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Black Employment Patterns in the Houston, Texas Labor Market

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I. Introduction: The Background Setting

The rapid growth of the City of Houston since the end of World War II has attracted nationwide interest. Ranking in 1968 as the country's seventh largest city, it is the largest population center in the South. With its proximity to large concentrations of minority people (Negroes, Mexican-Americans, and Indians), the degree and nature of the participation of these groups in such an expanding labor market is of national significance. In accordance with the mandate of this study, however, attention will focus only upon the employment experiences of Houston's black community.

As a means of setting the scene, the City of Houston is located in Harris County which is one of the five counties that comprise the Houston Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA).[1] The Houston SMSA---although small when compared with many Eastern and Western SMSA's---ranks as the fourteenth largest such grouping

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in the nation. The Houston SMSA included approximately 1.8 million people in 1968. Of this number 1.4 million resided in Harris County and 1.2 in the City of Houston. The black population of the City was estimated in 1968 to number about 300,000 people.

As a result of exceedingly liberal annexation laws, the City's land area is the third largest in the Nation. Surrounded by vast open areas that are sparsely populated, Houston has been able to expand jurisdiction and thus avoid the insular constraints of rigid boundaries that hamper the growth of urban areas elsewhere.

The labor market of the late 1960's has been extremely tight. The U.S. Department of Labor estimated the 1967 unemployment rate to be about 3.3. percent (2.4 percent for whites and 6.3 percent for nonwhites).[2]

Houston is sometimes referred to as "a Southern city that looks Western." In no area is the resemblance more Southern than Western than in the area of social legislation. The City does not have a fair employment practices act or a human relations commission with enforceable authority nor does the State of Texas have such a statute or commission. Neither the City or the State has a minimum wage law to cover people excluded from the Federal law. Texas is the only state in the union with a Constitutional limit on the amount of dollars available for welfare payments. A proposal to raise the minimum was overwhelmingly defeated in 1968. As a result welfare payments have been reduced to a maximum allowable to a family of five (or more) of $123 a month. In Houston, the situation is becoming acute as it is anticipated that

the number of welfare recipients will double in 1969 which may force another inhumane reduction of payments to all. Texas is also a "right to work" State which is only testament to the weakness of the labor movement in the State.

Consistent with a laissez-faire philosophy toward the labor market is one of the City's most unique features: the absence of zoning laws. For present purposes, the significance of the absence of zoning provisions is that it has hampered the ability of the City to participate in numerous important social programs. Specifically, difficulties have arisen between the City and the Federal Government over public housing, urban renewal, urban renewal planning, and the Model Cities program. Complaining about these difficulties, Mayor Louie Welch charged in 1968:

> I would submit that the City of Houston has been unfairly deprived of major and important Federal funds for the solution of our local problems of bettering housing and living conditions. I would not argue with the other requirements of the workable program. I would not suggest that other cities should eliminate their zoning. But I submit that Houston is being grossly and unfairly treated in the denial of funds by the arbitrary ruling that we must have zoning or something that, by any other name, amounts to the same thing.[3]

Public transportation in Houston has also become a serious barrier to better employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups. With the minority population located in various enclaves in or near the center of the City and employment opportunities expanding in outlying regions, inadequate public transportation is an obstacle to labor mobility.[4]

Against this background, a study of the experience of blacks in the Houston labor market can proceed.

II. General Influences Upon Black Employment

Poverty. Throughout the sixties, the black population has expanded rapidly. The sources of growth have been: (1) migrants from the rural areas of East Texas; (2) migrants from rural areas of Western and Southern Louisiana; (3) the internal growth of the families already living in the City; and (4) the return of disillusioned former residents who had migrated to the North. The local community action agency, the Harris County Community Action Agency (HCAAA) states that the major proportion of the Negroes moving into Houston are---by Federal standards---"poor". In 1965, HCAAA classified 370,316 people in Harris County in this category (or about 25 percent of the county's population); 304,076 of the poor resided in Houston (or about 28 percent of the city population).[5] The poverty population increased in Houston by 16.9 percent between 1960 and 1965. Of the 370,316 classified as being "poor" in 1965, Negroes comprised 196,603 (or 53 percent) of the total.

Unemployment. Houston does not have a single Negro ghetto in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, it has several enclaves. In physical features, Houston's poor reside in areas of wide streets and single level dwellings. In this sense, the appearance more resembles the Watts area of Los Angeles than the high rise "egg crates" of Bedford-Stuvyesant. The three major areas in which the Negro community live are (1) a central area of the city that is composed of 22 contiguous census tracts [called the "original CEP area" because it is the section of the City in which the Federal Government's Concentrated Employment Program

(CEP) operates]; "Sunnyside" in South Houston; and "Acre Homes" in northeast Houston (part of which was outside the 1968 city limits). The Texas Employment Commission has "unofficially" estimated the employment situation in 1968 for these to be as follows:

	CEP area	Acre Homes	Sunnyside
Civilian Labor Force	72,000	8,600	8,750
Unemployed	4,300	600	550
Employed	67,700	8,000	8,200
Unemployment Rate	6.0%	7.0%	5.7%

Thus, it is clear that the unemployment rates in the areas of greatest Negro habitation have a far worse employment picture than that of the overall labor force of the City. In interpreting these figures, it is important to note that to be included in the civilian labor force it is necessary to meet the labor force attachment test of being "available" and "actively seeking" employment. Hence, many people--especially women--are excluded from these figures. As one TEC official commented:

> There is a sizeable labor pool in Houston but their participation in the labor market is restricted by limited education, lack of skills, illiteracy, and poor work habits. I call this group the unpotential labor force. They are mostly women.[6]

Of these people "officially" counted as unemployed, it is estimated that one-third of the City's total come from the "original CEP area" (which comprises only about 15 percent of the City's population and 10 percent of its civilian labor force).[7]

Public Schools. The education of Negro youth is done almost exclusively by the public schools. Hence, some commentary concerning the Negro and the Houston schools seems apropos. Within the Houston city limits, there are three separate school districts. Each is operated on an independent basis--i.e., they are not administered by the city government. By far, the most significant for present purposes is the Houston Independent School District (HISD). With almost 250,000 students enrolled in its schools in 1968, it ranked as the sixth largest school system in the Nation and the largest in the South. During the 1968-69 school year, approximately 32 percent of the students were Negro. The administering School Board for HISD is elected entirely on a citywide basis. The only Negro member on the Board resigned in early 1969 and was replaced by a white who was appointed by the remaining Board members. The Board has been a frequent topic of controversy--especially within the minority community. In Texas, where political labels are considered extremely important, the Board as of February 1969 was composed of six "conservatives" and one "liberal."

The last vestiges of dejure separate schools were not eliminated until September 1967. At the time, a "freedom of choice plan" was inaugurated which would allow students to transfer to schools of their choice if they were not of the predominate race in the new school. On February 11, 1969, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a court order which called for the end of the "freedom-of-choice plan" and for a more extensive integration of school facilities.

In its 1969 case, the Justice Department charged that the freedom of choice plan had failed to "disestablish the dual school system." Mrs. Gertrude Barnstone, the only "liberal" on the School Board, concurred with the Justice Department's contention. She claimed that: "Parents in the ghetto areas have never really had a choice. They couldn't get their children to the white schools because of the lack of transportation."[8] She added that the existing boundary system has been gerrymandered to exclude Negroes from all-white schools.

In its petition the Federal Government contended that: 81.7 percent of the Negro students in HISD are enrolled in schools that are 95 percent Negro; 79.8 percent of the white students in HISD are enrolled in schools that are 95 percent white; in schools which have more than 95 percent Negro enrollment, 92.7 percent of the faculty are Negro; and in schools which have more than 95 percent white enrollment, 94.1 percent of the faculty are white. The brief requested the Court to order HISD to "formulate and adopt" a new student assignment plan and to assign teachers in proportion to the overall racial composition of all teachers (i.e., under the present overall ratio every school's faculty would be 70% white and 30 percent Negro) until racially identifiable schools are eliminated from the system. The School Board's attorney, Mr. Joe Reynolds, was quoted as saying that the latter proposal, if implemented, "would be chaotic."[9] The President of the School Board, Mr. Robert Eckels, claimed that the District is as integrated as it can be.[10]

As for the question of school dropouts, it is difficult to obtain precise estimates by race. The HISD does not keep records "on dropouts as such" but it does estimate the dropout rate for "disadvantaged youth" to be 7.98 percent during the 1966-67 school year.

Community Organization. One of the most striking features of the Houston scene is the almost total lack of community organization among the black population. Although there are five NAACP chapters in the City, there was not--as of 1968---a chapter of the Urban League or of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). There has been a branch of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) at Texas Southern University and there is an Afro-Americans for Black Liberation (AABL) organization at the University of Houston. But these student groups have concerned themselves largely with either campus issues or national problems rather than local community affairs.

In sharp contrast to the experiences of the other American cities with comparable large Negro populations, the more "active" community groups in Houston are still dominated by ministers. The Rev. Earl Allen has been one of the more outspoken critics of the plight of the Negro in Houston. Through the HOPE Development Fund, he has sought to meld together a grassroots organization to amplify the Negro position on crucial city decisions. The Rev. William Lawson is another community leader. He has been the local sponsor of the "operation breadbasket" project of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Nonetheless, the black community has yet to produce a local organization with the broad support needed to express its needs in a politically effective manner. One explanation for this phenomena has been offered by local anti-poverty workers. They claim the Negro community is not only geographically spreadout and frequently split by the numerous freeways that characterize the city; but, more importantly, the Negro population is in a constant state of flux. For while it is true that a large number of poor Negroes migrate into Houston each year from rural areas, many of them stay only a few years until they can gather sufficient funds to move to California. This supposition is given credence by the Kerner Commission finding that 75 percent of the Negroes in Los Angeles came from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama.[11] It is quite likely that Houston is serving as a "way station" to the West although there is no official documentation available to prove the hypothesis.

Unionism. In many cities, trade unionism has secured substantial economic gains for large numbers of workers in the local labor markets. In Houston, the best estimate is that only 15 percent of the labor market is organized. Moreover, the preponderence of union members are in certain sectors: construction, steel, petroleum, longshoring, and Federal employment. About one-third of the union members in the City are in the construction crafts. For Negroes, union construction jobs have been only token outside of the laborer and cement masons crafts.[12] Moreover, local officials of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission report

that they are encountering more opposition from unions than from employers in the promolgation of fair employment practice policies. One such spokesman explained:

> Labor unions are unwilling to sign contracts that give equal treatment to Negroes. Too often Negroes are seen to be a threat to their jobs and they'd rather see one of their own in the positions that a minority member might hold or be promoted into. In order to get a change in the line of progression, a Negro is often asked to waive all of his previous seniority and start at the bottom of the new line. Or, as is becoming the increasing pattern, they now say that the Negroes must take a test to enter that line. Employer's wouldn't do this if unions didn't make them sign agreements to do so.[13]

To the degree that the above impressions are valid, unionism--rather than being a vehicle of delivery--has been serving as a roadblock to black advancement.

Political Power. With the abolition of the poll tax for federal, state, and local elections, minority groups throughout Texas have begun since the mid-sixties to participate on a mass scale in the democratic processes. State laws that require annual voter registration; that require one year of residency to be eligible to vote; and that specify a January 31st cut-off date each year for registering to vote during that year, still pose obstacles to wider voter participation by minority groups.

Of greater significance for Negro political action in Houston is the manner in which officials are elected in voter districts. There are three U.S. Congressional Districts (#8, #7, and #22) in Houston. Congruent with the boundaries of the U.S. Congressional Districts are three Texas Legislative Districts. The Legislative Districts have 6, 6, and 7 state representatives

respectively; but the representatives are elected as a whole rather than by individual wards within each district. As a result, even though blacks represent almost 25 percent of the City's population there is only one black among nineteen state representatives from Houston. As regards to state senators, there four separate senatorial districts within which only the people of that district can vote for one senator. Accordingly, there is one black senator from Houston.

Within this framework, an examination of the specific employment experience of Negroes in Houston can proceed.

III. Prevailing Negro Employment Patterns

Drawing upon data provided by the annual survey reports (EEOC - 1 forms) submitted by covered private employers to the Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the familiar pattern of Negro exclusion from the mainstream of Houston's economic life is readily observable. Table I presents a summary of the racial employment pattern as of early 1966. The data covers approximately 38% of the estimated labor force for the identical time period. It covers about 43 percent of the total white employment for the period but less than 30 percent of the blacks employed in Houston. The wide difference in coverage between the two percentages is, of course, a comment itself about employment patterns. Those covered were all private firms which employed more than 100 employees for more than 20 weeks in the given year. That is to say, the data encompass the enterprises where wages are typically higher, working conditions better, and union activity more

TABLE II

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Summary Distribution of Anglo and Minority Group Employment for Houston SMSA by Sex, 1966

Occupation	Total Number	Total Percent	Negro Number	Negro Percent	Orientals and Spanish Surnames Number	Orientals and Spanish Surnames Percent	Anglo Number	Anglo Percent
Summary by Male:								
Managers	20,831	(100.0)	137	(.6)	270	(1.3)	20,424	(98.0)
Professional	19,066	(100.0)	51	(.3)	302	(1.6)	18,713	(98.1)
Technical	11,279	(100.0)	181	(1.6)	375	(3.3)	10,723	(95.7)
Sales	11,816	(100.0)	208	(1.8)	273	(2.3)	11,335	(96.0)
Clerical	14,009	(100.0)	391	(2.8)	486	(3.5)	13,132	(93.7)
Craftsmen	40,115	(100.0)	1,594	(4.1)	1,708	(4.2)	36,813	(91.8)
Operatives	40,694	(100.0)	7,809	(19.2)	2,977	(7.3)	29,908	(73.5)
Laborers	22,186	(100.0)	9,014	(40.6)	2,173	(9.8)	10,999	(49.6)
Services	11,506	(100.0)	4,356	(37.8)	1,276	(11.1)	5,874	(51.0)
Subtotal	191,502	(100.0)	23,741	(12.4)	9,840	(5.1)	157,921	(82.5)
Summary by Female:								
Managers	1,198	(100.0)	34	(2.8)	35	(3.0)	1,129	(94.2)
Professional	2,482	(100.0)	282	(11.4)	126	(5.1)	2,074	(83.6)
Technical	3,149	(100.0)	554	(17.6)	159	(5.0)	2,436	(77.3)
Sales	5,798	(100.0)	154	(2.6)	199	(3.4)	5,445	(94.0)
Clerical	28,787	(100.0)	399	(1.4)	826	(2.9)	27,562	(95.7)
Craftsmen	909	(100.0)	83	(9.1)	103	(11.3)	723	(79.5)
Operatives	4,691	(100.0)	777	(16.6)	782	(16.7)	3,132	(66.8)
Laborers	1,729	(100.0)	559	(32.3)	309	(17.9)	861	(49.8)
Services	8,188	(100.0)	2,680	(32.7)	860	(10.5)	4,648	(56.8)
Subtotal	56,931	(100.0)	5,522	(10.1)	3,399	(6.1)	48,010	(84.3)
Summary of Both:								
Managers	22,029	(100.0)	171	(.8)	305	(1.4)	21,553	(97.8)
Professional	21,548	(100.0)	333	(1.5)	428	(2.1)	20,787	(96.5)
Technical	14,428	(100.0)	735	(5.1)	534	(3.7)	13,159	(91.2)
Sales	17,614	(100.0)	362	(2.0)	472	(2.7)	16,780	(95.3)
Clerical	42,796	(100.0)	790	(1.8)	1,312	(3.1)	40,694	(95.1)
Craftsmen	41,024	(100.0)	1,677	(4.1)	1,811	(4.4)	37,536	(91.5)
Operatives	45,385	(100.0)	8,586	(19.0)	3,759	(8.3)	33,040	(72.8)
Laborers	23,915	(100.0)	9,573	(40.0)	2,482	(10.4)	11,860	(49.6)
Services	19,694	(100.0)	7,036	(35.7)	2,136	(10.8)	10,522	(53.4)
Grand Total	248,433	(100.0)	29,263	(11.8)	13,239	(5.3)	205,931	(82.9)

prevalent. Thus, blacks were concentrated in firms or enterprises not covered by the EEOC reporting requirement. By and large, such undertakings are small employers (those having fewer than 100 employees on their payroll for 20 weeks a year), numerous service occupations, non-profit enterprises, and the entire government sector. Other than government employment, working conditions in these sectors are relatively less favorable.

Of the 248,433 employees included in the data, 83 percent were Anglos and only 12 percent were Negroes.[14] By sex classification, 82 percent of the men surveyed were Anglos and 12 percent Negro; 84 percent of the women were Anglos and 10 percent of the Negroes. Almost 50% of the Negro women were employed in "service" occupations in the covered enterprises whereas 88 percent of the Negro males were employed in the operative, laborer, and service categories. The precise proportions of each occupation category by sex and race is shown by the percent column in Table I. It is obvious that Negroes--both male and female--are clustered in the occupations that typically classified as being unskilled or semi-skilled and largely blue collar type jobs. Conversely there is a paucity of Negroes of both sexes in all white collar occupations.

Turning from the aggregate summary to specific industries, the overall pattern in replicated in miniature. The ten largest employment industries accounted for 53 percent of the total employment covered by the EEOC survey. Similarly, 45 percent of the Negroes included in the data were employed in these ten industries. Hence, it is important to examine separately the employment patterns in each of these industries.

The Chemical Industry. Of the covered sectors, the largest single employment generating industry in Houston was the chemical industry. As can be seen by Table A (see Appendix for Tables A-J), Negroes accounted for only 5% of the total jobs. Only 35 Negro women were employed in the entire industry. Of the 1,160 jobs occupied by Negroes, 1,025 (or 88 percent) were in the operatives, laborer, or service occupations. As these blue collar occupations are rapidly being eliminated in this industry through increasingly automated production techniques, the chemical industry affords little prospect for providing employment for Houston's existing minority work force. Unless extensive efforts are made to prepare these groups to qualify for white collar jobs, the largest private employing industry in the city will become more of a white man's preserve than it already is.

Machinery Manufacturing (non-electrical). The second largest covered industry was non-electrical machinery manufacturing. Table B indicates the 1966 employment pattern. Of the 1,585 Negroes employed, only 5 were women. There were 1,680 Anglo females working. The 1,580 Negro males were concentrated in the blue collar occupations--operatives and laborer classification accounted for 1,360 (or 88 percent) of the total positions occupied by the blacks. The absence of Negroes in white collar occupctions is virtually absolute.

The Liquid Hydrocarbon Industry. A large industry that is relatively unique to the Houston labor market is the liquid hydrocarbon industry. Concerned with the extraction of products from

natural gas, Table C shows that in 1966 the industry employed 14,324 people. Only 249 (or less than 2%) of these were Negroes. Thirteen of the blacks were women; 2,620 of the Anglos were women. Of the males 185 (or 74 percent) were employed in the blue collar occupations of operatives, laborers, and services.

Petroleum. Another major industry that is uncommon to most urban areas but of major importance to the Houston business sector is petroleum. But as with the chemical industry, it too is undergoing a marked technological transformation which is altering its occupational structure. Blue collar jobs are becoming a smaller proportion of the total job picture. White collar occupations are increasing in absolute and relative terms. Yet as Table D clearly shows, the few Negroes in the industry (876, blacks or 6 percent of total employment) are almost exclusively employed in the blue collar jobs. Only 17 Negro females found jobs in the industry compared to 1,810 Anglo women.

Wholesale Trade. Having a large and growing urban population as well as being a regional manufacturing and transportation center, it is logical to expect wholesale trade to be a significant employment sector for the City. Table E indicates the industry's occupational distribution by race. Clerical and sales jobs dominate the industry's job structure; yet Negroes composed a scant 13 and 58 employees in these respective occupations. Negro women found few opportunities (only 39 of 2,276 women employed were black) despite the fact that black women elsewhere have traditionally found the industry accessible. As for the Negro males, the

pattern remains the same. Even though wholesale trades is a service industry, it has numerous blue collar occupations. It is in these jobs that Negroes are clustered. In total, Negroes held 15 percent of the jobs. In this industry, it is the distribution of the types of jobs held by Negroes rather than the number of opportunities offered that is of consequence.

Retail Trades (General Merchandise). With a constantly growing sales market, it is of no surprise that the retail sector is an important source of employment in Houston. Its job structure is heavily weighted toward sales and clerical type jobs. Indeed, almost 65% of the jobs are of these classifications (see Table F). Negroes, however, accounted for only 3% of employees in these two categories although they held 11% of the total jobs in the industry. The explanation for the paucity of Negroes employed in the major job occupations of the industry--jobs which are generally low paying and unskilled--rests again with the female employment patterns. The retail industry employed 7,458 women in 1966 but only 490 (or 6 percent) were Negroes and of these 269 (or 55%) were in service occupations. Only 120 Negro women were in sales and 46 in clerical positions. Negro males were almost exclusively employed in the blue collar categories (90% of the total were in such jobs). There are very few Negroes employed in the "visable jobs" which have direct contact with the buying public or in the white collar occupations. As the skill requirements for most of these jobs is minimal, it is impossible to conclude any other explanation for this pattern than the obvious existence of discriminatory employment practices.

Building Construction. The rapid growth of the City means by definition that the building industry is a booming business. As in most metropolitan cities, the construction industry is divided into two sectors: commercial and residential. The former is typically composed of large enterprises, is generally unionized, and is engaged in the construction of specialized projects for government and business. The latter sector is usually made up of small firms, which (in Houston) are almost totally non-unionized and which concentrate upon home building. For the most part, it is the commercial contractors who are covered by the EEOC data. Table G indicates the occupational status of the 416 Negroes (415 of whom were males) employed by the covered employers. As the industry is one in which the occupational structure is extensively blue collar, there is no particular significance to the fact that 98 percent of the Negroes in the industry are employed in such occupational classifications. The fact that Negroes represented only 4 percent of the total employment figure is highly significant. Especially since 64 percent of the Negroes employed in the industry were laborers.

Although there are few statistics available on the residential sector, it is likely that it does provide employment for a large number of minority people. The 1960 population census reported that 5,948 Negroes were employed in the construction industry. This figure represented 18 percent of the industry's employment figure. Sixty percent of the Negroes, however, were employed as laborers. As so few Negroes are accounted for in the EEOC survey

of the large contractors, it can safely be assumed that the preponderence of opportunities for Negroes in the building industry is in the residential sector. The fact that most of this work is done on the outer perimeters of the City imposes difficulties to greater Negro participation. The problems occur because building sites are becoming increasingly more distant from the Negro population clusters and public transportation is seldom available to these areas.

Medical Services. The medical facilities of Houston are superior. The center of the activities is the Texas Medical Center. Sixteen different institutions and fourteen medical organizations have joined together to form this complex which has attained international prominence. Education, research, and patient care are provided. In the Houston area there are 50 hospitals with a combined total of over 9,500 beds. Existing plans call for an additional 1,600 beds to be added in the next 3 to 5 years. There are also numerous clinics and convalescent homes in the city. The employment needs of this sector are rapidly increasing and it has become a primary target for the federal manpower programs.

Table H presents the results of the 1966 EEOC survey of the industry. In sharp contrast to the other industries discussed in this report, medical services is dominated by female workers. Of the 10,518 employees accounted for in Table H, 8,169 (or 77 percent) were women. Of the female employees, 29 percent were black women. Of the 3,163 Negroes (male and female) employed in

in the industry, 72 percent are employed in blue collar occupations. Most are employed in service occupations.

Fabricated Metals (not ordered or transported). Another large manufacturing industry is the fabricated metals industry. Table I presents the racial occupational breakdown. Negroes represented 13 percent of the total employment and they are almost entirely centered in the blue collar job categories. There were only 22 Negro women employed in the covered enterprises.

Food and Kindered Products: Due to its proximity to the large agricultural areas of East Texas and the fact that the city is a transportation hub, the food and kindered products industry is the tenth largest employer in the Houston labor market. Table J shows that Negroes composed almost 23 percent of the work force. All but 83 of the 2,049 Negro workers were males. The blue collar jobs--especially the laborer category--accounted for most of the job opportunities for black.

The Federal Government. Turning attention to the public sector (which was not included in the EEOC survey), it should be noted that the Federal Government is a major employer in the Houston SMSA. Table II indicates that between 1965 and 1967 that the number of Federal employees increased by 2,481 to a total of 15,799. Of the 1967 figure, 3,418 (or 21.6 percent) of the employees were black; but, 62 percent of this number were employed in the Post Office Department. Regardless of under which wage scale they worked, Negroes dominated the lowest paying categories. Typically, these occupations are the least skilled and afford the poorest opportunities for advancement.

TABLE II

NEGRO EMPLOYMENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR OF THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1965 AND 1967

Pay Category	1965 Employment	1965 Negro Number	1965 Negro Percent	1967 Employment	1967 Negro Number	1967 Negro Percent
Total All Pay Categories	13,318	2,777	20.9	15,799	3,418	21.6
Total General Schedule	7,478	614	8.2	8,569	753	8.8
GS-1 thru 4	1,639	436	26.6	1,726	505	29.3
GS-5 thru 8	1,565	113	7.2	1,688	124	7.3
GS-9 thru 11	1,878	57	3.0	2,062	105	5.1
GS-12 thru 18	2,396	8	.3	3,093	19	.6
Total Wage Board	1,116	466	41.8	1,097	468	42.7
Up thru $4,499	305	270	88.5	246	242	98.4
$4,500-$6,499	323	175	54.2	268	172	64.2
$6,500-$7,999	404	21	5.2	398	51	12.8
$8,000-and over	84	0	0.0	185	3	1.6
Total Postal Field Service	4,513	1,641	36.4	5,985	2,160	36.1
PFS 1 thru 4	3,802	1,490	39.2	5,033	1,932	38.4
PFS 5 thru 8	594	150	25.3	793	223	28.4
PFS 9 thru 11	98	1	1.0	132	3	2.3
PFS 12 thru 20	19	0	0.0	27	0	0.0
Total Other Pay Plans	211	56	26.5	148	37	25.0
Up thru $4,499	137	55	40.1	62	33	53.2
$4,500-$6,499	23	0	0.0	27	3	11.1
$6,500-$7,999	4	0	0.0	6	0	0.0
$8,000-and over	47	1	2.1	53	1	1.9

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Aside from direct employment, the Federal Government exercises another significant influence on employment in Houston through its spending policies. An Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) report disclosed that in fiscal year 1968 that the federal government spent $1.1 billion dollars in Harris County--$728 million of this within the Houston city limits. The figure includes money expended for salaries of persons on federal payrolls, social security benefits, all federal loan and grant programs, grants for public works projects, and other miscellaneous expenditure categories. The major agencies involved were: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) $281 million; the Department of Defense, $201 million; and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, $184 million. The effect that an infusion of this magnitude has as it ripples through the local economy is immense. It is certain that Negroes and whites have benefited by enhanced job opportunities, but it is impossible to separate the ripple effect by race.

The City Government. In 1968 the City of Houston itself employed about 8,000 people to provide its municipal services. Of this number, 1,792 (or over 20%) were Negroes. Of the jobs classified as being "above semi-skilled" levels, Negroes occupied 353 of the positions--or about 8.5 percent of the total number available.[15] The Fire Department had 53 Negroes on its staff and the Police Department had 51 Negro officers (13 of whom were above the rank of patrolman). Since 1967 the Mayor has prepared a Report on minority employment in City government as

part of an annual commentary on minority problems in general. The Report is given wide circulation in the Negro community to demonstrate that the city is "one that has a mission toward its minority groups."[16]

Other Areas. When the number of Negroes accounted for by the EEOC survey of all private employers of over 100 employees is combined with the figures of Negro employment in the City and Federal government (state and county figures are unavailable), the fact remains that about two-thirds of the Negroes in the Houston labor market remain unaccounted for. The explanation rests with the conclusion drawn by the Research Department of the Concentrated Employment Program--namely:

> In Houston, Negroes are overwhelmingly concentrated in personal service occupations such as maids, cooks, dishwashers, and yard men. Despite the fact that there has been some upgrading, the mass of Negroes have been untouched.[17]

IV. Concluding Observations

To be sure, there are a host of public and private programs in operation in the City that are attempting to alter the prevailing patterns of black employment. In the final report from which the above material is taken, at least one-third of the discussion will pertain to these vital efforts. The purpose of this paper is limited to stating the challenge--which is immense. It is safe to say, however, that the response has by no means been commensurate with the need.

It would be surprising if the position of the blacks in the Houston labor market was not found wanting. The magnitude of the divergence between black and white employment experience is extremely wide. It is true, of course, that the occupational and industrial patterns of black employment resembles the situation found in most other American cities. Yet, a congruity of inequity can never be a source of consolation or a reason for satisfaction with the current remedial efforts. To be no worse than others is no comfort if all are unjust and inadequate. Every reading of the economic barometer for blacks in Houston produces a frightfully low rating. Too often public officials respond only to claps of thunder (i.e., threats of civil disorder) rather than to indications of low barometric readings--despite the fact that the latter phenomenon has far more ominous implications than the former.

The tragedy of Houston is more of what could be than what is. Houston has a real opportunity to alter significantly the black employment situation. In many other cities such a goal is little more than a dream. The Houston economy is growing steadily. In the climate of industrial expansion and labor shortages, a tight labor market can foster meaningful change if a significant institutional response can be marshalled. Elsewhere, the drive to alter prevailing racial employment patterns in urban areas is often hobbled by the presence of relatively higher unemployment rates (for all races) and markedly slower economic growth rates.

Despite the battery of public and private manpower programs in operation, only surface changes seem to be the results. Fundamental alterations have yet to occur. The tight labor market has spawned a satisfaction with quantitative results rather than qualitative improvements. That is to say, there is a pervasive smugness expressed by many spokesmen that any one who wants "a job" can find one in Houston. There seems to be little serious concern about "the types of jobs" in which blacks are concentrated. The philosophy that a job is a job is to be revered in times of mass unemployment (as in the 1930's); but it is reputed in an era of tight labor demand and social change (as in the 1960's). For as the old adage goes, man does not live to work, he works to live. The upward aspirations of blacks to improve their economic status should be encouraged by powerful community institutions and not viewed with eschewal. The public school system should be especially responsive to these considerations. For as Dr. Kenneth Clark has so vividly written, it is the inadequate preparation provided by these school systems that performs the discriminating for prejudiced employers.[18] Poor schooling often means that employers need only to set minimum qualifications in order to exclude blacks from jobs in other than menial occupations.

There seems little doubt that the Houston labor market is capable of absorbing black men into entry level jobs that pay at least the $1.60 federal minimum wage. But it should always be remembered that $1.60 an hour for a full time employed person provides an annual income of only $3,200. Such an amount is

scarsely sufficient for a breadwinner to support a family. The occupational structure described in the preceding pages strongly implies that blacks are clustered in the lowest paying, least skilled, and most competitive jobs in the City. These are the employment patterns described by Elliot Liebow (in his now classic study of Negro streetcorner men) where:

> The job is not a stepping stone to something better. It is a dead end. It promises to deliver no more tomorrow, next month, or next year than it does today.[19]

Keenly aware that society indicates its value of the work rendered by the amount it is willing to pay for its performance, Liebow concluded that the man who holds such a job places "no lower value on the job than does the larger society around him."

Hence the need is to provide (1) substantive opportunities for upgrading black males or (2) entry into jobs that may not afford advancement opportunities but do provide substantial income (as many skilled craft occupations). The first priority for all training enterprises in Houston--be they academic schools, vocational schools, MDTA classes, the JOBS program, or simply private training programs--should be geared to these objectives. With a demonstrated surplus of available entry jobs, there can be no justification for the expenditure of funds for the preparation, recruitment, or placement of males in entry jobs.

As for black females, the occupational and industrial employment patterns are so exclusionary as to warrant investigation. What possible defense could be offered for the situation presented in the liquid hydrocarbon industry which employed 2,620 Anglo

women but only 13 black women? Or the petroleum industry which employed 1,810 Anglo women but only 17 black women? Or the wholesale trades which employed 2,276 Anglo women but only 39 black women. For black women, therefore, it seems apparent that discriminatory barriers are the immediate problems and that training and job placement offer little hope for more than ad hoc accomplishments. Given the fact that the welfare system of the state of Texas is both inadequate and inhumane; that women often must supplement or serve as breadwinners in low income families; and that there is the absence of an applicable minimum wage in the major employment sectors for women, they need special attention. With the obvious existence of pervasive discriminatory job patterns, public policy should set as a priority the eradication of these obstacles. It is of little significance to establish a flow of trained black women if there is no hope of finding placement under prevailing hiring standards. The suspicion that many of the manpower programs for black women are serving an income maintenance function rather than a training function seems warranted. Until the hiring practices are altered, however, there is little other purpose that they realistically perform. To say that this is a deplorable state of affairs it too tautological to require elaboration.

In his 1968 Report to the minority community, the Mayor of Houston stated that they reside in "a City that cares." There is doubt that the possibility exists to attain the implied promise of

such rhetoric; there is reason to fear, however, that the major power groups in the City do not share the urgency of this concern.

Footnotes

[1]The other four counties--Brazoria, Fort Bend, Liberty, and Montgomery--were only recently added in 1965 to the Houston SMSA.

[2]The "official" rates were estimated for 1967 by the U.S. Department of Labor in a special urban labor force survey in 20 cities. In Houston, nonwhite is a virtual synonym for black since Mexican-Americans are included in the white figure.

[3]"Statement by the Honorable Louie Welch, Mayor of the City of Houston," Hearings Before the National Commission on Urban Problems, Volume 3, (Washington Government Printing Office, 1968) pp. 134-5.

[4]See, Houston Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System Plans for Fiscal Year 1969, p. 13. (Hereafter referred to as CAMPS).

[5]"Dimensions of Poverty--Houston-Harris County Texas 1965," Report of the Houston-Harris County Economic Opportunity Organization [This organization has subsequently become the HCAAA which is quoted the text], p. 1.

[6]Personal interview with Mr. Terrence Traveland, Statistician for the Texas Employment Commission, (June 19, 1968).

[7]C.A.M.P.S. Plan, op. cit., p. 22.

[8]"Officials Answer US Motion: Schools Integrated As Can Be," Houston Chronicle (February 12, 1969), p. 1.

[11]Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 240.

[12]See F. Ray Marshall and Vernon M. Briggs, Jr., The Negro and Apprenticeship. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), pp. 175-181. Interviews in 1968 confirm the continued paucity of blacks in the crafts.

[13]Personal Interview with Mr. John Butler, Representative of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Houston, Texas (June 24, 1968).

[14]The remainder--about 5% were largely of Mexican-American descent. As the mandate of the present study pertains to Negroes only, there will be no specific discussion of the employment patterns of this group. When the term "white" is used in this paper, it means that those with Spanish surnames are included; when the term Anglos is used, they are excluded. I have included the Spanish-surname group, however, in the major statistical tables for the sake of greater clarity as to the nature of employment patterns in the city.

[15]"Dear Citizen...Report 2 on Minority Group Problems and Progress," Publication of the Office of the Mayor of Houston (August 31, 1968), p. 12.

[16]Ibid. p. 1.

[17]Personal Interview with Mr. Wiley Dunn, Research Director, Concentrated Employment Program, Houston, Texas (June 27, 1968).

[18]Kenneth B. Clark, Social and Economic Implications of Integration in the Public Schools (U.S. Department of Labor: Washington, D.C., 1964).

[19]Elliot Liebow, Tally's Corner (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), p. 63.

TABLE - A

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	2,878	6	17	2,855
Professional	2,244	1	22	2,221
Technical	1,477	22	20	1,435
Sales	445	0	7	438
Clerical	1,947	23	24	1,900
Craftsmen	4,704	83	26	4,595
Operatives	5,508	453	93	4,962
Laborers	842	448	59	335
Services	446	124	10	312
Total	20,491	1,160	278	19,053

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE 8

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT
IN THE MACHINERY (NON-ELECTRICAL) INDUSTRY
IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	1,496	2	16	1,478
Professional	873	1	5	867
Technical	953	2	16	935
Sales	1,266	1	4	1,261
Clerical	2,553	22	42	2,489
Craftsmen	5,188	140	169	4,879
Operatives	4,920	852	245	3,823
Laborers	1,151	508	92	551
Services	162	62	10	90
Total	18,562	1,590	599	16,373

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE C

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE LIQUID HYDROCARBONS (PRODUCTS RECOVERED FROM NATURAL GAS) INDUSTRY IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	1,552	0	8	1,544
Professional	3,614	2	35	3,577
Technical	1,574	9	37	1,528
Sales	103	10	1	98
Clerical	3,705	40	27	3,638
Craftsmen	1,056	2	10	1,044
Operatives	1,765	62	73	1,630
Laborers	798	50	107	641
Services	157	74	7	76
Total	14,324	249	305	13,770

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE [redacted] D

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE PETROLEUM AND REFINING INDUSTRY, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	1,641	1	1	1,639
Professional	1,977	2	16	1,959
Technical	678	9	8	661
Sales	99	0	1	98
Clerical	2,746	23	30	2,693
Craftsmen	3,550	58	40	3,452
Operatives	1,612	391	42	1,179
Laborers	374	268	51	55
Services	411	124	22	265
Total	13,088	876	211	12,001

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE E

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE WHOLESALE TRADE INDUSTRY IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	1,346	2	14	1,330
Professional	610	3	7	600
Technical	634	6	6	622
Sales	2,284	13	23	2,248
Clerical	3,300	58	133	3,109
Craftsmen	1,548	252	170	1,126
Operatives	2,273	555	198	1,520
Laborers	772	361	59	352
Services	117	65	7	45
Total	12,884	1,315	617	10,952

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE F

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE RETAIL TRADE (GENERAL MERCHANDISE) INDUSTRY IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	1,247	7	27	1,213
Professional	54	0	3	51
Technical	88	0	6	82
Sales	5,602	169	218	5,215
Clerical	2,257	67	112	2,078
Craftsmen	544	27	101	416
Operatives	737	181	88	468
Laborers	594	224	72	298
Services	1,049	607	31	411
Total	12,172	1,282	658	10,232

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE G

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	698	7	3	688
Professional	772	2	15	755
Technical	630	0	58	572
Sales	10	0	0	10
Clerical	924	0	17	907
Craftsmen	3,508	54	114	3,340
Operatives	2,095	83	185	1,827
Laborers	2,096	268	222	1,606
Services	201	2	18	181
Total	10,934	416	632	9,886

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE 14

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE MEDICAL SERVICES INDUSTRIES IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Manager	740	19	27	424
Professional	1,853	288	147	1,418
Technical	2,347	456	214	1,677
Sales	6	2	0	4
Clerical	1,445	114	172	1,159
Craftsmen	205	28	3	174
Operatives	1,161	380	158	623
Laborers	648	434	108	106
Services	2,383	1,442	282	659
Total	10,518	3,163	1,111	6,244

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY GROUP OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE MEDICAL SERVICES INDUSTRIES IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

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Professional	1,853	288	147	1,418
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Operatives	1,161	380	158	623
Laborers	648	434	108	106
Services	2,383	1,442	282	659
Total	10,518	3,163	1,111	6,244

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

TABLE 5

SUMMARY OF ANGLO AND MINORITY OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE FOOD AND KINDRED PRODUCTS INDUSTRY IN THE HOUSTON SMSA, 1966

Occupation	Total	Negro	Spanish Surname and Oriental	Anglo
Managers	850	15	21	814
Professional	162	1	2	159
Technical	150	24	12	114
Sales	1,534	93	43	1,398
Clerical	794	13	20	761
Craftsmen	998	138	80	780
Operatives	2,360	652	297	1,411
Laborers	2,101	1,009	280	812
Services	221	104	6	111
Total	9,170	2,049	761	6,360

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission