

REPORT  
OF THE  
SOUTHERN LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH CENTERS

THIRD PLANNING CONFERENCE  
OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS  
FEBRUARY 12-13, 1957

February, 1957

Southern Education Foundation  
811 Cypress Street, N. E.  
Atlanta 8, Georgia

The Southern Education Foundation Leadership Program moved forward apace at the third regional planning conference held in Atlanta, February 12-13, 1957. Representatives from the six university centers\* now cooperating in the effort attended the two-day session.

The meeting was intended as a follow-up to the October conference at which the "Spirals of Change" concept was first projected as a possible research design capable of coordinating regional activity. At that time the group charged an interim committee with responsibility for spelling out the theory comprehensively and disseminating a report to the several institutions. In addition, each representative agreed to discuss the spiral theory with his own staff as a possible source of inspiration and organization for extended intra-institutional research. It was intended that the thinking generated by this activity would provide impetus for getting this February conference off to a running start. Since any projected program would necessarily involve resources, the group also anticipated a consideration of budgetary requirements for the coming year.

#### The Spirals Revisited

Initial conference discussion centered on the reactions of instructional staffs to the spiral theory. On the basis of reports made by each representative, it seemed clear that the spirals as a unified theory had provoked a variety of attitudes. There appeared to be some difference of opinion over both the meanings of the spirals as a theory and its implications for research. As

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the discussion proceeded, it became increasingly evident that these differences were in part semantic in origin and in part a result of the fact that members of the group cherished diverse and occasionally competing notions concerning the nature of people, society, and social change. A detailed report by the interim committee on the evolution of the theory and the thinking behind it tended to clarify some of the issues which were raised.

On the other hand, these competing interpretations notwithstanding, the entire group accepted the spiral concept as the focus of regional research activity. None questioned its potential as a research tool. All saw it also as a means of communication--a point of common reference transcending the immediate area of interest or individual point of view. It was of further value, they thought, as a cohesive frame of reference within which the results of research could be meaningfully related. They definitely rejected the notion that the spirals concept was a theory to be "proved." Rather the group saw it as a dynamic open-ended idea lending itself to constant testing and growth. Finally, they saw it as a source of new insights into problems and kinds of research needed for their solution.

Although the discussion tended generally to center on the spiral theory, considerable attention was directed to the concept of research itself. This seemed a natural development since the spiral theory sprang from effort to create a regional research design. It seemed natural, too, that the group voiced a variety of notions regarding the nature and value of research. However, from this particular phase of the discussion there seemed to emerge a point of agreement of considerable significance for the character of future leadership training activity. It was this: Research is a device or a means of training leaders.

It is not an end in itself divorced from other aspects of the program. One phase of the preparation program of a leader should be participation in significant research activity. In this way, the objectives of developing leadership competence and securing data relevant to current problems can be accomplished in the same activity with greater effectiveness.

### Institutional Plans

Consistent with the different points of view regarding the spirals, the plans of the various institutions covered a rather wide range of interest and activity. The University of Arkansas used the medium of two dissertations to describe their research interests. One concerned itself with a history of the race problem and measures employed to cope with it. The other purported to investigate the preparation of Negro principals in light of the new demands now being visited on them by social change.

Auburn spelled out a four-fold interest. One was a dissertation designed to test the spiral concept directly by probing the effect of the administrative climate created by principal behavior on teachers' perceptions of self, role, and group relationships. A second will seek to identify community factors significantly influencing self perception and role concepts. A third will deal with an analysis of leadership personality types in different social groups. A fourth will be an experimental analysis of the Tuskegee summer workshops.

The University of Texas indicated plans to continue their CPEA studies of the job of the principal. A special emphasis in this project will be further exploration of a concept of staff cooperation in which "unity" and "diversity" are not considered opposites. They also hope to study community factors in-

fluencing educational administration.

Although no definite program has jelled as yet at the University of Oklahoma, the staff has indicated strong interests in research devoted to identifying community factors which account for social change. They anticipate the matriculation of Foundation sponsored fellows this fall, at which time research in this area will begin.

The program at the University of Kentucky is also still in the beginning stage, definite plans having been deferred pending the further identification of research areas by the group at this meeting. However, they have staked out three areas of interest. One would seek to identify the factors which trigger interpersonal, intergroup aggression and conflict in a community. Another would analyze the way in which leadership structures affect these aggressions. The third would examine the personal perceptions of teachers and students as affected by the integration of schools.

The interests of the Peabody staff touch three somewhat diverse areas. With Arkansas and Texas they share a concern for the administrator in his role as a decision maker. Specifically, they see a need to explore the "cultural gaps" in his preparation. With Oklahoma they share an interest in the factors accounting for social change. Also, they saw a research potential in the wealth of data compiled by the Southern Education Reporting Service.

#### --And for the Future

In planning for the future, the group decided to work on an institutional basis at least until next fall. At that time, another regional meeting will be held. Each institution agreed that, prior to this meeting, they would develop

their research interests into a comprehensive plan or design. It was further agreed that this plan would clearly set forth the assumptions on which the institution's program of preparation of leaders for a bi-racial society is to be based.

As a result of conference discussions of the leadership development program in general, and the "Spirals of Change" in particular, the group felt that it might profitably re-examine and restate its objectives. Although no basic changes were made, new emphases were added. In summary, the objectives now appear to be as follows:

1. To develop leadership for the schools of the South, with research being viewed as a major tool of learning in the program.
2. To secure current needed research on significant Southern problems influencing education.
3. To create a residue of interest in the problems of the South among the staffs of the participating institutions which will outlive the present program.
4. To test the "Spirals of Change" as a theory of personal development and social change.
5. To create and codify a fund of information relevant to problems which are peculiarly Southern.

In addition to discussing the more theoretical aspects of the program, the group also clarified the recruiting policy in at least two respects. First, they stipulated that candidates from disciplines other than education may be

accepted providing the problem they choose to investigate is directly concerned with education in a bi-racial society. Second, the institution itself will bear the major burden of recruiting with the Foundation being kept informed of developments. Once accepted, the fate of the student will remain with the institution.

In summary, then, it appears that the group reached basic agreement on five significant points. First, they accepted the spirals of change theory as the central focus of the regional research program. Second, they shared the conviction that research is a means of developing leadership dismissing the notion that it is an end in itself. Third, they committed themselves to drawing up an institutional research design before the fall meeting in which they would spell out prominently the assumption upon which their preparation program is based. Fourth, they shifted emphasis in several aspects of the program's objectives. Fifth, they restated recruiting policies to bring them into harmony with the aforementioned changes in other aspects of the program.

REC/mj

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