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ABSTRACT

Historical changes reflected in the educational goals of black and white high school seniors in 1966 and 1972 were compared. The five orientation dimensions studied were aspiration, expectation, goal deflection, goal certainty, and goal intensity. Data were collected in the four contiguous Northeast Alabama counties of Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, and Marshall. These counties, which corresponded most closely to traditional Appalachia, were mountainous, predominantly rural, and characterized by low incomes and poor living conditions. In 1966, the sample consisted of 924 students in 19 high schools. In 1972, 918 students in 15 of the original 19 schools comprised the sample. Questionnaires were group administered to all seniors. Among the findings were: (1) educational aspirations of black and white boys were generally lower in 1972; (2) educational expectation levels of boys were generally lower in 1972 while female expectations were not; (3) rates of anticipatory goal deflection did not change greatly from 1966 to 1972; and (4) black boys and girls revealed more certainty about achieving their expected goal in 1972. Findings indicated that Northeast Alabama youth showed a rather consistent trend toward a lowering of their educational goals and a weaker value for education. Future historical comparisons were recommended to determine whether these changes represent merely a short-term trend or are more indicative of a long-term shift in societal values. The findings are presented in separate tables by sex for each of the five orientation dimensions. (NQ)

**EDUCATIONAL PROJECTIONS OF SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN YOUTH:
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS IN NORTHEAST ALABAMA, 1966-1972***

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine historical change as it is reflected in the aspirations and expectations of youth in a specific geographic area over time. In this instance attention is focused on the educational goals of high school seniors in 1966 compared with their 1972 counterparts.

Source and Collection of Data

Data for this study are one in a series of state reports involving a regional research effort.^{1/} Surveys of high school seniors were conducted in 1966 and 1972 in the four contiguous Northeast Alabama counties of Cherokee, DeKalb, Jackson, and Marshall. These particular counties are those corresponding most closely to traditional characteristics of Appalachia.^{2/} The area is mountainous, predominantly rural, and characterized by low incomes and poor living conditions.

In 1966 the study was initiated in a sample of high schools representing the four-county area. A list of all 33 high schools was compiled. Two schools were part of independent city school systems and four were segregated Negro schools. By reason of their unique structural characteristics, all six of these schools were selected for inclusion in the study.

The remaining 27 high schools were affiliated with county-wide school systems. Each school was ranked from largest to smallest on the basis of combined January 1, 1966 enrollment in the 10th and 12th grades. Thirteen county schools were randomly selected by beginning with the largest high school and selecting every other one. With one exception, all county schools were located outside an urban area. Nineteen schools were included in the 1966 contact.

*Paper presented to the Rural Sociology Section of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, Memphis, Tennessee, February, 1974. This research was conducted by the School of Agriculture and Agricultural Experiment Station under Hatch Project 327 (S-81) "Development of Human Resource Potentials of Rural Youth in the South and Their Patterns of Mobility."

^{1/}Participating states in the Southern Regional Research Project S-81, include Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas.

^{2/}Selection of the area was made in 1965 by a multidisciplinary research team undertaking a broadly based study of economic and social development in Alabama's Appalachian Region.

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By 1972 the four Negro schools had been eliminated and their students assigned to previously all-white schools, leaving 15 of the original 19 schools for re-study. In addition, the one county high school located in an urban place had withdrawn from the county system and become an independent city system. No private schools had developed in the area in response to desegregation. Racial integration of the schools represents the only major structural change in the community and educational experience of local youth, and this impact was minimal because of the small number of black persons in the area.

Questionnaires were group administered in 1966 and 1972 to all seniors present in school on the contact day. In 1966 Alabama was not a participating member of the regional research project (S-61). The states that were members used identical questionnaires in 1966 and 1972. Alabama, on the other hand, utilized a questionnaire in 1966 which was patterned after and similar but not identical to the regional questionnaire. Alabama adopted the regional questionnaire for use in 1972, and all efforts were made to insure coding similarity between the 1966 and the 1972 data.

Composition of the study populations in 1966 and 1972 is presented in Table 1. Particular note should be made of the fact that the number of blacks in the Alabama sample was quite small. In order to be consistent with reports from other states, a racial comparison by sex and year was made using chi square as the test statistic. However, given the small sub-sample of blacks in Alabama, the chi square results are questionable in regard to blacks.

Table 1. Race - Sex Distribution of Alabama Study Population by Year

Sex	Total		Black		White	
	1966 No.	1972 No.	1966 No.	1972 No.	1966 No.	1972 No.
Male	438	470	18	23	420	447
Female	486	448	41	22	445	426
Total	924	918	59	45	865	873

Findings

The findings concerning historical change in the educational orientations of black and white youth are presented in separate tables by sex for each of five orientation dimensions. These dimensions include aspiration, expectation, goal deflection, goal certainty, and goal intensity.

Aspirations

Educational aspirations of black and white boys were generally lower in 1972 than in 1966, although overall aspirations were relatively high,

Table 1-1. Historical change in aspirations of black boys occurred along the lines of a marked decline in the proportion desiring to complete graduate study and a marked increase in the proportion wanting to take vocational training. Interestingly, no black boys in 1972 wanted to attend a junior college compared to 12 percent in 1966.

White boys showed consistently lower levels of educational aspirations in 1972 than in 1966. Decreases occurred in the proportions desiring to attain the three highest levels of education. In contrast, the proportions aspiring to the three lowest educational levels increased, with the largest increase (9 percent) being in the technical training category. Differences observed for white boys were statistically significant, as tested by chi square, but not significant for black boys.^{3/}

Historical change in the educational aspirations of black and white girls from 1966 to 1972 indicated a lowering in educational aspirations similar to that occurring among boys, Table 1-2. Increases were observed in the proportions of black girls wanting to quit high school and to terminate their education upon graduation from high school. However, the largest increase (11 percent) was at the community college level. A rather large decrease (20 percent) occurred among black girls aspiring to complete high school and take vocational training. Among those with high educational aspirations, fewer black girls in 1972 than in 1966 wanted to complete graduate study, while more (7 percent) wanted to terminate their education upon graduation from college.

It is worthy of special note that an opposite trend occurred among the black boys and girls in regard to vocational training versus community college. Twenty-five percent more of the black boys in 1972 than in 1966 desired vocational training; whereas, almost 20 percent fewer black girls in 1972 than in 1966 desired such training. On the other hand, almost 12 percent fewer black boys and over 11 percent more black girls wanted to complete junior college. This may indicate either the presence of some confusion among blacks as to the types of training offered in the junior college and trade schools or a shifting of aspirations resulting from additional post-high school alternatives created by the opening of both kinds of schools within the area.

Changes in aspiration levels were not as pronounced for white girls as for black girls. Increased proportions were found among white girls with low educational aspirations. Decreased proportions occurred among those with medium and high educational aspirations. Historical change in the educational aspirations among neither black nor white girls was statistically significant.

^{3/}Chi square was used to test historical change in educational orientations. Differences were considered significant if the .05 level of confidence was reached.

Expectations

As was true for aspirations, educational expectation levels of boys were generally lower at the most recent time, Table 2-1. Among black boys, the proportion expecting to complete high school or less was 25 percent higher in 1972 than in 1966. Large decreases occurred at the community college level (12 percent). Worthy of special note is the fact that in 1972 many more Negro boys (55 percent) desired vocational training than felt they (26 percent) would achieve it. The percentage of black males expecting to finish college was higher, although fewer expected to complete graduate study.

White males showed a consistent trend toward lower educational expectations from 1966 to 1972. This trend was not as pronounced as that observed with regards to their educational aspirations. Increases occurred in the three lower ranked educational categories and decreases in the three highest ones. Differences were statistically significant for white but not for black boys.

Female expectations were not consistently lower from 1966 to 1972. Smaller proportions of black girls expected the three lowest ranking educational levels. Increases, on the other hand, occurred in the proportions expecting junior college and college educations. However, no black girls in 1972 reported expecting to complete graduate study, while 7.3 percent had done so in 1966.

Fewer white girls expected to quit high school but a rather large increase occurred in the proportion who expected only to complete high school. Increases for white girls occurred in the proportions with both the lowest and highest educational expectations with a trend away from vocational and junior college types of education. White girls, in general, experienced less decline in educational expectations relative to aspirations. Differences for white girls were significant but not those for black girls.

Goal Deflections

Rates of anticipatory goal deflection did not change greatly from 1966 to 1972, Tables 3-1 and 3-2. For all race - sex groupings in 1966 and 1972 a majority (about two-thirds) held aspirations congruent with their expectations. Moreover, at both points in time students were more likely to be negatively oriented, i.e. aspirations greater than expectations, than positively oriented.

In specific terms, deflections among black boys were somewhat more negative (aspirations higher than expectations in 1972 than in 1966). A different picture emerged for white boys. Both positive and negative goal deflections decreased in occurrence indicating a trend toward somewhat greater congruity between aspirations and expectations. Differences were not significant for either black or white boys.

Girls of both races exhibited less goal agreement than boys. The black girls showed an increase in positive, as well as, negative goal deflections, with correspondingly fewer experiencing no goal deflection. White girls showed a smaller proportion with negative goal deflections, but a larger proportion with positive goal deflection. The proportion of girls experiencing no goal deflection was more similar that of boys in 1972 than it was 7 years earlier. Differences were significant for white girls at the .01 level, but not for the black girls.

Certainty of Expectation

Certainty of achieving ones expected educational goal indicates the degree to which a person feels confident that his projected educational level is achievable, Table 4-1. Black boys in 1972 showed more certainty than their counterparts in 1966. In contrast, virtually no change occurred in the proportions of white boys reporting the various degrees of certainty about their anticipated goal attainment. Differences were not significant for either black or white males.

Black girls, as was true for black boys, revealed more optimism about achieving their expected goal in 1972 than in 1966. Just the opposite was true for white girls. The proportion who were sure or very sure of achieving their educational goal was 8 percent lower. Differences were significant for the white girls, only.

Intensity of Aspiration

Each youth ranked seven life goals in terms of their importance to him. One of these goals was education. Youth in all race - sex groupings ranked education lower in importance as a life goal in 1972 than had youth in 1966, Tables 5-1 and 5-2. More boys, both black and white, gave their educational goals a low ranking, Table 5-3. Chi square differences showing historical change in the intensity of aspirations for white boys were highly significant but not for black boys. The same trend held true for the girls, Table 5-4. Fewer black and white girls rated their educational goals as high in importance to them. Differences were significant at the .05 level for the black girls and at the .01 level for the white girls.

Summary and Conclusions

Northeast Alabama youth showed a rather consistent trend toward a lowering of their educational goals and a weaker value for education. From these findings, one must conclude that Reich's (1970) "greening of America" thesis has reached these rural youth. One might also conclude that attempts by government and industry to increase interest in vocational training as a desirable alternative to a college degree may have had some effect. This is especially true in reference to blacks where increasing realism may have occurred relative to opportunities for dramatic upward mobility. The tumultuous decade of the sixties was a time of increasing pessimism and cynicism on the part of many Americans which caused youth to question the promise of unlimited opportunity for all.

Future historical comparisons need to be made to determine whether these changes represent merely a short-term trend or are more indicative of a long-term shift in societal values. Clearly, educational policy makers must heed the existence of changing educational goals among rural youth.

TABLE 1-1: Historical Changes in Educational Aspirations of Northeast Alabama Boys: 1966-1972

Aspirations	Black			White		
	1966 N=17	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=412	1972 N=443	Change
Quit High School	0.0	0.0	(-)	1.0	2.0	(+1.0)
Graduate from High School	11.8	9.1	(-2.7)	7.3	12.0	(+4.7)
Graduate from H.S. & Tech. School	29.4	54.6	(+25.2)	24.0	32.7	(+8.7)
Graduate from Jr. College	11.8	0.0	(-11.8)	10.2	4.8	(-5.4)
Graduate from College	23.5	31.8	(+8.3)	33.5	29.1	(-4.4)
Complete Graduate Study	23.5	4.5	(-19.0)	24.0	19.4	(-4.6)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=6.7$ d.f.=4 P>.05			$\chi^2=24.4$ d.f.=6 P<.001		

TABLE 1-2: Historical Changes in Educational Aspirations of Northeast Alabama Girls: 1966-1972

Aspirations	Black			White		
	1966 N=41	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=443	1972 N=422	Change
Quit High School	0.0	4.5	(+4.5)	.5	1.2	(+.7)
Graduate from High School	2.4	4.6	(+2.2)	9.2	14.0	(+4.8)
Graduate from H.S. & Tech. School	56.1	36.4	(-19.7)	36.3	35.1	(-1.2)
Graduate from Jr. College	2.4	13.6	(+11.2)	9.5	8.8	(-.7)
Graduate from College	24.4	31.8	(+7.4)	30.5	25.6	(-4.9)
Complete Graduate Study	14.7	9.1	(-5.6)	14.0	15.3	(+1.3)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=6.66$ d.f.=5 P>.05			$\chi^2=10.66$ d.f.=6 P>.05		

TABLE 2-1: Historical Changes in Educational Expectations of Northeast Alabama Boys: 1966-1972

Educational Level	Black			White		
	1966 N=18	1972 N=23	Change	1966 N=412	1972 N=439	Change
Quit High School	0.0	13.1	(+13.1)	1.7	2.5	(+.8)
Graduate from High School	16.7	26.1	(+9.4)	14.3	21.0	(+6.7)
Graduate from H.S. & Tech. School	44.4	26.1	(-18.3)	27.2	30.3	(+3.1)
Graduate from Jr. College	16.7	4.3	(-12.4)	15.8	9.1	(-6.7)
Graduate from College	16.7	30.4	(+13.7)	29.6	26.2	(-3.4)
Complete Graduate Study	5.5	0.0	(-5.5)	11.4	10.9	(-.5)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=7.39$ d.f.=5 P>.05			$\chi^2=15.23$ d.f.=5 P<.01		

TABLE 2-2: Historical Changes in Educational Expectations of Northeast Alabama Girls: 1966-1972

Educational Level	Black			White		
	1966 N=41	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=443	1972 N=424	Change
Quit High School	2.4	0.0	(-2.4)	2.7	1.7	(-1.0)
Graduate from High School	2.4	0.0	(-2.4)	18.7	24.8	(+6.1)
Graduate from H.S. & Tech. School	58.6	45.5	(-13.1)	37.2	27.9	(-9.3)
Graduate from Jr. College	4.9	22.7	(+17.8)	11.1	11.0	(-.1)
Graduate from College	24.4	31.8	(+7.4)	26.2	27.2	(+1.0)
Complete Graduate Study	7.3	0.0	(-7.3)	4.1	7.4	(+3.3)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=7.54$ d.f.=5 P>.05			$\chi^2=14.75$ d.f.=5 P<.02		

TABLE 3-1: Historical Change in Anticipatory Goal Deflections of Northeast Alabama Boys: 1966-1972

Goal Deflection	Black			White		
	1966 N=17	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=407	1972 N=437	Change
None	64.7	59.1	(-5.6)	63.4	68.4	(+5.0)
Positive	5.9	4.5	(-1.4)	4.7	4.3	(-.4)
+1	(5.9)	(4.5)	(-1.4)	(3.7)	(2.7)	(-1.0)
+2	(-)	(-)	(-)	(1.0)	(1.1)	(+.1)
+3	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(.5)	(+.5)
+4	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
+5	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Negative	29.4	36.4	(+7.0)	31.9	27.3	(-4.6)
-1	(5.8)	(22.7)	(+16.9)	(18.9)	(16.2)	(-2.7)
-2	(11.8)	(13.7)	(+1.9)	(6.4)	(6.4)	(0)
-3	(11.8)	(-)	(-11.8)	(5.4)	(3.4)	(-2.0)
-4	(-)	(-)	(-)	(.7)	(.7)	(0)
-5	(-)	(-)	(-)	(.5)	(.6)	(+.1)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=4.47$ d.f.=4 P>.05			$\chi^2=6.05$ d.f.=8 P>.05		

TABLE 3-2: Historical Change in Anticipatory Goal Deflections of Northeast Alabama Girls: 1966-1972

Goal Deflection	Black			White		
	1966 N=41	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=441	1972 N=418	Change
None	73.2	63.6	(-9.6)	67.3	66.0	(-1.3)
Positive	7.3	13.6	(+6.3)	.7	4.2	(+3.5)
+1	(2.4)	(9.1)	(+6.7)	(.5)	(3.1)	(+2.6)
+2	(4.9)	(-)	(-4.9)	(.2)	(.7)	(+.5)
+3	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(.2)	(+.2)
+4	(-)	(4.5)	(+4.5)	(-)	(.2)	(+.2)
+5	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Negative	19.5	22.8	(+3.3)	32.0	29.8	(-2.2)
-1	(7.3)	(18.2)	(+10.9)	(18.6)	(23.7)	(+5.1)
-2	(7.3)	(-)	(-7.3)	(8.2)	(4.1)	(-4.1)
-3	(4.9)	(4.6)	(-.3)	(4.5)	(1.2)	(-3.3)
-4	(-)	(-)	(-)	(.5)	(.8)	(+.3)
-5	(-)	(-)	(-)	(.2)	(0)	(-.2)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=7.59$ d.f.=6 P>.05			$\chi^2=30.85$ d.f.=9 P<.001		

TABLE 4-1: Historical Changes in the Certainty of Educational Expectations of Northeast Alabama Boys: 1966-1972

Certainty	Black			White		
	1966 N=17	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=416	1972 N=438	Change
(1) Very sure	17.7	18.2	(+.5)	29.8	30.1	(+.3)
(2) Sure	29.4	40.9	(+11.5)	44.0	41.8	(-2.2)
(3) Not very sure	52.9	27.3	(-25.6)	19.5	19.9	(+.4)
(4) Uncertain	0.0	9.1	(+9.1)	6.5	6.8	(+.3)
(5) Very uncertain	0.0	4.5	(+4.5)	.2	1.4	(+1.2)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
	$\chi^2=4.32$ d.f.=4 P>.05			$\chi^2=3.63$ d.f.=4 P>.05		

TABLE 4-2: Historical Changes in the Certainty of Educational Expectations of Northeast Alabama Girls: 1966-1972

Certainty	Black			White		
	1966 N=41	1972 N=22	Change	1966 N=444	1972 N=419	Change
(1) Very sure	19.5	40.9	(+21.4)	31.8	28.9	(-2.9)
(2) Sure	36.6	22.7	(-13.9)	43.5	38.2	(-5.3)
(3) Not very sure	36.6	31.8	(-4.8)	19.1	22.0	(+2.9)
(4) Uncertain	4.9	4.6	(-.3)	4.9	9.9	(+5.0)
(5) Very uncertain	2.4	0.0	(-2.4)	.7	1.0	(+.3)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	

$\chi^2=3.93$ d.f.=4 $P>.05$ $\chi^2=10.57$ d.f.=4 $P<.03$

TABLE 5-1: Historical Changes in the Intensity of Educational Aspirations of Northeast Alabama Boys: 1966-1972

Rank Importance	Black			White		
	1966 N=17	1972 N=21	Change	1966 N=414	1972 N=425	Change
1	47.0	38.1	(-8.1)	45.4	25.6	(-19.8)
2	11.8	14.3	(+2.5)	12.1	11.4	(-.7)
3	5.9	23.8	(+17.9)	9.4	8.2	(-1.2)
4	5.9	4.8	(-1.1)	8.9	8.0	(-.9)
5	23.5	0.0	(-23.5)	8.9	11.8	(+2.9)
6	0.0	9.5	(+9.5)	9.7	14.8	(+5.1)
7	5.9	9.5	(+3.6)	5.6	20.2	(+14.6)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
Mean Score	2.71	2.81		2.75	3.94	

TABLE 5-2: Historical Changes in the Intensity of Educational Aspirations of Northeast Alabama Girls: 1966-1972

Rank Importance	Black			White		
	1966 N=40	1972 N=21	Change	1966 N=441	1972 N=416	Change
1	75.0	52.4	(-22.6)	52.8	43.0	(-9.8)
2	10.0	4.8	(-5.2)	16.3	16.3	(0)
3	2.5	9.5	(+7.0)	7.7	9.4	(+1.7)
4	2.5	14.3	(+11.8)	5.9	7.8	(+1.9)
5	5.0	9.5	(+4.5)	4.6	5.0	(+.4)
6	0.0	9.5	(+9.5)	7.7	6.5	(-1.2)
7	5.0	0.0	(-5.0)	5.0	12.0	(+7.0)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	
Mean Score	1.73	2.52		2.36	2.83	

TABLE 5-3: Historical Changes in the Intensity of Educational Aspirations of Northeast Alabama Boys: 1966-1972

Rank Importance	Black			White		
	1966 N=17	1972 N=21	Change	1966 N=414	1972 N=425	Change
High (1, 2)	58.8	52.4	(-6.4)	57.5	37.0	(-20.5)
Intermediate (3, 4, 5)	35.3	28.6	(-6.7)	27.3	28.0	(+.7)
Low (6, 7)	5.9	19.0	(+13.1)	15.2	35.0	(+19.8)
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	

$\chi^2=1.44$ d.f.=2 $P>.05$ $\chi^2=51.52$ d.f.=2 $P<.001$

