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THE EFFECT OF SEGREGATION ON THE ASPIRATIONS OF NEGRO YOUTH.

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THE AUTHOR TESTED THE HYPOTHESIS THAT THERE IS A NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEGREE OF SEGREGATION AND THE ASPIRATION LEVEL OF NEGRO STUDENTS. THE STUDY WAS LIMITED TO NEGRO AND WHITE HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS IN A NEW ENGLAND TOWN. ALTHOUGH HER FINDINGS SHOWED THAT NEGRO HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS DO HAVE LOWER EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS THAN WHITES, THEY FAILED TO SUPPORT THE HYPOTHESIS THAT THIS FACT IS RELATED TO THE AVERAGE SCHOOL PERCENT NEGRO (ASPN) IN THE FIRST 9 SCHOOL YEARS. BEFORE CONCLUDING THAT THERE IS NO RELATION BETWEEN EARLY SEGREGATION EXPERIENCE AND ASPIRATION IN HIGH SCHOOL, THE AUTHOR CONSIDERED (1) GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES OF PRE-HIGH-SCHOOL SCHOOLS ATTENDED, (2) UNCONTROLLED DIFFERENCES OF PRE-HIGH-SCHOOL SCHOOLS ATTENDED, AND (3) SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENCES. THE AUTHOR FOUND THAT "SOUTHERN" NEGROES DID HAVE CONSISTENTLY LOWER ASPIRATIONS THAN "NORTHERN" NEGROES, BUT WHEN THE SAMPLE WAS RESTRICTED TO NORTHERN EDUCATED NEGROES, THE HYPOTHESIS WAS STILL NOT SUPPORTED. THE AUTHOR FOUND, CONTRARY TO THE HYPOTHESIS, A TENDENCY TOWARD HIGHER ASPIRATIONS IN HIGH ASPN SCHOOLS THAN IN LOW ASPN SCHOOLS, BUT FOUND NO UNCONTROLLED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THIS. NOR DID PARENTAL SOCIAL CLASS ACCOUNT FOR ASPIRATION DIFFERENCES, SINCE LOWER-CLASS WHITE STUDENTS HAD LOWER ASPIRATIONS REGARDLESS OF ASPN SCORE, WHILE NEGRO ASPIRATION SCORES VARIED POSITIVELY WITH THE ASPN SCORES REGARDLESS OF SOCIAL CLASS. THE AUTHOR SUGGESTED THAT IF THE SCHOOL'S ATMOSPHERE IS NEGATIVE, A NEGRO CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM IS MORE THREATENED BY A DESEGREGATED SCHOOL THAN BY A SEGREGATED SCHOOL. THIS REPORT IS A REPRINT FROM THE "HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW," VOLUME 36, NUMBER 3, SUMMER 1966. (JH)

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The author tests the hypothesis that there is a negative relationship between the degree of segregation and the aspiration level of Negro students. Her findings fail to support this hypothesis, suggesting that this relationship is more complex than is generally assumed.

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The Effect of Segregation on the Aspirations of Negro Youth

Several recent studies of the mobility orientation of youth have compared the educational and occupational choices of Negroes and whites in order to determine whether aspirations reflect class or racial sub-cultures.¹ The results of these investigations are not completely clear. In the first place, the level of aspiration of Negro and white pupils varies according to whether plans or preferences are considered. In the second place, though level of aspiration is usually found to be more related to social class than to race, there are indications that the aspirations of Negroes are less related to social class than are the aspirations of whites.² More data on the correlates of the plans and preferences of Negroes are needed.

Two variables of particular relevance to the aspirations of Negro youth

¹ Noel P. Gist and William S. Bennett, "Aspirations of Negro and White Students," *Social Forces*, XLII (October, 1963), 40; Robert G. Holloway and Joel V. Berreman, "The Educational and Occupational Aspirations and Plans of Negro and White Male Elementary School Students," *The Pacific Sociological Review*, II (Fall, 1959), 56; and Richard M. Stephenson, "Mobility Orientation and Stratification of 1000 Ninth Graders," *American Sociological Review*, XXII (April, 1957), 204.

² Aaron Antonovsky and Melvin J. Lerner, "Negro and White Youth in Elmira," *Discrimination and Low Income*, ed. A. Antonovsky and L. Lorwin (New York: New York State Commission against Discrimination, 1959); Albert J. Reiss, Jr., and Albert L. Rhodes, "Are Edu-

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have been insufficiently studied—regional background and school segregation. If the aspirations of children reflect in any part their racial sub-cultures, those children who have been most exposed to their racial sub-culture should be most affected. Thus we would expect the occupational and educational choices of either southern or segregated Negroes to be less like those of whites than are the choices of either northern or integrated Negroes. Whether the influence of the sub-culture would be to raise or to lower the aspirations of Negro youth is debatable. Green, studying the occupational preferences of southern and northern Negro girls in Chicago in 1947, found that the northerners tended to choose higher level occupations than the southerners.³ Antonovsky and Lerner report that a higher proportion of the children of northern than of southern Negro mothers in an upstate New York city plan professional occupations.⁴ But Wilson found that racial segregation in a California community was associated with higher, not lower, aspiration for Negro sixth graders. Contrary to the general trend toward lower aspirations as the socio-economic status (SES) of the school was lowered, the occupational and educational aspirations of the Negro children in his sample were higher in the low SES schools (in which they were in the majority) than in the moderate SES schools (in which they were in the minority).⁵ This finding suggests that the effect on Negro aspirations of *de facto* segregation in the North may be quite different from that of total community segregation in the South.

The present research was based on the assumption that insulation from the dominant culture and exposure to the Negro sub-culture, whether in the North or in the South, would tend to lower the aspirations of youth. The study to be reported here was part of a larger investigation designed to test the broad hypothesis that segregated schooling has a lasting and depressing effect on the educational and occupational aspirations, the academic achievement, and the intergroup behavior of Negro youth.⁶ The specific hypothesis

cational Norms and Goals of Conforming, Truant and Delinquent Adolescents Influenced by Group Positions in American Society?" *Journal of Negro Education*, XXVIII (Summer, 1959), 252; Henry G. Stetler, *Comparative Study of Negro and White Dropouts in Selected Connecticut High Schools* (Hartford: State of Connecticut, Commission on Civil Rights, 1959); Alan Bond Wilson, "The Effect of Residential Segregation upon Educational Achievement and Aspiration" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Education, University of California, Berkeley, 1960); and J. Wayne Wrightstone, "Demonstration Guidance Project in New York City," *Harvard Educational Review*, XXX (Summer, 1960), 246.

³ Charlotte Green, "The Occupational Ambitions of Two Groups of Negro Girls" (unpublished Master's dissertation, University of Chicago, 1947).

⁴ Antonovsky and Lerner, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁵ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁶ Nancy Hoyt St. John, "The Relation of Racial Segregation in Early Schooling to the Level of Aspiration and Academic Achievement of Negro Students in a Northern High

for this part of the study is that the greater the average per cent Negro of schools attended in elementary grades one through nine, the lower the educational aspirations of Negro high school students.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The middle-sized New England city chosen as the locale of the study met the basic field requirement in having high schools in which Negroes were a minority of the population, but elementary and junior high schools with a wide range of Negro-white ratios. Of the city's thirty-five elementary schools, two became 90 per cent, six 40 to 70 per cent, and thirteen 1 to 39 per cent Negro during the years in which members of the sample attended. The four junior high schools were 85, 40, 7, and 6 per cent Negro, respectively.

The population studied included all boys and girls, both Negro and white, dropout and non-dropout, ever enrolled in the class of 1962 in high school. Comparisons of students in the city's two high schools on key variables indicated that for the purposes of this study high school differences could be ignored and all juniors in the city could be considered a single population. In May, the school records of the entire junior class were examined for data on test scores and academic grades, and a questionnaire was administered to the non-dropouts in their regular guidance classes. The guidance counselor marked the race of the student on each questionnaire as it was handed in.

The per cent Negro of each elementary or junior high school, in each of the nine years in which members of the sample might have attended, was established by interviewing and pooling the estimates of 1) the principals of the twenty-one schools in the city attended by Negroes, 2) the assistant superintendent in charge of elementary schools, and 3) a school demographer in the city planning department.⁷ Then an average elementary school per cent Negro (ASPN) score was calculated for each high school student. It proved possible to collect the necessary data to assign an ASPN score to 219 of the 235 Negro members of the class. The 49 students who received scores of below 40 had usually been in a minority situation in their early schools. The 80 students with scores between 40 and 70 had a more mixed experience,

School" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, 1962). For findings on the relation of segregated elementary schooling and intergroup behavior in high school, see Nancy Hoyt St. John, "De Facto Segregation and Interracial Association in High School," *Sociology of Education*, XXXVII (Summer, 1964), 326.

⁷ The estimates of the assistant superintendent and the school demographer for the most part confirmed, but in one or two cases led to a 5 to 10 per cent revision of, the estimates of the principals.

while the 90 students with scores between 70 and 100 had experienced varying degrees of either *de jure* or *de facto* segregation. These ASPN scores are the independent variable of the study.

The social class level of students was estimated by coding their reports of their parents' education and occupation according to Hollingshead's two-factor index of social position.⁸ Of the Negro juniors, 59 per cent were found to be in class V, 34 per cent in class IV, and only 7 per cent in classes I - III. For the analysis reported in this paper, social class level was dichotomized, with students in class V rated "low" and those in classes I -IV rated "high."

The questionnaire listed a series of educational plans—ranging from "Leave high school before graduation to get a full-time job, go into the army or get married," to "Graduate, go to a four-year college, and then go on to professional or graduate school"—and asked students first to check the educational plan he would *most like* to follow and then to check the educational plan he really *expected* to follow. Of the 1,073 white and 235 Negro students enrolled in the class of 1962, 154 whites and 41 Negroes had dropped out by the spring of their junior year. The educational plans of these students were, as judged by their behavior, at the lowest level. Their educational preferences are not known. Ninety-six per cent of the Negro and white students remaining in school completed the questionnaire and indicated their plans and preferences for future education.

The great majority of both races did not distinguish between educational plans and preferences. Only 5 per cent of the white students and 7 per cent of the Negroes indicated that they would prefer more schooling than they were planning for. Since these differences are slight and do not affect the relationships between race, segregation, and aspiration, we shall simplify our presentation by discussing plans only.

SCHOOL SEGREGATION AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF NEGROES

The basic hypothesis of the study was that, regardless of whether schooling had been in the South or the North, the greater the average (pre-high school) school per cent Negro (ASPN), the lower the educational aspirations of Negro high school students. The aspirations of all Negro students regardless of degree of segregation in early schooling is first presented in Table 1. There we see that 18 per cent of the class have already dropped out, that 34 per cent plan no further schooling after graduation, but that 47 per cent plan some form of post-high school education. In contrast, the aspira-

⁸ August B. Hollingshead, *Two Factor Index of Social Position* (New Haven: By the author, 1957).

tions of white students are significantly higher. Though roughly the same proportion of whites and Negroes drop out or terminate their education with high school graduation, a larger percentage of whites choose a four-year college and a smaller percentage choose a lower level of further education.⁹

TABLE 1
*Percentage Distribution on Educational Plans
of New England City Juniors, by Race*

<i>Educational Plan</i>	<i>Negro (N = 227)</i>	<i>White (N = 1,038)</i>
1. Graduate school	4	8
2. Four-year college	9	17
3. Technical, business school or junior college	34	24
4. High school graduation only	34	34
5. Leave high school before graduation	1	2
6. Had already dropped out	18	15

$$\chi^2 = 11.10, p < .01$$

Table 2 presents data to test the hypothesis of a significant relation between ASPN and the educational aspirations of Negroes. This hypothesis is, in fact, not supported. There are no significant differences in educational plan by degree of segregation in early schooling. Instead of highest aspirations for students from the schools with lowest ASPN, there appears to be some curvilinear tendency. Thus 56 per cent of those whose ASPN scores are 40 to 69, as compared to 45 per cent of those whose early schooling had been either "more integrated" (high ASPN) or "more segregated" (low ASPN), aspire to some form of post-high school education, but the lack of significant chi-square indicates that the percentage of high aspirations for the middle ASPN group could have occurred by chance.

It seems appropriate to conclude that for New England City Negro students there is no relation between early segregation experience and aspiration in high school. Before reaching such a conclusion, however, certain questions need to be answered. In particular, it seems important to ascertain

⁹The test of significance performed on the data for this study is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test. This test was selected because although it does not assume an interval of measurement, as does correlation, it does account for the ordinal nature of the data, as the usual chi-square test does not. See Sydney Siegel, *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1956), pp. 127-236. The author is indebted to Eigil Pedersen for his help in performing the statistical analyses.

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TABLE 2
*Percentage Distribution on Educational Plans of Negro Juniors
 by Average Elementary School Per Cent Negro**

<i>Educational Plan</i>	<i>Average School Per Cent Negro</i>		
	<i>70-100 (N = 90)</i>	<i>40-69** (N = 80)</i>	<i>1-39** (N = 49)</i>
1. Graduate school	6	1	4
2. Four-year college	7	15	6
3. Technical or business school or junior college	32	40	35
4. High school graduation only	33	33	41
5. Already dropped out or planning to drop out	22	11	14

$\chi^2_{ks} = 2.04, p < .50$

* The total N for this table is 219, as compared to an N of 227 Negroes in the preceding table, because it proved impossible to compute an ASPN score for 8 students. In view of the small sample size, the decision was made to retain the largest possible number of cases for each separate analysis.

** For computing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov chi-square, these two columns were collapsed.

whether the relationship between school per cent Negro and aspiration is being masked by differences in the regional location of segregated schools, by differences between schools on variables other than racial mix, or by differences in the social class backgrounds of pupils. The subsequent sections will take up these questions in the order presented.

The Effect of Region on the Relation of School Segregation and Aspiration

Over a third of the Negro juniors in New England City were born in the South. Most of these southern migrants came north during their elementary rather than pre-school years. In Table 3 we compare the educational plans of "Southerners" (who have spent one or more years in schools below the Mason-Dixon line) and "northerners" (who have attended northern schools only). It is apparent that early experience in southern environment and schools, and family migration north, are negatively related to the aspirations of the Negroes in our sample, for only 41 per cent of the southerners, as compared to 52 per cent of the northerners, plan any type of post-high school education.

Table 3 also shows for southerners and northerners separately the relation of school segregation and aspiration. Although southerners have higher aspirations if their experience has been in schools 40 to 60 per cent Negro

TABLE 3
Per Cent of Negro Juniors Planning Post-High School Education,
by Average School Per Cent Negro and by Migration from the South*

	<i>Average School Per Cent Negro</i>			
	<i>All</i> % (N)	<i>70-100</i> % (N)	<i>40-69</i> % (N)	<i>1-39</i> % (N)
Northerners	52 (159)	51 (45)	59 (65)	45 (49)
Southerners	41 (59)	39 (44)	50 (14)	0 (1)

* Because these further studies were of an exploratory nature, the decision was made not to perform tests of statistical significance. In any event, examination of the figures indicates that they cannot in any way be taken as supportive of the original hypothesis of a negative relationship.

rather than in schools 70 to 100 per cent Negro, their aspirations are in either case lower than those of northerners. Given such consistent differences in the level of aspiration of southerners and northerners and our special interest in the latter group, the rest of the paper will focus on the effect on aspirations of *de facto* segregation in the North.

The top line of Table 3 shows that, when the sample is restricted to students whose schooling has been entirely in the North, the hypothesis of the study is still not supported, since only 45 per cent of those who have attended schools with ASPN between 1 and 39, as compared to 59 per cent of those in schools 40 to 69 and 51 per cent of those in schools 70 to 100 per cent Negro, have high aspirations. This finding raises the further question: Is the lack of relationship due to the effect of some other variables associated with the respective groups of schools or the home background of the pupils who attend them? To these questions we now turn.

The Effect of Uncontrolled Differences between Schools of Different Racial Mix

One possible explanation of the curvilinear tendency towards higher aspiration for the graduates of elementary schools 40 to 69 per cent Negro than for other Negro students is that the three groups of schools differed in some characteristics other than racial mix. According to any tangible evidence, the education offered in all schools in New England City appeared to be equal. One indirect method of controlling for possible intangible differences seemed to be a comparison of the effect of ASPN on white and Negro juniors. We argue that if racially balanced schools had, for example, better teachers or

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a more stimulating peer group climate than other schools, the aspirations of both white and Negro students should be affected. This may be a tenuous assumption, since the effect of such factors on Negroes and whites may be quite different. Nevertheless it seems interesting to examine the evidence on this matter.

Since in this part of the analysis we are concerned with the effects of *de facto* segregation in a single northern city, data on migrants are not relevant; and because ASPN scores and other data are not available for the white dropouts, we have also omitted them from consideration. With the sample restricted to Negro and white non-dropouts who had spent all nine pre-high school years in New England City public schools, the Negro students whose average experience had been most segregated now emerge as those with the highest educational plans (Table 4), but those with ASPN scores of 40 to 69 still have higher plans than those with a score of 1 to 39.

TABLE 4
Of Non-Dropout Juniors Who Spent Nine Years in New England City Public Schools, Per Cent Planning Post-High School Education, by Average School Per Cent Negro and by Race

	<i>Average School Per Cent Negro</i>		
	<i>70-100</i>	<i>40-69</i>	<i>0-39</i>
	<i>% (N)</i>	<i>% (N)</i>	<i>% (N)</i>
Negro	73 (26)	65 (46)	43 (35)
White	—	57 (46)	60 (348)

The number of white students who had attended schools 70 to 100 per cent Negro (which actually were over 90 per cent Negro in two cases out of three) was so few that they were omitted from the analysis. However, a comparison of the educational plans of those with ASPN scores of 40 to 69 and those with scores of 0 to 39 reveals practically no difference between the two groups of white students. Therefore, it appears unlikely that uncontrolled differences between the two groups of schools can account for the higher aspirations of the Negro graduates of schools 40 to 69 per cent as compared to those of schools 1 to 39 per cent. However, the conclusion must remain tentative, in view of the possibly differential effect of unknown characteristics of the schools on Negro and white youth.

The Effect of Parental Social Class Level

Finally, we asked whether the apparently different effect of school racial composition on the educational plans of Negro and white students could be a function of different parental social class level—in other words, whether those whites in racially balanced schools or those Negroes in predominantly white schools are of lower than average social class level. For the sample as a whole, the educational plans of Negroes and whites of the same social class level are found to be quite similar. Not only are the plans of both races significantly related to social class level, but also any significant difference between races disappears when social class is held constant.

The results of the analysis of the level of educational plans of Negroes and whites of high and low parental social class level by ASPN are shown in Table 5. Regardless of their social class level, Negroes tend increasingly to plan post-high school education as their ASPN scores rise. Whites of high social class tend, if anything, to plan post-high school education more frequently as their ASPN scores fall. White students at the lowest social class level have low educational plans regardless of ASPN score. In other words, the apparently opposite effect of school racial composition on the educational plans of Negro and white students does not seem to be a function of differential parental social class level.

TABLE 5
Of Non-Dropout Juniors Who Spent Nine Years in New England City Public Schools, Per Cent Planning Post-High School Education, by Average Elementary School Per Cent Negro and by Race and Social Class

		Average School Per Cent Negro		
		70-100 % (N)	40-69 % (N)	0-39 % (N)
Negroes				
<i>Social Class</i>				
	High (1-4)	87 (15)	78 (18)	53 (15)
	Low (5)	55 (11)	54 (26)	44 (18)
Whites				
<i>Social Class</i>				
	High (1-4)	—	67 (33)	71 (232)
	Low (5)	—	39 (13)	39 (109)

In sum, the evidence of these further analyses gives no support at all to the original hypothesis. Similar analyses were conducted using occupational preferences as the index of aspirations, and the conclusion was no different. There is no significant difference in occupational preference by degree of segregation in early schooling, even when we control for migration from the South, parental social class, or (by means of comparison with white students from the same elementary schools) uncontrolled variation in school quality. We may conclude that, for these Negro juniors, *de facto* segregated schooling (as reflected in high ASPN scores) is not associated with lowered aspirations, since the graduates of elementary schools in which Negroes are in the minority have apparently lower, not higher, aspirations than the graduates of elementary schools that are predominantly Negro.

DISCUSSION

The absence of empirical support for the hypothesis of the study may be interpreted on both methodological and theoretical grounds. To take up methodological considerations first, the relatively low degree of segregation in the city should be kept clearly in mind. Because of the small number of non-migrants who had spent nine years in all-Negro schools, the most segregated group included all whose average school per cent Negro had been above 70. It could be argued that this is not a test of segregation at all, since the psychological boundary perhaps comes at 90 or 95 per cent. Moreover, with only two schools in the city above 90 per cent Negro, the possible effect of special characteristics of those schools—the personalities of their principals, say—could not be randomized. A larger sample and multivariate techniques of analysis might reveal important conditional relationships. Further, the validity of replies to questionnaires as a measurement of true attitudes is always open to question. This list of the methodological shortcomings of the present study could be extended and suggests that the findings should be generalized beyond the sample only with caution.

It is, however, possible that replication in other settings might lead to a similar conclusion: that aspirations are not negatively related to average school per cent Negro. Before attempting further tests of the hypothesis, some rethinking of its theoretical rationale seems in order.

The original hypothesis was based on the assumption that school segregation has the following dimensions for a Negro child:

Perception of

1. unfavorable community attitude to Negroes
2. low expectations of teachers and parents
3. low quality of schools

- Exposure to peers with
4. low expectation of success
 5. low academic norms
 6. high suspicion of whites
- Lack of
7. interracial contact

However, desegregation under unfavorable conditions would not necessarily eliminate all such unfortunate features of segregated schooling. It may be that unless the staff is committed to integration and is optimistic about the potential of Negroes, and unless the school's academic policies encourage disadvantaged children, a Negro child's self-esteem and motivation is more threatened by a desegregated than by a segregated school. He may become painfully aware of his own poor preparation and the low expectations for him of teachers and white classmates. He may suffer the humiliation of assignment to a slow section. He would be exposed to the discomforts of a minority position. Interracial contact in which status is not equal with respect to family background, academic preparation, and the esteem of classmates would not teach Negro children to achieve in an interracial situation.¹⁰

It therefore seems likely that both racial balance and "racial atmosphere" have important effects on school children. Without racial balance, a favorable racial atmosphere may be impossible; but once racial balance is attained, two forces may work at cross-purposes for the Negro child (and this may be the reason for the curvilinear tendency noted in our data). On the one hand, a more favorable social milieu may tend to raise the aspirations and achievement of Negro children. But on the other hand, they may be placed in an unfavorable competitive position that more than offsets such advantage. If so, only under school conditions that minimize interracial competition will racial balance benefit pupils.

The data presented in this paper suggest that the hypothesized relation between integration and the aspirations of Negro students may not be a simple one. In view of the theoretical and practical interest of the subject, further study on two fronts is indicated: the research described here should be replicated in other settings, and the meaning of segregation as an aspect of social structure and its effect on the personality of the Negro child should be further explored.

¹⁰ Indirect evidence of the effect of competition with white peers on the performance of Negro students is afforded by the experiments of Katz. Irwin Katz, "Review of Evidence Relating to the Effects of Desegregation on the Intellectual Performance of Negroes," *The American Psychologist*, XIX (1964), 381.

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