background. — The educational level of the postal employee is considered to be very high, especially for a job with such low qualifications. The average grade level is about two years of college. There are many employees with college degrees. Some are ex-school teachers, and there are a few who are currently employed in the public school system. The majority of the men are products of local institutions. Many of these men came from other places to go to school in Atlanta and stayed on to become postal employees.

Off hand, one might wonder why are there so many college trained men in the postal service. Many reasons have been given; therefore, we shall look at some of the reasons from an unbiased point of view. They are:

1. About ten years ago, may be not quite that long, a job in the post
office was considered as a prestige job because of the mere fact that it paid well; that is comparatively speaking.

2. Many of the Negroes are products of liberal arts schools and they are only qualified to teach and many of them have refused to leave Atlanta and Atlanta needs only so many teachers. In short, the teaching field is over crowded in the city of Atlanta.

3. Up until the present time, a teacher's pay was far below that of a postal employee.

4. Many of the college trained men are not qualified to teach. Some of them were below average students and did not warrant a job in the teaching profession.

5. Many of the men came into the postal service to work only for a short period of time and became "stuck."

6. Some were working in the post office to finance their education. Whatever the reasons might be, the fact still remains that the Atlanta post office is full of college trained men and some are still seeking employment in the postal service.

To get a better picture of the training that some of the men had received before they came into the postal service, a chart has been set up showing the level of education of fifteen employees, their major fields and the schools from whence they came.

Table 2 is somewhat indicative of the training that the men had received before coming into the postal service. It must be admitted that this chart shows a very high percentage of men holding college degrees, and it is hoped that it will not lead anyone to believe that all postal employees have college degrees. Some are still going to school; and they will eventually finish and get their degrees. But there are many that do hold degrees.
Many of the young men of the Korean conflict can be placed in this category. Some did not get a chance to finish school before they were inducted; others were financially unable; and because of federal benefits they became able to go to school. Being older and more mature, many of the men have found it profitable to work and go to school simultaneously. Then, on the other hand, the constant desire to leave the postal service has motivated others to go back to school. Wives and friends are playing their part in influencing the men to continue their education. Then there is a group that is going to school only for the government subsistence that they can receive. Most of these men are enrolled in the business schools. They go until their government subsistence expires. Then there are a few that are going to school to finish something that they started many years ago and never finished. Take the case of one fellow who is approaching his forties, he feels that his life is incomplete and in order to have peace of mind he must finish school to prove something to himself.

Social Status and Community Roles. — By far and large the postal employee ascribes to middle class status. He has acquired or is in the process of acquiring all of the symbols of the Negro middle class. His immediate friends, business contacts, and social affiliates are middle class.

The postal employee may be considered as reasonably active in civic and social affairs in the community. His roles are wide and varied. In some communities he goes about unnoticed, in others, he is an integral part, his presence is felt and needed, he takes part in all of the future plans of the community. The older clerk carries more weight in the community than the younger employee. This could be due to the fact that the
TABLE 2
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF FIFTEEN POSTAL EMPLOYEES, THEIR MAJOR AND MINOR FIELD, DEGREES HELD, AND HONORING SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>General Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Morehouse - A. U.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Morehouse - A. U.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Elem. Education</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Morehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Psychology &amp; Ed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Morehouse - A. U.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Prairie View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Psychology &amp; Ed.</td>
<td>Math.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Morehouse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
older employee has acquired all of the symbols necessary for middle class recognition, such as a home, an automobile, an education, middle class contacts, and many other things that are considered as characteristic of the Negro middle class. Then, too, he entered the postal service when it was considered as a prestige job.

The postal employee has had a chance to rub elbows with the doctors, lawyers, professors, and businessmen of importance. Socially, he is very active. He makes it his business to get invited to all of the dances that are considered a social most. He belongs to many of the social organizations, such as the fraternities, civic and social clubs. In some cases, the postal employee has furnished leadership for these organizations. They have taken an active part in the local bridge tournaments. Some serve as bridge instructors at the Y. M. C. A.

Attitude toward Job. — A man’s attitude may be considered as the way he feels toward someone or something. His attitude is often exhibited in the way he acts in a certain situation or toward a certain person.

To get the postal employees true attitude of his job is a very hard task. When asked if they like their jobs, very few employees will give a negative or positive answer and let it go at that. Many of them will tell you that they do not like the job. They will go on to tell you how it could be a better job. Then, there are some that are satisfied with their job and complain only because the others about them are complaining. The majority of the men say that the pay is the most attractive part of the job. Many of the men considered their job as a pressure job. That is, they are constantly being harrassed by their supervisors and might be called in on
the carpet at any time. In short many of the men do not like their jobs, but they are satisfied. To a certain extent this might appear to be a strange statement, but the satisfaction comes with the pay check.
CHAPTER III

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

This chapter will deal with the social psychology of an occupation. It will show how the lack of job satisfaction leads to frustrations. For many people, the first job, or jobs, may have little or no relation to their interests. This is especially true during the school years. During this period many unrelated jobs are held. These jobs are usually taken because they are available and not necessarily because they interest the worker. In most cases these jobs are only temporary. There are times when the initial job may be of very great importance in advancing or hindering eventual lifetime satisfactions, particularly for non-professional work. There are several studies that point out the disillusionment that may come when an initial job, looked forward to as an indication of the attainment of adulthood, turns out to be frustrating. If the jobs seem to have possibilities for eventual advancements, or when they give a feeling of social status, these disappointments may be lessened. In most cases when a job is taken only for the need of the money, adaptation becomes difficult. Under pressure, it may happen that the person dare not attempt a change, either to another job or in the circumstances under which he is working. To the extent that adaptation to the situation involves building up a gross fantasy life, it may be very detrimental if long continued; and, often 1 results in neurotic behavior. Let us examine some of the causes of frustration of the Negro postal clerk.

1 Anne Roe, *Psychology of Work* (New York, 1956), pp. 274-75
The postal employee is full of frustrations. He employs every defense or escape mechanism available; displacement, regression, sublimation, rationalization, projection, identification, and others. This is especially true of the college trained individual. It is assumed that the higher the education the higher the degree of frustration will be.

When asked why they are working in the post office, very few of the men will give an answer that is completely true. Most will begin by rationalizing. Very few, if any, will admit that he is working in the post office because of the lack of other accessible positions. Most will defend the job as being one of the better paying jobs for Negroes, and state that they were married and had to provide support for their families. Thus, they would quote the salaries being paid to teachers at the time the former completed school. Years ago, this was very true, and even today the post office ranks as one of the better paying jobs in the South for Negroes.

Referring to Table two we note that when many of the subjects entered college they enrolled as biology or chemistry majors. Students pursuing such a curriculum are generally considered as pre-medical students. They had hopes of entering medical school after completing undergraduate work. They did not entertain the idea that might teach and least of all become postal employees. They eventually realized that they would not be able to fulfill their dreams; hence they found themselves engaged in an occupation for which the man on the street might qualify. How does this effect them? Upon some of the men, it has a tremendous effect. They are constantly on the defensive and some have developed a feeling of inferiority because of their failures to continue in their chosen fields.
This feeling is accentuated when they hear or read of the success of some of their former colleagues. They like to associate themselves with their successful friends. This gives them the feeling that if others made it we could have made it also if we could have stayed in school and made the necessary sacrifices and remained single. The institution of marriage must take many such abuses and act as the scapegoat for the failures of many of these men. This is not only true of the men that had a pre-medical background but also true of those that had college training in other areas. Many of the men have said, "Had I known that this is where I was going to end up I would have been here four years earlier."

Why do these men remain in the post office? Some say they remain in the post office because it is the better paying job, and the only other job that they are qualified to hold is that of a teacher. It appears that many are college trained and some of them are not qualified to teach. One clerk stated that he would like to teach but teaching is a full time job, and he would be unable to maintain his outside jobs in order to support his family adequately. This is another example of rationalization because there are several postal employees working as school teachers in order to supplement their income.

Another factor that is mentally disturbing to the postal employee is that his job is declining in prestige. He no longer stands out in the community. Once when he was asked why he chose the postal service in

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1 The postal employee has generally been regarded as middle-class in the Negro community. However, this is no longer the case since occupational succession for Negroes has been rapid in urban areas in the past decade.
favor of the teaching profession, he would proudly quote his salary and that would be sufficient. But today this is no longer true. The teacher's salary is steadily climbing, outranking the salary scale of the postal employees. Then there is the matter of job prestige. There is no comparison. When asked about job prestige, many of the men will say that they are not concerned with prestige and that their primary purpose is to earn a living. As one clerk puts it "to hell with prestige, you can't write a prestige check." Here again we can find a defense mechanism being employed. This same man is prestige-conscious. He is college trained; he identifies himself with the Negro middle class. His life goals are to portray all of the symbols of middle class society; he is buying his home, owns his automobile, and he is sending his children to private school; yet, he makes the statement that he is not prestige-conscious. He often speaks of his social contacts and "the strings that he has pulled."

Out of the fifteen unstructured interviews, only one directly stated that he was definitely prestige-conscious. He would like very much to have a job that is considered a white collar job which gives him recognition in the community.

The friends of the postal employees are divided into two categories when asked how they feel about the job as a prestige. The non-professionals rate the job very high, whereas, the professionals rate the job very low, especially for the college trained. The professional feels that a man should do what he was trained to do, leaving his profession only to better himself financially.

Another disturbing factor to the postal employee is the fact that his
wife is beginning to equal him in earning power, and in some cases, surpassing him as a wage earner. Many of the men say that this is insignificant and that it does not effect them. This is improbable for no man likes to have his ego deflated. In our way of American life, the male is considered to be the bread winner and his spouse is dependent upon him. Though it aids him financially when she competes with him on the economic market, it creates a psychological problem. The mere fact that some women make more money than their husbands neutralizes the male's only claim to superiority. This is especially true if the wife is considered a professional. Not only has she excelled fiscally but also in job prestige. There is the case of one employee who refuses to take a day tour of duty because of the mere reason that he would have to take a wage reduction and his wife would then be making more money than he would. Of course, this is not indicative of all postal employees. Many have learned to accept the situation and live with it accordingly. As one employee puts it, "Every thing we have done we did it together, and my wife never tries to make me conscious of how much money she is making. We have always put our checks together and operate as if we only had one income. She still acts as if she is dependent upon me, whereas, we are dependent upon each other."

When asked if they plan to make a career as a postal clerk, very few of the men will come right out and say yes, even when all evidence point in that direction. He will always give you the impression that there is a possibility that he might leave the postal service if the "right" opportunity presents itself. Then he will reject this assertion and say
that he must give his longevity in the postal service some consideration; and, there is the matter of his age. Many men say that they can't afford to abandon the postal service because their obligations dictate that they remain there. Some are in a position to leave, but they remain rather than give up their retirement benefits. Many of these men act as part time salesmen, real estate agents, carpenters, warehousemen, etc.

There is a group that turns to fantasy; they are forever dreaming and building air castles. Some speak of leaving the south and seeking employment elsewhere. Many of these men are too old to think about pulling up stakes and starting over. For the most part, they have families and they are indebted to many creditors. Some of these clerks are disillusioned with the substitutes' pay. Some of the standards of living seem to be based on the pay of a substitute, consequently, the postal employee finds it difficult to readjust to a regulars' pay. Many have to consolidate, while others have to find jobs to supplement their incomes. All of this has added to the postal clerks woes. Yet, on the other hand there are some who take advantage of the abundant years and managed their affairs well. They prepare for the future, and today, they are reaping the benefits.

The lack of vertical mobility is also leaving its marks upon the personality of the Negro clerk. This situation is due chiefly to segregation, not qualifications and abilities. In the past years, no matter what qualifications or experiences the Negro clerk brought with him into the postal service, he could not rise above level four (distributional clerk). Of course, it is not quite as rigid at the present time because Negroes are being allowed to take supervisors' examination. Many are placed on the list
of eligibles, but there is a way of avoiding this list of eligibles. Many believe that this provision was inserted to thwart the progress of the Negro clerk.

There are two Negroes filling the capacities of supervisors on the day tour in the incoming letter section, whereas, there are none on the night tour of duty. On the night tour, the Negro comprises over half the work force. This lack of mobility has been damaging to the Negro. The first reason is that he feels that he is intellectually superior to the white clerk. He knows that most of the white clerks come from outlying towns, and many of them are farmers with very few exceeding a high school education. Their feelings are often portrayed in their remarks about the supervisors. They often refer to their supervisors as ignorant "pencil pushers" and "over paid string cutters." Many feel that the post office could not operate without them, efficiently. The past month this southern office ranked tops in efficiency. Many of the Negro clerks believe that they were chiefly responsible for this achievement.

There is the matter of separate facilities, although a federal order has been passed that there will be no separate swing rooms and toilet facilities and the old pattern of segregation remains. All of the Negro clerks still congregate in an over crowded swing room although there are no signs designating such. From an outsider's point of view, this would look like voluntary segregation. To a certain extent, it is. But the main factor in keeping the status quo in tact is the element of fear. Many believe that they will be harassed by the supervisors and that their jobs will be in jeopardy. Consequently, these separate facilities exist
even after they have been ordered abolished by the federal government. Working in a situation like this only adds to the Negroes' inferiority and makes him feel insecure. If this were not so, he would make an attempt to exercise some of the privileges that have been granted him by the federal government.

Next, there is the wish for an opportunity to express ones individuality. Many would like to be given credit for the ability to think. They would like to be able to converse with their supervisors on an employee to employer level and not as Negro to white. The Negro clerk is denied the right to work in many departments. On the night tour of duty, he can not work in the registry division, postage due section, box section, nor is he allowed to work in the windows. Many times an open job is posted for bids and a long list of qualifications is listed, when in some instances the only qualification is skin color. Certainly, in a situation like this, the ego undergoes irreparable damage.

Throughout this chapter we have implied that there is more to a job than the pay check. The question is, how much more, and what? An occupation should be able to satisfy the need esteem. Status and prestige are the greatest sources of satisfaction for these needs. This is especially true for minority groups, who may receive an occupational acceptance which they can not achieve socially, or gain social acceptance through occupational status.

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1 Ibid., p. 33.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this investigation has been to study the career pattern of the college trained Negro postal employee. The technique employed has been one of participant observation and covering a period of one year. During this period the investigator visited homes, social gatherings, and taverns in an endeavor to get at the varying degrees of self conceptions and patterns of frustration.

The data have suggested that there is considerable frustration and dissatisfaction among most of the Negro college trained postal employees. The major reasons for this are:

1. The job identity fails to mesh with educational orientation.
2. A lack of mobility because of racial prejudice.
3. The declining prestige of the postal employee.
4. The desire for higher social status which is not afforded as a postal employee.

The data revealed that when the subjects entered college they had all indications of preparing for a profession. Early marriage appeared to be the major reason for seeking employment as a postal employee. In each instance postal employment was looked upon as being a temporary situation while continuing the educational career.

As the problem of an early marriage was investigated it was revealed that such occurrences were not planned but were the results of pregnancy. This set the stage for a career as a postal employee. Whereas the desire, in many instances, was to continue in college and work, it proved to be
an unworkable situation in many cases. As a result of this many of the subjects were not able to complete their college training. With an increase in family size and the wife not being in an employable state made the situation more frustrating.

We found that as time progressed many of the postal employees began to realize their chances for fulfilling their original plans were becoming somewhat limited for various reasons. Those who had hopes of attending medical school were confronted with financial and sponsorship problems. In some instances it was revealed that many of the subjects were, in the main, very mediocre as students and it was very doubtful if they could have successfully pursued a professional career.

The diminishing social status of the postal employee in the Negro community was found to be a major source of frustration. Because of occupational succession and increasing occupational opportunities for Negroes in Atlanta, employment in the post office is no longer looked upon as being a middle class occupation. Many are married to school teachers who enjoy a higher status and receive a higher salary. Again, this inability to surpass the spouse in earning power adds to the mounting frustrations involved in not being able to secure better positions.

In spite of the frustrations associated with the employment situation there appears to be a definite change in self conceptions as time passes. This is associated with what we may term as "symbolic time." The subjects, after becoming a regular employee, accept their status as such. It is at this point that they realize that, in all probability, they will remain a postal employee. This is the stage where there are turning points in the individual's identity.
Therefore, we may conclude that employment of the college trained Negro postal worker may be seen as representing varying degrees of frustration. These frustrations may be seen in a clearer perspective if they are placed on a continuum with respect to time. As a result of this we may expect the degree of frustration to be highly correlated with longevity of employment.
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