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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RACIAL PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANY COMMANDERS R--ETC(U)
AUG 75 J H NEWBY

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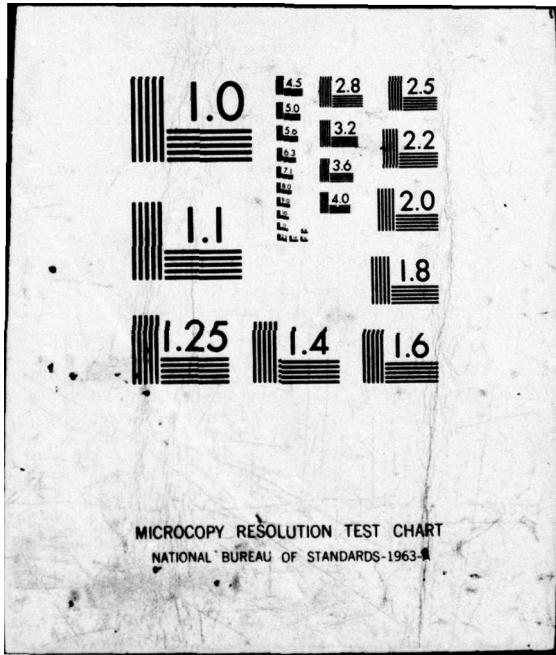
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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The purpose of the study was to describe variations in racial perceptions, along with ideal and real patterns of leadership behavior among a sample-group of Army leaders who have vital roles to play in the area of race relations. Questionnaire data were utilized from a sample of convenience which consisted of 104 company commanders and 104 non-commissioned officers assigned to five Army installations. The data revealed the lack of any significant correlation between company commanders' racial perceptions, and patterns of leadership behavior.			

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Consequently, the data indicated that the leader behaviors of the commanders occurred partially independent of their racial attitudes.

The following general conclusions were drawn from the study.

(1) The lack of a significant relationship between racial perceptions and patterns of leadership behavior point to the necessity of examining situational determinants of leadership patterns, as they might relate to race relations in the army.

(2) While racial integration seemed to be an accepted and valued phenomenon in the Army, Black company commanders tended to differ from White company commanders relative to the perception of day-to-day Army experiences in terms of race. Generally, Blacks believe that Whites are receiving preferential treatment while Whites believe that Blacks are receiving preferential treatment.

(3) Company commanders and non-commissioned officers identified Consideration (looking out for the welfare of the men) as the commanders' predominant pattern of leadership.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RACIAL PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANY COMMANDERS
RELEVANT TO ARMY SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND KNOWLEDGE

FINAL REPORT

John H. Newby, Jr. D.S.W.

August 1975

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RACIAL PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANY COMMANDERS
RELEVANT TO ARMY SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND KNOWLEDGE

Problem and Purpose

This study was concerned with the nature of the relationship between racial perceptions and patterns of leadership behavior among Black and White Army company commanders. The purpose of the study was to describe variations in racial perceptions, along with ideal and real patterns of leadership behavior, among a sample-group of Army leaders who have vital roles to play in the area of race relations. In conjunction with the objectives of the study, relevant implications for Army social work practice were examined.

Methodology

Questionnaire data were utilized from a purposive sample of 104 company commanders and 104 non-commissioned officers assigned to five Army installations. Two research instruments were used for data collection, namely, the Racial Perceptions Inventory and the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire. Ten hypotheses were tested in relation to the goals of the study. The hypotheses were statistically analyzed by either the Pearson-Product Moment Correlation Coefficient or t test.

Summary of the Findings and General Conclusions

Summary of the Findings Pertaining to the Relationship Between Racial Perceptions and Patterns of Leadership Behavior

Perhaps a most significant finding resulting from analyzing the data pertains to the relationship between racial perceptions and patterns of leadership behavior among the company commanders who were the subjects of study. Accordingly, analysis of the data indicate the existence of insignificant correlations between racial perceptions (i.e., attitudes toward integration and perception of racial discrimination) and two dimensions of leadership behavior, namely, Consideration and Initiating Structure as measured by the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire. The finding of no significant relationship between racial perceptions and patterns of leadership behavior seems to indicate the partial independence of overt behavioral manifestations from racial attitudes and/or perceptions. In conjunction with this finding a t test which measured the difference between the commanders' Consideration scores (real) and Initiating Structure scores (real) resulted in a t value which was significant at the .01 level. In short, the data indicate that the commanders' leadership scores were significantly higher on the dimension of Consideration than they were on Initiating Structure. This finding was corroborated by NCO ratings of leadership patterns demonstrated by their company commanders.

Summary of the Findings Relating to
Ideal and Real Patterns of Leadership
Behavior Among Company Commanders

Leadership patterns of company commanders were measured by scores they received on the leadership dimensions of Consideration and Initiating Structure measured by the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire. Accordingly, the data revealed a significant discrepancy between company commanders' perceptions of their ideal versus real patterns of leadership behavior. In this context, the hypothesis was tested that there would also be a significant difference between company commanders' descriptions of ideal versus real Consideration and Initiating Structure. "T" tests, for measuring the significance of the difference between the mean scores of company commanders vis-a-vis ideal and real Consideration and ideal versus real Initiation of Structure, were significant at the .01 level. The data, therefore, provide support for the theoretical formulation that discrepancies often exist between expected (ideal) patterns of leadership behavior, and the manner in which roles are actually performed. In short, role behaviors do not always measure up to role expectations.

Two hypotheses were tested to measure the significance of difference between commanders' and NCOs' perceptions of ideal and real patterns of leadership behavior. No significant differences were found between company commanders' self-descriptions of their leadership behaviors, and NCOs' descriptions of the commanders' leadership behaviors. It might, therefore be concluded from the data, that NCOs were generally knowledgeable of their company commander's real (actual) pattern of leadership behavior. NCOs were also very closely aligned with their company commanders in describing ideal

patterns of leadership behavior for company commanders.

Literature pertaining to expected discrepancies between role perceptions and role expectations, depending upon one's place in a leadership hierarchy, was not supported by the data. Speculative factors, which might be related to the lack of any significant discrepancy between leadership roles described by commanders, and NCOs are: (1) the emphasis the Army places on the crucial nature of leadership at the company level, (2) the military longevity of the NCO respondents and (3) respondents' involvement in the Vietnam War, which might be related to NCOs' cognizance of real and ideal patterns of leadership for company commanders. The latter point is being made in view of the crucial nature of leadership in war zones.

The conclusions drawn from analyzing the data pertaining to company commanders' and NCOs' descriptions of ideal and real patterns of leadership behavior are: (1) significant discrepancies exist between the way commanders really perform their leadership roles and their ideal expectations, as to how leadership roles ought to be performed, and (2) NCOs tend to agree with their commanders' perceptions of real and ideal patterns of leadership behavior.

Summary of the Findings Relating to
Differential Racial Perceptions Between
Black and White Company Commanders

The data reveal the existence of perception differentials, along racial lines, of company commander's daily race-related experiences in the Army. There was a tendency for Black company commanders to differ from White company commanders in their attitudes toward integration. Accordingly, Black company

commanders tended to have more favorable attitudes toward integration than White commanders.

The most significant difference between the racial perceptions of Black and White company commanders relates to the perception of racial discrimination. The difference between Blacks and Whites on this variable was significant at the .01 level.

In addition to discrepancies regarding attitudes toward integration and perception of racial discrimination, Black commanders differed significantly from Whites on their perceptions of backlash feelings. The data regarding backlash feelings indicate that the White company commanders believe that they are being threatened by Blacks, and that Blacks receive preferential treatment in the Army. It might be concluded from the data that perceptions and attitudes regarding the race-related experiences of Black company commanders in the Army are different from those of White company commanders. Relative to perceptions of racial discrimination, Blacks believe that Whites receive preferential treatment while Whites believe that Blacks receive preferential treatment. Therefore, the data suggest the existence of a "perception gap" between Blacks and Whites relative to their race-related experience in the Army.

Summary of the Findings Relating to Attitudes
Toward Integration, Vietnam Duty Status and
Pre-Army Interracial Experiences

The data indicate that attitudes toward integration among the company commanders were no different depending upon (1) whether the commander served in a combat or support unit in Vietnam or (2) whether or not he had had pre-Army interracial experiences. However, the commanders who reported that they had not had pre-Army interracial contacts had more favorable attitudes toward integration than commanders who reported that they had had pre-Army interracial contacts.

Implications of the Findings for Army
Social Work Practice

As specialists in human relations and social functioning, social workers are being called upon to perform key race relations roles in the Army. They provide consultation to commanders, supervise and conduct race relations programs, serve as members of commander's staffs, teach, conduct race relations research, etc. A salient finding of this study which might have implications for Army social work practice, is the notion that leadership behaviors and/or race-related behaviors may occur partially independent of racial attitudes or perceptions.

Racial discord in the Army seems to be more related to offensive race-related behaviors than to racial perceptions and/or racial attitudes. Therefore, efforts to modify: (1) behavioral manifestations, related to racial

disharmony and (2) the social context in which prejudice and discriminatory practices arise might prove more beneficial than efforts directed toward changes in racial attitudes. Modification of behavior, and/or situational factors, relative to race-related problems, might then serve as an impetus for the alteration of untoward racial attitudes.

In short, the findings pertaining to the relationship between racial perceptions and patterns of leadership behavior, seem to have implications for Army social practice in the following contexts:

- (1) They suggest that Army social workers, who have race relations responsibilities, should explore situational variables, i.e., peer-groups, reference groups, rank stratification, etc. as they relate to leadership roles in the area of race relations. Thus, when these situational variables, or factors are taken into account, more accurate predications might be made regarding patterns of leadership behavior as they might pertain to race relations in the Army.
- (2) Social workers assessing leader behaviors, as they might relate to race relations, should be cognizant of the fact that leadership roles, like other behavior do not occur within a vacuum. Accordingly, leadership is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, i.e., there are many factors which influence it, and similar stimuli produce variant results. Therefore, leadership roles relative to race relations might be understood best if they are examined within an interactional frame. For example, the interaction of the leader's racial perceptions and attitudes along with; (1) the race-related values, opinions and beliefs of followers, and (2) racial factors relative to the situation in which the leadership occurs.
- (3) Army social workers desirous of exploring the relationship between racial perceptions or attitudes, and racial behaviors should be aware of the complexities which might be inherent in their task.

A majority of the company commanders in this study described their leadership roles as being aligned with the Consideration dimension of

leader behavior. Therefore, the data indicate that a "human relations" foundation appears to be present among a sample-group of Army leaders who have crucial race-related roles to play. If similarities exist between the leadership patterns of company commanders in this study and those performing parallel roles throughout the Army, it might follow that company commanders generally have considerable concern for the welfare of their men. Consequently, this component of their leadership might serve as a viable link to the human relation and/or social functioning roles of Army social workers.

The data indicate further that there is a very significant relationship between racial perceptions and the race of company commanders. In this regard, the data seem to give Army social workers evidence that differential perceptions of race-related Army experiences pertain to the Black and White subject of this study as they did in similar race relations research conducted by the Army. Therefore, social workers' knowledge of such a substantial difference in racial perception among Blacks and Whites might:

- (1) Serve as a basis for social work intervention into the area of race relations in the Army since the dysfunctional elements of racial disharmony tend to have a negative impact upon individual, group, and organizational functioning.
- (2) Serve as a basis for calling the attention of Army leaders to the "perception gap" between Blacks and Whites and the need to explore factors which give rise to this situation.
- (3) Serve to stimulate discussions, conferences, training programs, "gripe-sessions" etc., relative to offensive behaviors and discriminatory

implementation of policies, which might be related to the perception differentials. These activities might then serve to increase trans-racial communication and understanding.

(4) Stimulate the interest of the Army's command structure to evaluate facets of daily Army life, i.e., promotions, punishments, the judicial systems, etc., which might relate to discrepant racial perceptions between Blacks and Whites in the Army.

(5) Call the Army's attention to the need to bring its efforts to eliminate racial discrimination into better alignment with its achievements in the area of racial integration.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are:

(1) The sample-group of respondents was not chosen at random. Therefore, generalizations cannot be made beyond the respondents herein discussed.

(2) The instrument used to measure patterns of leadership behavior focused upon two general dimensions of leader behavior rather than upon specified race-related behaviors per se.

(3) Interviews were not conducted along with the administration of the questionnaires.

(4) The sample of Black company commanders, included in the study, was proportional to their numbers in the population of study. However, a larger number might have facilitated more comparisons.

(5) The installations from which the sample was drawn may not have been "typical Army posts" for research related to race relations in the Army.

Recommendations for Further Research

The data analyzed in this study seem to highlight the need for further research as indicated below:

(1) The data point to the desirability of examining the effects of factors other than racial attitudes and racial perceptions as they might relate to overt racial behaviors. Generally, there appears to be a need to examine relevant situational determinants of leadership and overt race-related behavioral manifestations.

(2) The data indicate a need to study the etiology of perception differentials between Blacks and Whites in the Army.

(3) Significant demographic variables should be studied to see how they might relate to racial perceptions and race-related behaviors.

(4) Follow-up studies could be done on: (1) specific individuals who are significantly perceptive of racial discrimination in the Army and (2) on specific individuals who feel that other racial groups receive preferential treatment.

(5) Research should be conducted to discover the possible communication barriers that might precipitate the "racial perceptions gap" extant in the Army.

(6) Research should be undertaken to study the relationship between variant values, beliefs, opinions, etc., of different racial groups in the Army, and problems which arise in the area of race relations.