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ABSTRACT

This section of the 1970-1971 National Assessment of Educational Progress presents summary data for the responses to literature assessment. Data is presented in graph and tabular form and discussed in detail for the educational attainments of nine year olds, thirteen year olds, seventeen year olds, and adults (ages 26-35). The data is also categorized according to region of the country, sex, color (blacks and whites), level of parental education, size and type of community, and size of community groups. The report assessed attainments in four areas or themes: (1) understanding imaginative language, (2) responding to literature, (3) recognizing literary works and characters, and (4) reading habits. Discussions are provided of how various groups performed on each of these themes, the results according to various objectives of the assessment, and how the various age groups performed on these themes. (DI)

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A Project of the Education Commission of the States

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Assessment Reports

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# 9	Citizenship: Group Results B	May, 1972
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#02-R-03	Reading: Written Directions (Theme 3)	May, 1973
#02-R-05	Reading: Gleaning Significant Facts from Passages (Theme 5)	May, 1973
#02-R-02	Reading: Graphic Materials (Theme 2)	June, 1973
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INTRODUCTION

Each year, beginning with its second assessment year, the National Assessment of Educational Progress publishes a General Information Yearbook which describes all major aspects of the Assessment's operation. The reader who desires more detailed information about how National Assessment defines its groups, prepares and scores its exercises, designs its sample and analyzes and reports its results should consult the General Information Yearbook for Year 02, Reading and Literature (02-GIY).

Briefly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress is an information gathering project which surveys the educational attainments of 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults (ages 26-35) in ten subject areas: Art, Career and Occupational Development, Citizenship, Literature, Mathematics, Music, Reading, Science, Social Studies and Writing. Two areas are assessed every year and all areas are periodically reassessed in order to measure educational progress. Each assessment is the product of several years' work by a great many educators, scholars and lay persons from all over the country. Initially, these people design objectives for each area, proposing specific goals which they feel Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. These goals are reviewed by more people and then passed along to developers of tests, whose task it is to create measurement tools appropriate to the objectives.

When the exercises prepared by the test developers have passed extensive reviews by specialists in the subject matter and in measurement, they are administered to probability samples of various populations. The people who comprise those samples are chosen in such a way that the results of their assessment can be generalized to an entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 9-year-olds on a given exercise, we can generalize about the probable performance of all 9-year-olds in the nation.

After assessment data has been collected and analyzed, National Assessment publishes its theme and summary reports. Theme reports focus upon groups of exercises that are related to one another. Usually, they are related because each represents an attempt to measure achievement of the same general objective, skill, knowledge or attitude. A summary report presents a general overview of all results, with particular emphasis upon median group performances relative to national performance.

In Literature, there are four theme reports. The first, Understanding Imaginative Language, presents the results for all released exercises that measure specific competencies in dealing with imaginative language. The second theme, Responding to Literature, is comprised of all released exercises that call for written or verbal responses to works of literature. The third, Recognizing Literary Works and Characters, presents the results of all exercises requiring knowledge of specific works or figures. And the fourth, A Survey of Reading Habits, deals with reading frequency questions, reading inventories and attitude questions. The exercises covered in Themes 1 and 2 relate to Literature Objective II: become engaged in, find meanings in, and evaluate a work of literature. Theme 3 exercises measure achievement of Objective I: read literature of excellence, and Theme 4 questions bear both on Objective I and Objective III: develop a continuing interest and participation in literature and the literary experience.

Theme reports present results exercise by exercise. Summary reports like this one, however, deal with the larger picture and rely more heavily on median percentages derived from a number of results. The theme reports are more concrete and particular since they include actual exercises, scoring rationales, sample responses and so on. The summary report is more general, shifting the emphasis to overall performance patterns for various groups of people.

National Assessment divides the national population into groups in order to provide data about certain types of schools and students. The variables it uses are region of the country, sex, color, parental education and size and type of community. Within each variable there are at least two groups. Each of the variables and groups is fully defined in the General Information Yearbook, but the following explanations may serve the reader's purposes:

Region. The country has been divided into four regions-- Southeast, West, Central and Northeast--in order to present results for various regions relative to the national results.

Sex. For every exercise we present the results obtained by males and by females.

Color. Currently, we present results for Blacks and Whites.

Parental Education. The four parental education categories are defined by the highest level of education attained by either of a person's parents. The no high school category is comprised of all people who indicated that neither parent went to high school. The some high school category consists of all those who indicated that the parent with the most education attended high

school but did not graduate. In the graduated from high school category are all those who indicated that at least one parent graduated from high school, and in the post high school group are all who indicated that at least one parent received some post high school education. (This may mean college, but it also includes adult education courses of any kind, vocational training, etc.)

Size and Type of Community (STOC). The categories or groups within this variable are defined by the size of a person's community and an occupational profile of the area his school serves. Again, the reader should consult the General Information Yearbook for precise definitions of these groups.

1. Extreme Inner City. People in this category attend schools in cities with populations greater than 150,000; the schools serve areas in which a high proportion of the residents are on welfare or not regularly employed.
2. Extreme Rural. People in this category attend schools in a community having a population less than 3,500. Most residents in the area the school serves are farmers or farm workers.
3. Extreme Affluent Suburb. Individuals in this group attend schools within the city limits or residential area served by a city with a population greater than 150,000; the area served by the school consists primarily of professional or managerial personnel.
4. Rest of Big City. These are students attending schools in a big city (population greater than 200,000) who are not included in either the extreme inner city or extreme affluent suburb groups.
5. Medium Size City. Individuals in this category attend schools in cities with populations between 25,000 and 200,000.
6. Small City. People in this group attend schools in a community of less than 25,000 inhabitants.
7. Suburban Fringe. People in this group attend schools in the metropolitan area served by a city with more than 200,000 inhabitants; the school and the area it serves are outside of the city limits.

Size of Community Groups. The results for 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds who are in school can be presented in terms of these STOC categories. However, we do not have the information necessary to present the results for adults and out-of-school 17-year-olds in the same way. Consequently, the following less specific breakdown of results appears for all 17-year-olds (in- and out-of-school) and young adults:

1. Big City. In this group are all adults and out-of-school 17-year-olds who live in cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants; also included are 17-year-olds who attend schools in the same sized cities.
2. Urban Fringe. This category consists of adults and out-of-school 17-year-olds who live in the metropolitan area served by a big city; but outside of the city limits. It also includes 17-year-olds attending school in such areas.
3. Medium Size City. This category is comprised of adults and out-of-school 17-year-olds who live in communities with populations between 25,000 and 200,000; it also includes 17-year-olds attending schools in such communities.
4. Small Places. Adults and 17-year-olds who live or attend school in communities with populations under 25,000 fall into this group.

Limitations of the Data

Within the limitations due to measurement¹ and sampling error,² the obtained data as presented in National Assessment

¹Measurement error stems from three sources: (1) the measuring instrument--in our case, the exercises--may have imperfections such as ambiguity or a built-in tipoff to the correct response; (2) the respondent's physical condition (permanent or temporary), emotional or attitudinal condition (again permanent or temporary) and motivation; and (3) the measurement situation--temperature, lighting, pleasantness of surroundings, noise level and the test administrator.

²See Chapter 10 and Appendix C, General Information Yearbook (02-GIY) for a discussion of sampling error.

reports accurately describe the educational achievements of certain groups as they actually exist in the real world.

When the data show that a group has achieved either above or below the nation as a whole, one must exercise great caution in speculating about the causes of these obtained differences. Many factors may affect an individual's ability to give acceptable responses to exercises in the assessed subject areas. Consider, for example, a hypothetical group whose achievement is well above the national average. Most members of the group may attend schools which have excellent physical facilities and high quality faculties, belong to families which have attained a high socio-economic level, have well-educated parents, come from homes with many reading materials and so on. All these factors could contribute to the group's high level of achievement, while membership in the group itself may contribute very little or nothing.

The name of a group is merely a categorical label. When we look at the data for a given group, therefore, we cannot say that any difference in achievement between that group and the nation as a whole is attributable solely to membership in that group. In other words, a group must not be construed as necessarily being the cause or even being a cause for the comparatively high or low achievement of that group as compared to the nation as a whole. Often, a disproportionately large percentage of the members of a group of interest are also members of particular groups defined by other factors. All these factors may contribute to the group's high (or low) level of achievement.

All the limitations imposed on the data for individual exercises apply to summary data as well. In addition, the reader must understand clearly the concept of the "median difference (or effect)" which is used so often in our summary statistics. A group's difference is simply the difference between its percentage of success on an exercise and the national percentage of success. In a theme consisting of 30 exercises, a group would have 30 differences; its median difference for a theme or objective would be that difference above and below which half of its differences (15, to be exact) lie. Note that this is not the same thing as a mean or average of the 30 differences. By relating a group's median effect to a national level of performance we can determine whether, over a large number of exercises, a group consistently performs below or above a national performance level. The fewer exercises a median effect is based on, the less representative it may be of a group's performance.

When we compare the median effects for a given group across themes, objectives or age levels, nearly equal median effects indicate that the group's performance level has changed from theme to theme, objective to objective or age level to age level to

about the same extent that the national performance level has changed--whether such change be large or small. The group has maintained a constant position relative to the national level. To the degree that a group's median effects are unequal, the group has changed to a greater or lesser extent than the nation as a whole.

Whenever data are summarized, some information is lost. The median effect provides a numerical value that describes a group's overall performance on a set of exercises; it does not tell us, however, on which exercises a group performs quite differently than we would expect on the basis of its overall behavior. If a group effect departs from the group's median effect by an amount at least two and one half times as large as the pooled standard error³ of all the group's effects for a given set of exercises (theme or objective), the group's performance on that exercise is atypical.

For the limitations of age comparisons, see Report 8, Writing Mechanics, pp. 131-133.

³Chapter 10 and Appendix C of the General Information Yearbook (Report 02-GIY) discuss the meaning and use of the standard error. Appendix C gives the formula for the pooled standard error we use.

CHAPTER 1

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING IMAGINATIVE LANGUAGE

There are five kinds of exercises in the first theme volume: missing line exercises, designed to assess rudimentary skill in following rhythm or logic (or both) in poetry; pun exercises, designed to determine ability to recognize puns in passages which may or may not contain puns; metaphor exercises, which assess recognition of the tenor and vehicle of specific metaphors in poems; form similarity exercises, requiring people to identify similar passages and choose the genre which best describes them; and inference exercises, requiring identification of the tone or mood of a passage and a written defense of the answer.

There was, as one might expect, a steady increase in successful performance from age 9 to 13 to 17, followed by a slight drop in adult performance.

At all age levels, certain groups of people usually had higher percentages of success than the entire population, and certain groups performed below the national level. Regionally, for instance, the Southeast was consistently below the national level of achievement and the Central region was consistently above it. At age 13, the Northeast was about even with the Central region, and at the adult level, the West joined it.

Females consistently performed better than males at the three lower age levels, but at the adult level there was little difference between them.

Blacks, as a group, always had lower percentages of success than the national percentage; Whites, as a group, consistently did better than the nation as a whole.

At all four ages, levels of parental education correlated highly with percentages of success: that is, as a group, people whose parents have had no high school education consistently performed less successfully than the nation did; those who had at least one parent with some high school training performed somewhat better but were often below the national percentage of success; those with at least one parent who graduated from high school usually did as well as the national population did; and those who had at least one parent with post high school education almost always achieved percentages of success significantly greater than the national figure.

The results according to size and type of community groups reveal that students who attend inner city schools do not do nearly as well as all students taken together, whereas students attending urban schools which serve predominantly professional communities perform much better than the national population.

The performance of the various groups relative to each other and to the national performance is generally consistent throughout the four Literature themes and even the eight volumes of our report on the Reading assessment. Clearly, some groups of people demonstrate a general reading disadvantage, not simply a disadvantage with respect to understanding imaginative language. For even on the most elementary reading tasks, those groups do not achieve percentages of success as high as the nation's; naturally, as tasks become more sophisticated their disadvantage becomes more obvious.

Following is a discussion of the overall Theme 1 results for each age group. The median percentages used in this overview enable us to compare the performances of various groups to the national performance over a number of exercises.

In Exhibits A-D, each box represents the difference in performance between a group and the nation as a whole on a particular exercise. For example, in Exhibit A, the bottom box in the SE column shows that the Southeast was 13% below the national percentage on that exercise. The arrows depict the median of the differences for a group, enabling the reader to see how far above or below the national level each group's median difference lies. For example, the median difference for the Southeast in the same exhibit is -4.6%. Empty boxes correspond to exercise differences which were considered atypically above or below the group median difference. These exercises are referred to in the discussion as having produced unusually high or low results for a particular group relative to its median difference.

Overall Group Results for 9-Year-Olds

Percentages of success on 18 exercises in the theme ranged from 7% to 91%, and the median national percentage was 51.6%-- in other words, half the percentages were greater than 51.6%, half were less.

On most exercises (13 of the 18), females did better than males. This was especially noticeable on inference exercises, which required written responses, and form similarity questions. The female median difference was 1.5%, and the male median difference was -1.5%.

The median difference between Black and national results was -13.7%. On no exercise reported in this theme was the Black percentage of success as high as the national level. On form similarity exercises, it was about 20 points lower. Nine-year-old Whites nearly always performed slightly better than all 9-year-olds.

Children in the no high school parental education category generally performed less well than those whose parents had at least some high school education. This group's results were particularly low on metaphor and form exercises (see R113 and R117, for instance). Its median difference was -5.6%. The some high school group did somewhat better (it was above the national percentage on five exercises) and the graduated from high school group generally performed on a par with all 9-year-olds. Children whose parents have had more than a high school education demonstrated a decisive advantage throughout the Literature assessment. Their group percentage was always above the national level of achievement and their advantage was particularly great on exercises which 9-year-olds in general found difficult.

The extreme inner city group performed consistently below the national level of performance. On nine of the exercises its percentage was more than 14.5 points below the national figure, and on eight it was between -14.5 and 0; only once was its percentage equal to or better than the national result. The extreme rural group's median difference was -3.3%. On three exercises its results were better than the national results--see especially Exercise R101--but on the other 15 exercises, its percentages were always lower. Over all the exercises, students in the rest of big city, medium city and small city categories achieved results similar to the national results. The suburban fringe group had a percentage of success equal to or greater than the national figure on 15 exercises. Its median difference was 2.5%. On no exercise did the extreme affluent suburb group perform below the national percentage of success. On one form exercise (R117) its advantage was 16.4%. Half the time its percentage of success was 6.8% above the national figure, and half the time it was less than 6.8%. But almost always this group registered significantly higher percentages of success than all 9-year-olds together achieved.

Overall Group Results for 13-Year-Olds

Percentages of success on 29 exercises in this theme ranged from 10.3% to 87% and the median national percentage was 64.9%. Exhibit B reveals that the Northeast and Central regional groups generally performed slightly better than all 13-year-olds. The median difference was 1.9% for both regions. For the West, it was 1%. Southeastern students did not do as well as all 13-year-olds,

EXHIBIT A. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- PAGE 9

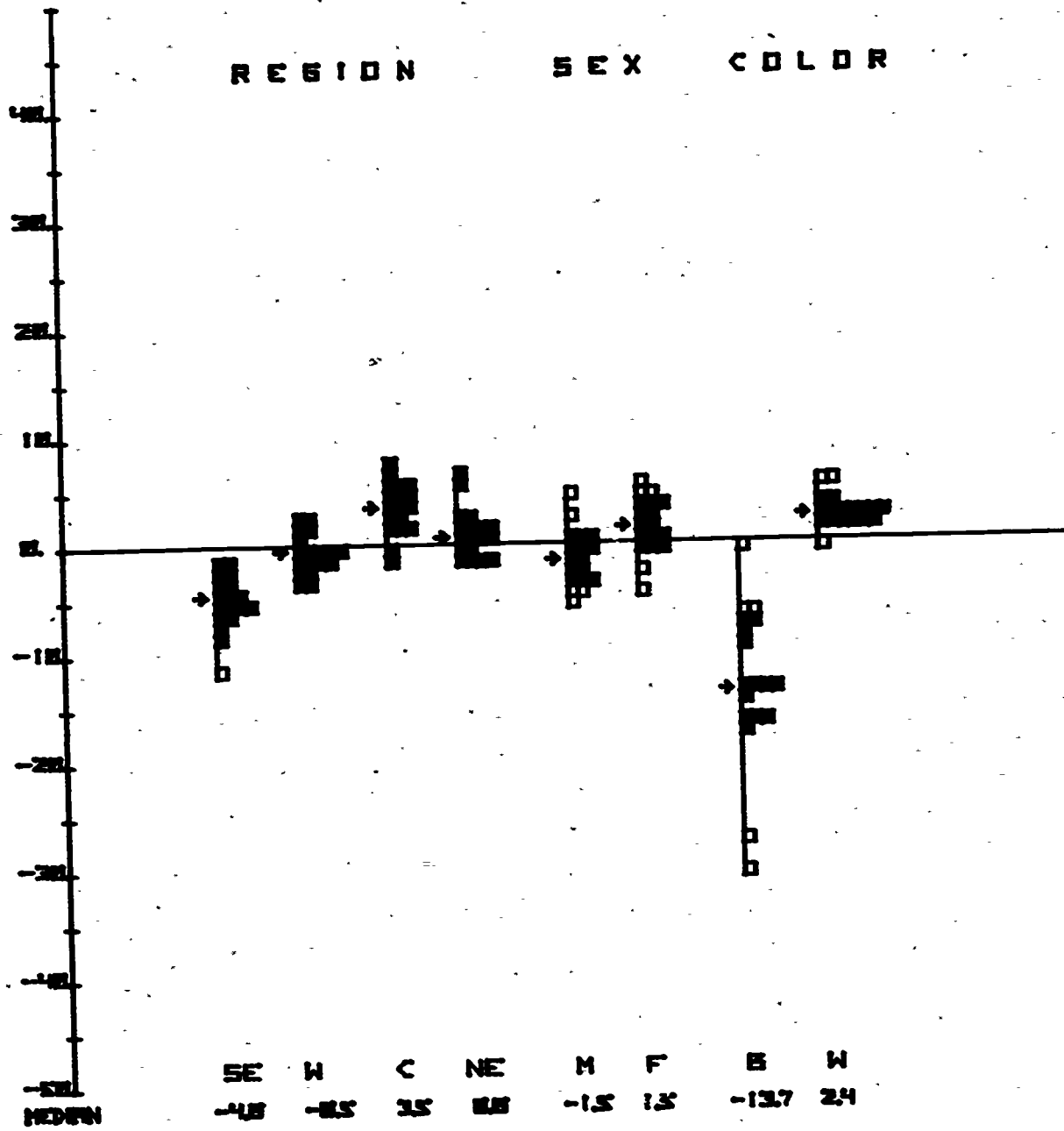
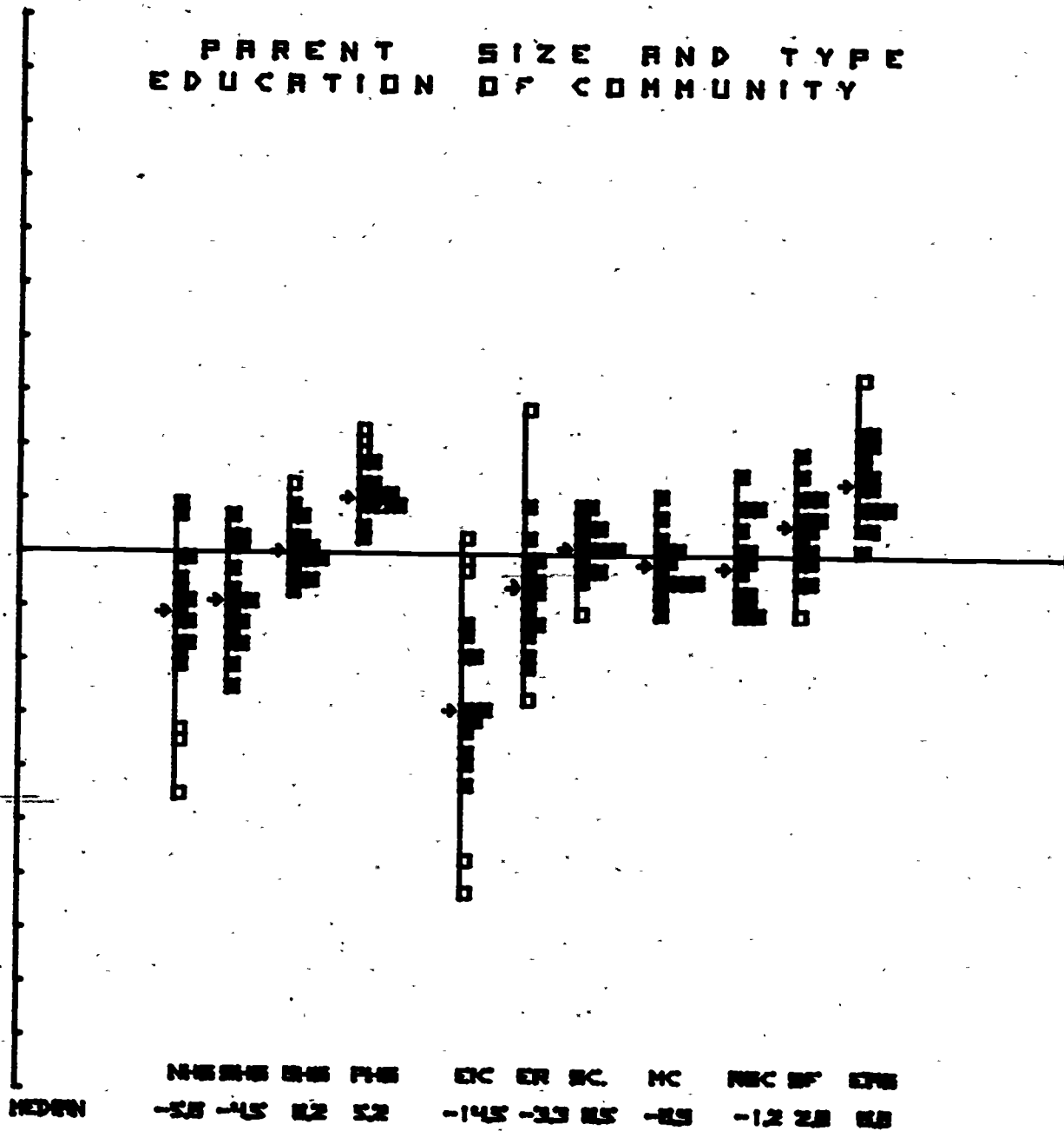


EXHIBIT R. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- AGE 9

PARENT SIZE AND TYPE
EDUCATION OF COMMUNITY



since on all of the 29 exercises their figure was below the national figure. Their median difference was -5.7%.

On 20 of the 29 exercises, the percentage of success for females was above the national percentage. They did particularly well on the inference exercises, which required written responses. Males, with a -1.7% median difference, were generally below the females. But on some exercises--notably missing-line Exercise R103, and metaphor Exercises R114 A and B--they did unusually well.

As at age 9, Blacks did not register percentages as high as the national figures--they were below it on all of the 29 exercises. However, on some exercises they did unusually well relative to their normal performance--see, for instance, the second part of Exercise R114 B. The White median difference was 2.9%. As a group, Whites did unusually well on R114 A.

Thirteen-year-olds in the no high school parental education group never achieved results as high as all 13-year-olds did on any of the 29 exercises. The median difference for that group was -11.6%, and for the some high school group it was -4.3%. The results for the graduated from high school group were equal to or better than the national results on 16 of the 29 exercises. This group did particularly well (relative to its usual performance) on R125, an inference exercise. The post high school group's median difference was 7.1%. The results for this group were always better than the results obtained by all 13-year-olds.

Of all the STOC groups, the extreme inner city group consistently registered the lowest percentages of success. Its median difference was -7.5%. Rural students were often below the national level of achievement too; their median difference was -4%. The rest of big city category's percentages were above the national figure on 12 of 29 exercises; the group's results were unusually low on exercises requiring writing. The medium size city and small city categories were at or above the national figure about half the time, while the suburban fringe group was usually at or slightly above the national figure. However, the extreme affluent suburb group achieved better results than all 13-year-olds did on all but 3 of the exercises, as its median difference of 5.6% indicates. People in this group did particularly well on R109 A, a pun exercise, and R118, a form exercise. Their lowest percentage of success was on the second part of R114, a metaphor exercise.

Overall Group Results for 17-Year-Olds

Percentages of success on the 27 exercises in this theme ranged from 16.3% to 94.5%; the median national percentage was 80%.

On none of the exercises did the Southeastern 17-year-olds perform at or above the national percentage of success. People in this group did especially poorly on the inference exercises and one pun exercise (R110 A). Their median difference was -4.9%. The Western regional group was above the national level on about half (56%) of the exercises, and its median difference was .9%. The Northeastern percentage of success was above the national figure on 3 of every 4 exercises. Its median difference was 1.2%. The Central region had the highest median difference (1.7%) and the greatest percentage of exercises (85%) on which its percentage of success was greater than the national one.

Females consistently outperformed males. On 22 of the 27 exercises they were above the national percentage of success and the males were below it. They did particularly well on the written part of the inference exercises and on form questions. Males did quite poorly on those items, relative to their usual performance. However, they did unusually well on metaphor exercise R115 B. The median difference for females was 1.3%, while for males it was -1.3%.

On no exercise in this theme was the percentage of success for Blacks as great as the national figure. On 6 exercises the difference was less than 10%, but usually it was greater; the group's median difference was -15.7%. Given their general performance, however, the Blacks did unusually well on two metaphor exercises (R112 A, R113). Their lowest percentages of success were on the inference exercises, which required some writing. Whites as a group always registered percentages of success above the national figure. Their median difference was 2.3%. They did particularly well (relative to their general performance) on two of the inference exercises (R126, R127) and on a pun exercise (R110 A). Their results were relatively poor on the second parts of Exercises R112 A and R113.

Neither of the two lower parental education categories ever registered a result at or above the national percentage of success. The graduated from high school group emerged above the national level on 8 of the 27 exercises, and the post high school group was always above that level. On half of the exercises, the results for the latter group were below 6%, and on half they were above. Relatively poor results appeared on parts of Exercises R112 A and R113, but the group obtained exceptionally high percentages of success on inference exercises (R124, R126, R127), and a pun exercise (R110 A). Seventeen-year-olds in the small places category did not do as well as those in other size of community groups. Their percentages of success were above the national figure on only 6 of the 27 exercises. The big cities group was above the national level on 9 exercises, and the medium size city on 13. The big city fringe group consistently performed best of these groups; its percentages of success were greater than

EXHIBIT B. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- AGE 13

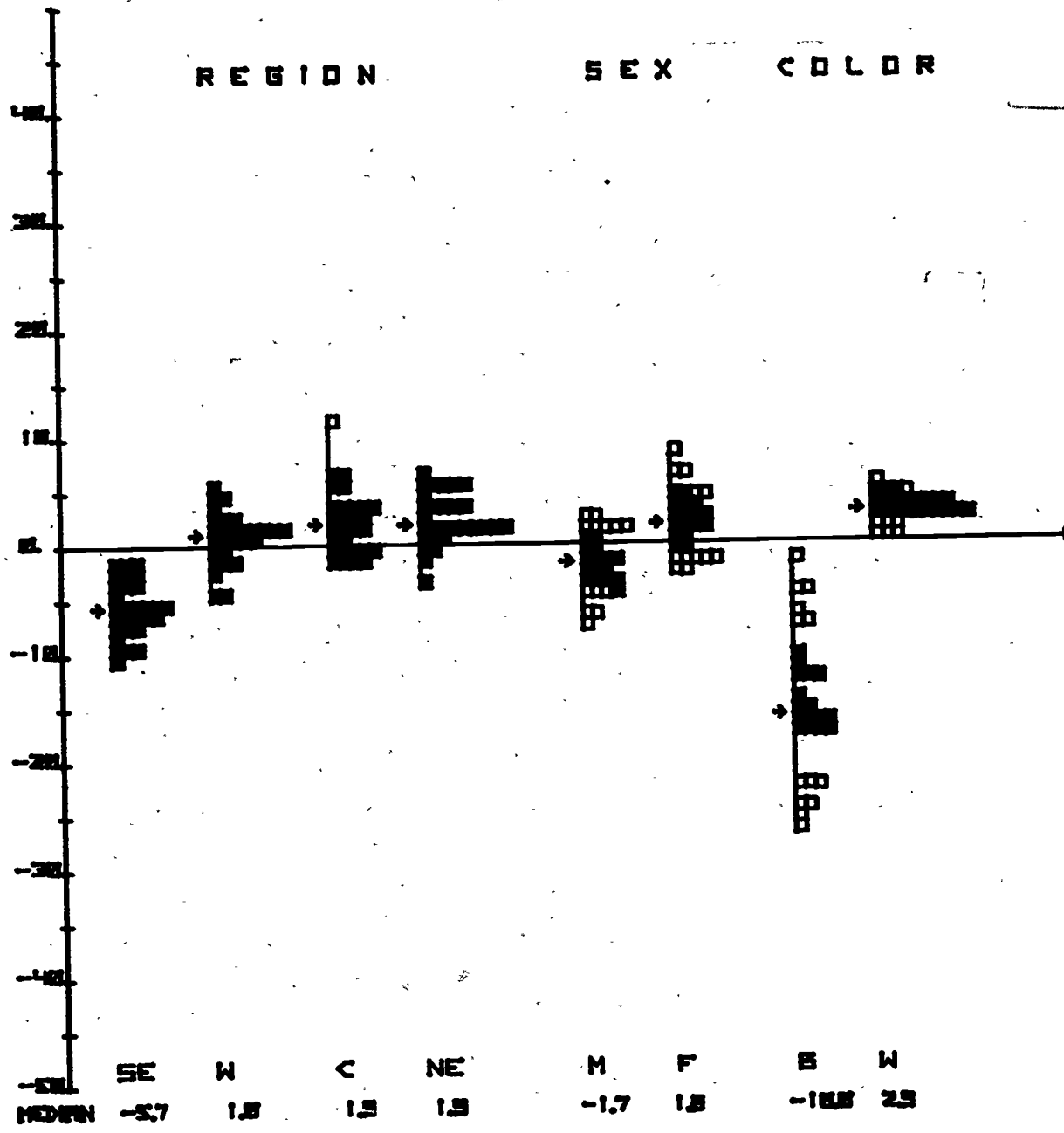


EXHIBIT B. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- AGE 13

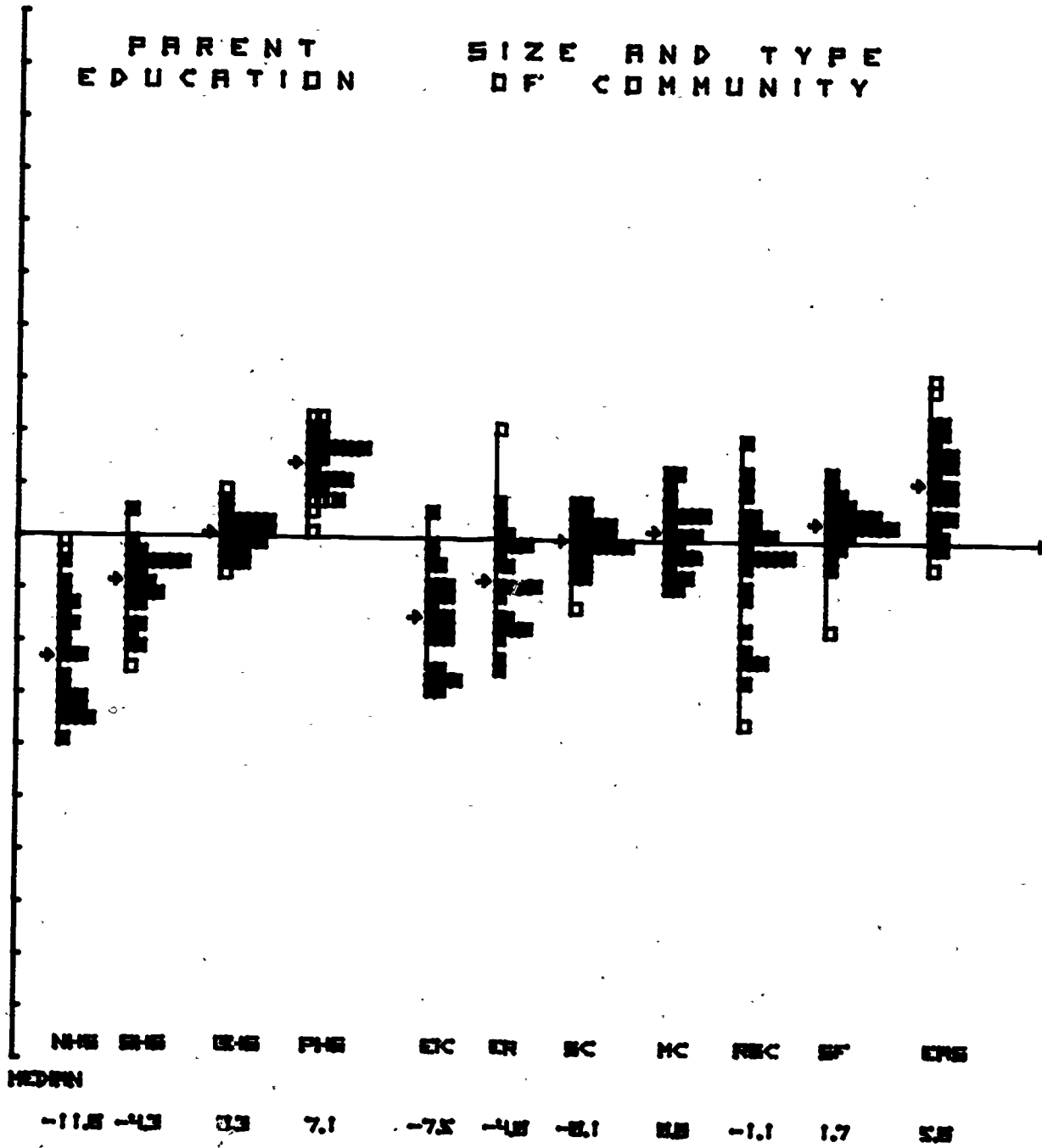


EXHIBIT C. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- AGE 17

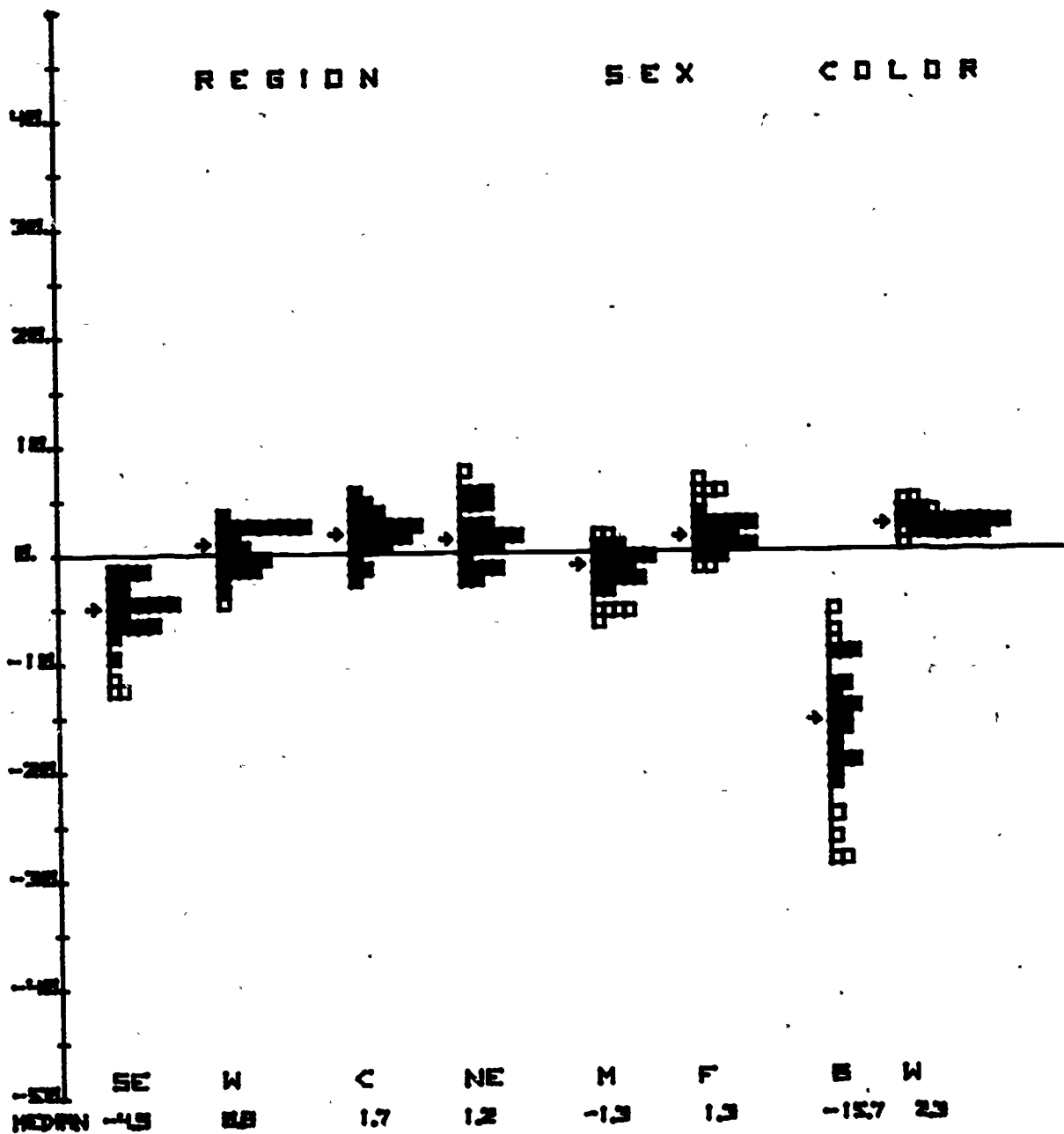
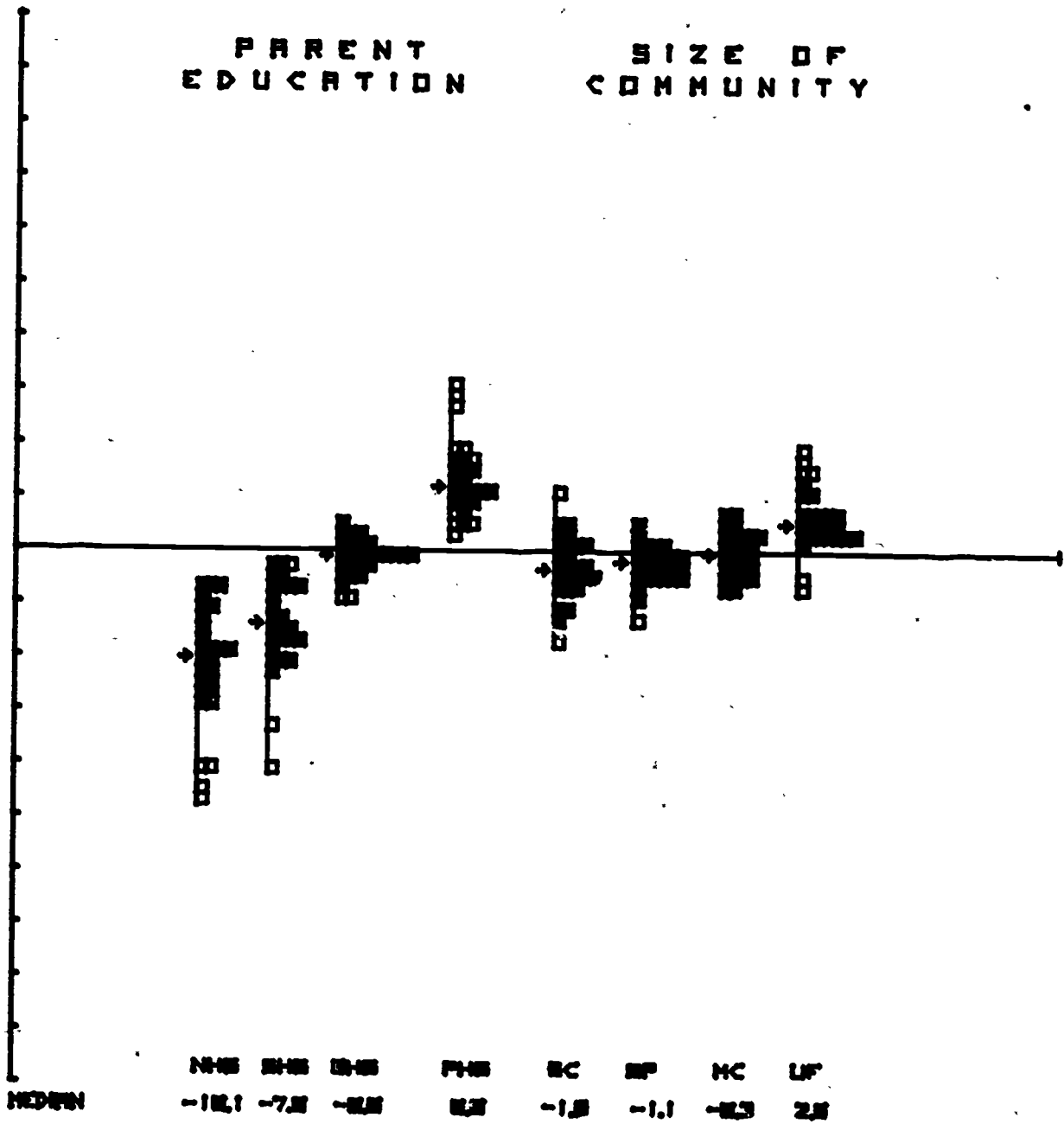


EXHIBIT C. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- AGE 17



the national figure on 24 of the 27 exercises. Its percentages of success were unusually high on the same exercises which the post high school group did well on: the inference exercises and the pun item. However, its achievement was sub-par on Exercise R114 B, a metaphor exercise.

Overall Group Results for Adults

The results on 21 exercises taken by adults ranged from 10.8% to 95%; the median national percentage of success was 69.6%.

As at the other ages, the Southeast regional group did not perform as well as the other regions. It never recorded a percentage of success at or above the national figure; the median difference was -7.8%. It did relatively well on the second part of R111 A, a metaphor exercise, but its performance was unusually low on pun Exercise R110 A and inference Exercise R127. The Northeastern region performed above the national level on 12 of the 21 exercises. Both the Central and Western regions, however, were above the national figures on 16 of the exercises. Westerners did particularly well on the inference exercises which called for written responses.

Over the 21 exercises, adult males demonstrated an advantage over females 11 times. However, the difference between the sexes' median percentages is only 6/10ths of a percent, so males cannot be said to have much of an advantage.

Percentages of success for Black adults never equalled or surpassed the national mark. The median Black difference was -19.9%. However, the group registered a relatively high figure on the second part of R112 A, a metaphor exercise. The results for Whites as a group were always at or above the national percentage of success.

As at the other age levels people whose parents have graduated from high school did better than those whose parents dropped out or never attended. The no high school parental education group never registered a percentage of success equal to or better than the national figure. The median difference was -9%. Its showing was unusually low on exercises requiring written responses. The some high school group's median difference was about -1%; on five of the exercises in this theme, this group performed above the national level. However, the graduated from high school category was above the national figure on 20 of the 21 exercises, and the post high school group's results were always better than the national results. The median difference for the former group was 4.2%; for the latter, it was 8.2%. As we noted at the other ages, the people in the highest parental education category performed particularly well on written responses (see Exercise

R127); they also did unusually well on R115 B--a metaphor exercise-- and R110 A, a pun question.

The best overall performance by a size of community group appeared in the medium sized city category. This group's percentage of success was above the national figure on 15 of the 21 exercises; the median difference was 1.7%. The urban fringe percentage was greater than the national figure on 13 exercises, the small places category on 11. The big city group was below the national performance on 15 of the 21 exercises.

Table 1 lists all the preceding group median differences by age. The median differences for three groups (the Southeast, Blacks and the extreme rural group) tend to move farther below the national performance at each succeeding age level. In other words, performance in these groups differs least from the national performance at age 9, most at the adult level.

Since Southeastern 17-year-olds and adults responded to many of the same exercises, the three point drop in median difference (from -5.0 to -7.8) between those two ages is particularly noteworthy as an indicator that either (1) the adults in this group have forgotten some of their high school training; or (2) today's 17-year-old has had more training than the adults did in the skills this theme requires. Probably both factors are at work.

One other observation: the Central region's median differences declined with each age increase. Does this indicate that elementary education in the midwest is in advance of the nation in emphasizing the skills called for in this theme?

This Literature theme should be read along with Volumes 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the National Assessment Reading report. Combining the five themes, there were 124 exercises assessing various literary comprehension skills at the 9-year-old level; at age 13, there were 171; at age 17, there were 145; and for young adults, there were 79. The information gathered by all these items provides baseline data about reading skills which are indispensable for literary comprehension. At the moment, the data indicate that people in some socioeconomic groups are less likely to fully comprehend the imaginative language of literature than most people. But there is a good deal more research ahead. For now, we at least have a starting point from which to launch inquiries that may one day tell us precisely which aspects of reading skill are most difficult for what groups at which age levels with what effect upon their capacity to enjoy and profit from literary art.

EXHIBIT D. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL THESE 1 EXERCISES -- ADULT

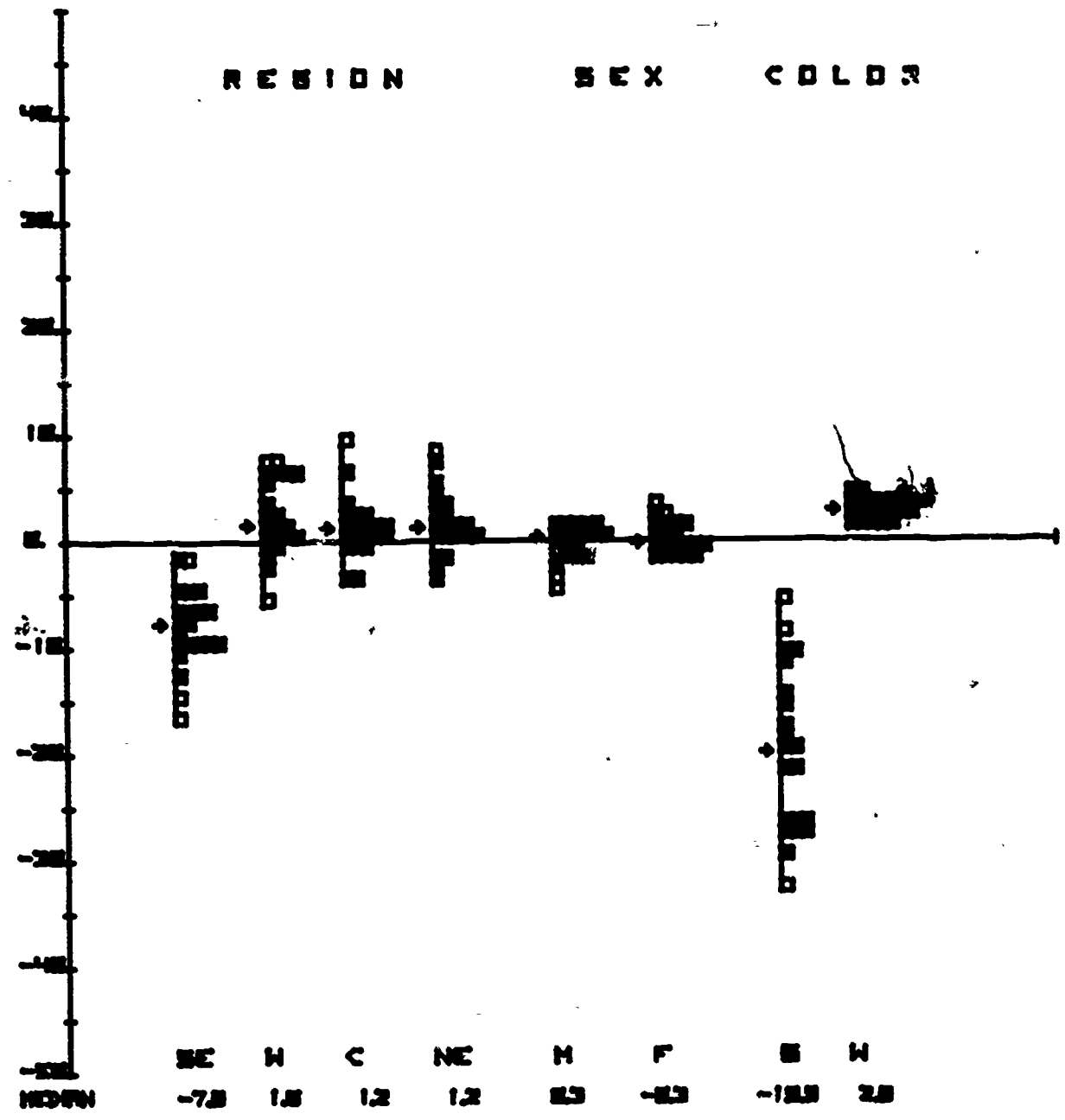


EXHIBIT D. DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP DIFFERENCES FOR ALL
THEME 1 EXERCISES -- ADULT

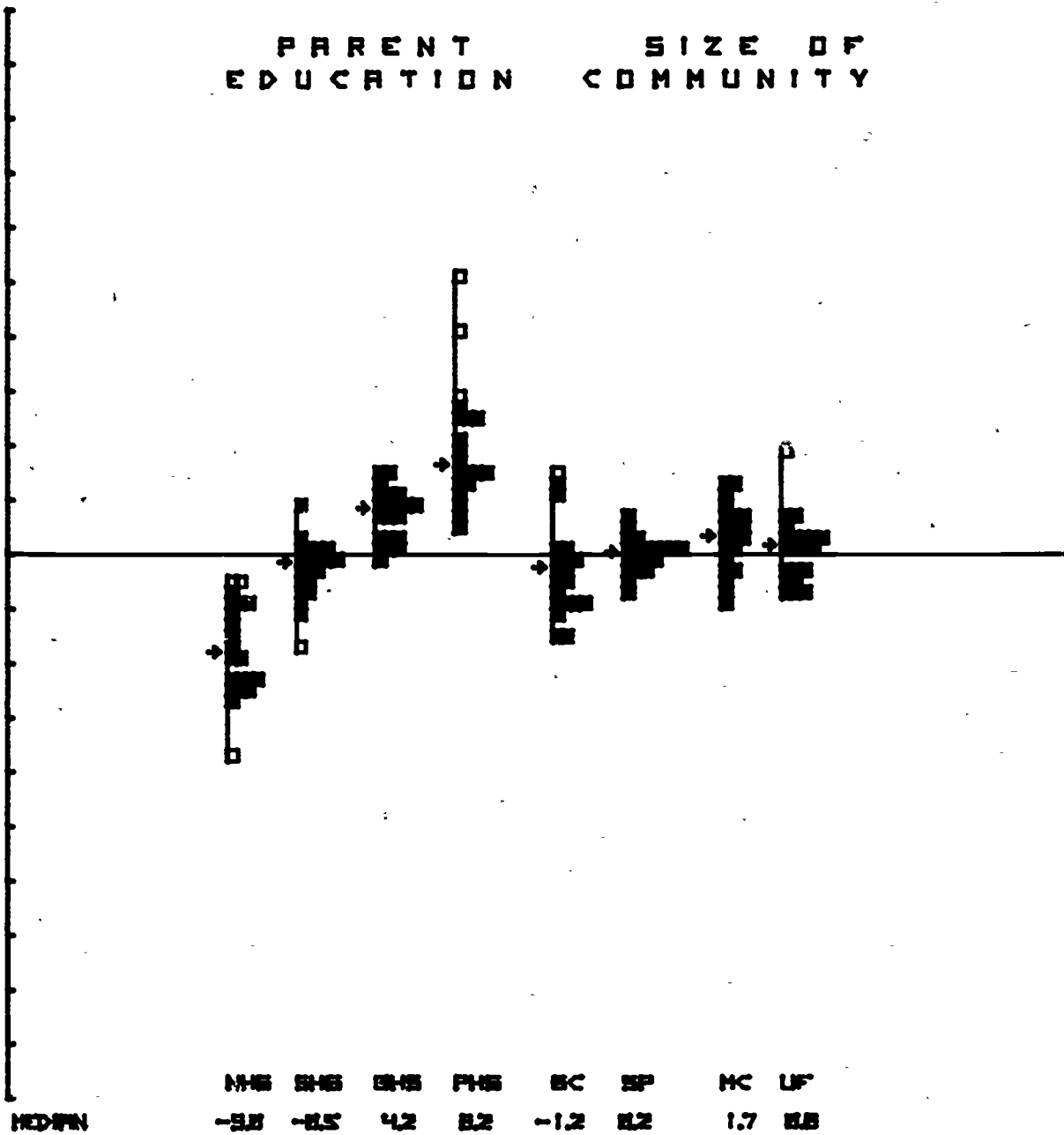


TABLE 1. Group Median Differences on
All Theme 1 Exercises

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Region				
Southeast	-4.1	-5.7	-5.0	-7.8
West	-0.5	1.0	0.8	1.5
Central	3.4	1.9	1.7	1.2
Northeast	0.5	1.8	1.1	1.2
Sex				
Male	-1.2	-1.8	-1.3	0.2
Female	1.1	1.8	1.3	-0.3
Color				
Black	-13.7	-16.0	-15.8	-20.0
White	2.2	2.8	2.2	2.7
Parental Education				
No High School	-6.2	-11.7	-10.2	-9.0
Some High School	-4.4	-4.3	-7.0	-0.8
Graduated from High School	0.3	0.2	-0.7	4.2
Post High School	5.2	7.1	5.9	8.2
Size and Type of Community				
Extreme Inner City	-14.1	-7.5	-8.1	
Extreme Rural	-3.2	-4.1	-5.0	
Small City	0.4	-0.2	-0.1	
Medium City	-0.8	0.8	-0.4	
Suburban Fringe	2.7	1.7	0.5	
Rest of Big City	-0.6	-1.1	-0.4	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	7.1	5.6	5.3	
Size of Community				
Big City	-2.6	-1.1	-1.9	-1.3
Urban Fringe	3.8	2.8	2.5	0.8
Medium Size City	-0.3	0.3	-0.3	1.6
Smaller Places	-0.5	-1.2	-1.1	0.1

NOTE: Some of the numbers in this table differ slightly from those in the previous exhibits. At ages 13, 17 and adult, the differences (.1%) are due to the use of a different rounding procedure. At age 9, the differences (ranging from .1 to .6%) reflect an updating of the results by the addition of three more exercise results to the 18 that appear in the previous discussion of age 9 results. These minor changes do not alter in any way our conclusions about the performances of the groups relative to the national level of performance.

CHAPTER 2

THEME 2: RESPONDING TO LITERATURE

The results for all exercises which required verbal or written responses to a specific work appear in this volume of the Literature report. There were not a great many such exercises for the obvious reason that they are very time consuming; however, the results do provide interesting baseline data as well as some very enjoyable reading.

All responses, whether written or verbal, were analyzed in two ways. First, they were classified according to the response categories detailed by Alan Purves and Victoria Rippere in NCTE Research Report No. 9, Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature. Once categorized, they were scored holistically on a one to four point scale.

Briefly, the Purves-Rippere categories describe various relationships between the writer of an essay and the work he is writing about. The first category, termed engagement-involvement, defines personal approaches to the work--subjective reflections or digressions and general discussions of the respondent's involvement in it.

The second category is termed perception and it encompasses responses which separate respondent from work and attend to the work primarily as an object to be described or functionally analyzed. Essays or verbal comments in this category are usually formalistic or analytic in direction.

Interpretation is the third category and into it fall all responses in which the essay writer attempts to find meanings in the work and generalize about its content and implications.

The fourth major category is called evaluation; it encompasses quality judgments and general reflections on the worth of the work and the value of reading it. When we found that a great many people tended to retell the story or poem literally, we made a separate (fifth) category for retelling; in the Purves-Rippere scheme, this type of essay would be in Category II, but it seemed useful to separate formalistic responses from these quite different sorts of perception. We also added a category for maverick responses, many of which were very creative.

Verbal responses were obtained by presenting people with stories or poems and asking them what they most wanted to say about the work, what they especially noticed and what they thought about it. We recorded their responses, transcribed them and categorized each statement made during the interview. Since most people expressed different reactions to each question, most produced statements in more than one category.

Results for essays, however, are a different matter. The scorers categorized an essay according to its general thrust; they did not, as with the verbal responses, classify individual statements. Thus, the category results for essay responses represent percentages of entire essays in a particular category. The two readers of each essay had to decide which of the frames of mind represented by the categories dominated the essay. This turned out to be easier than it sounds, probably because the essays were quite short and written within definite time limits.

The four-point quality scoring system worked as follows: a "one" response was totally inadequate; a "two" was barely adequate, usually consisting of perfunctory, undocumented, usually vague, assertions; a "three" was an adequate response using details in the work accurately to support an assertion about it; and a "four" was a superior response demonstrating insight, command of details and sophistication. The report details percentages of people who received adequate or better scores regardless of which category their responses fell into. It also reproduces sample responses ranging from the poorest to the most exciting.

The stimuli for the tape recorded responses consisted of three poems and the story "Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine," by Evaline Ness.¹ Nine-year-olds reacted to the story and two poems, 13-year-olds were given two poems, and the two older age groups responded verbally to a single poem. As one might expect, there were definite changes in the distribution of statements among the categories depending on the stimulus and the age of the respondent. Very few 9-year-olds approached "Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine" as an object to be analyzed, but a large percentage of them made engagement-involvement and evaluative statements about it. A great many more made formalistic perception responses when confronted with a poem, however. At all ages, about half or more of the people expressed some involvement with a work, but very few responses fell into the perception category. The proportion of interpretive statements increased with age. On one poem, fewer than one 9-year-old response in ten was

¹Evaline Ness, Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.

interpretive, but almost two thirds of the statements made by 17-year-olds and adults fell into this category. Evaluative responses (Category IV), on the other hand, decreased in number at the higher age levels. More than three 9-year-olds in five made evaluative statements, but at age 17 and at the adult level the proportion was between a third and a half. This is perhaps partly due to the tendency of the 9-year-old to reply "it's pretty good" regardless of the question, but it may also reflect the greater attention older people devoted to interpretive observations.

TABLE 2. Percentage of Responses in Each Category

<u>Literary Work</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Category</u>				
		I	II	III	IV	V
"Sam, Bangs, etc."	9	62	2	28	62	43
"If Apples, etc."	9	64	30	19	51	35
"Space Travellers"	9	69	17	9	62	50
"Space Travellers"	13	66	32	32	53	43
"Closing of the Rodeo"	13	53	23	46	51	40
"Closing of the Rodeo"	17	52	30	62	47	27
"Closing of the Rodeo"	Adult	47	13	63	37	30

I = Engagement-Involvement
 II = Perception
 III = Interpretation
 IV = Evaluation
 V = Retelling

Adequate or better responses were rare at the younger ages. Twenty-two percent of the 9-year-olds received adequate or better scores for their responses to the story; but the figure dropped to 12% for the poem "If Apples Were Pears" and 6% for the poem "Space Travellers," by James Britton. Percentages were higher for some groups--notably the extreme affluent suburb group and children whose parents had more than a high school education. For 13-year-olds, the percentages of adequate responses were 18% for one poem, 15% for the other. Twenty-eight percent of the 17-year-olds' and 37% of the adults' remarks were at least adequate.

There were four exercises requiring written essays. Two were administered to 13-year-olds, two to 17-year-olds and adults. People at each age level wrote in response to both poems and short stories.

Because we used different categorizing techniques for the essays, the distribution of responses among the categories changed considerably. About 1 essay in 11 was an engagement-involvement response, though for an A.E. Housman poem, the proportion was 1 in 33. Regardless of stimulus or age level, there were always very few perception responses--in fact, never more than 3%. Thirteen-year-olds wrote fewer interpretive essays than 17-year-olds or adults. For instance, 29% of their responses to the poem "Space Travellers" were interpretive, whereas 81% of the adult responses to Housman's "Into My Heart" were interpretive. At all ages, however, a poetic stimulus prompted more interpretive essays and far fewer paraphrasings than did the stories. Evaluative compositions were almost as rare as formally oriented ones at all ages, but especially at the two oldest age levels. Retellings appeared most frequently at age 13--33% of the poetry responses and 55% of the story essays were mainly paraphrasings--but they almost disappeared at the higher age levels (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. Percentage of Essays in Each Category

<u>Literary Work</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Category</u>					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
"Space Travellers"	13	9	3	29	9	33	11
"Half a Gift"	13	12	-	21	4	55	6
"Snake Dance"	17	9	1	56	5	25	4
"Into My Heart"	17	3	1	86	1	1	3
"Snake Dance"	Adult	8	1	69	2	16	1
"Into My Heart"	Adult	9	1	81	1	3	2

I = Engagement-Involvement
 II = Perception
 III = Interpretation
 IV = Evaluation
 V = Retelling

In general, the percentage of acceptable responses was greater on the written exercises than on the taped ones. Twenty-one percent of the 13-year-olds' essays about a poem received scores of 3 or 4, and 24% of their responses to a story were at least adequate. Interestingly, students in the inner city group did very poorly on the poem but performed as well as all 13-year-olds in their response to the story "Half a Gift" by Robert Zachs--a sensitive portrait of an impoverished inner city family. Their unusual success on this item would seem to support the view that children become more involved in materials they can

relate to and that this involvement can often compensate for deficiencies in writing skill.

In response to the story "Snake Dance," by Corey Ford, 44% of the 17-year-olds and 45% of the adults wrote adequate or better essays. There was a 15 point difference between the percentages of males and females writing good essays, the girls having the advantage. At the adult level, there was no sex difference but there was a major difference between two regional groups: the Southeastern percentage was 17 points below the national figure and the Western percentage was almost 12 points above.

Essays about the Housman poem "Into My Heart" make fascinating reading even when they were not particularly well done. A number of people interpreted the phrase "air that kills" in the opening line ("Into my heart an air that kills") as a reference to pollution; others used the poem as a forum for their war views, assuming, apparently, that the speaker was a returning Vietnam veteran. Of the several thousand essays written about this poem, 19% of the 17-year-olds and 28% of the adults received adequate or superior scores.

CHAPTER 3

THEME 3: RECOGNIZING LITERARY WORKS AND CHARACTERS

The third theme includes most of the exercises written to satisfy the first of the three major literature objectives: read literature of excellence. Five types of exercises assessed different kinds of recognition of literary works: the first presented the student with a picture from a well-known nursery rhyme, story or poem and asked him what work it illustrated; the second consisted of parodies of famous poems ("The Village Blacksmith," "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and "Sea Fever," for instance) and instructions to identify the source of the parody (these measured Objective IIB); the third type of exercise presented the respondent with an allusion to some literary work or figure and asked for identification of the allusion; the fourth presented people with a disguised myth or story pattern and asked for identification of its source; and the fifth consisted of straightforward questions about specific works and figures.

Needless to say, there are so many important literary works and characters in Western literature alone that it would be impossible to assess recognition of many. Therefore, the exercises involve a few selected names and works from folk literature, a few from Greek and Roman mythology, several from the Bible and from standard literary works often found on curriculum lists. Hopefully, data based on these few items will give us some idea of the extent to which people are familiar with a much broader range of works and characters.

The results indicate that, in general, there was a steady increase from age to age in the percentage of people who recognized works and characters. For instance, 45% of the 9-year-olds recognized an illustration of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party from Alice in Wonderland; at age 13, the percentage was 72%; and at age 17, it was 78%. Two thirds of the 13-year-olds recognized an allusion to Adam, but at age 17 the proportion was four fifths.

Some figures or works were not familiar to many people at any age level. Only 8% of the 13-year-olds recognized Don Quixote, for instance; at ages 17 and adult the figure was slightly over 20%. Only half the teenagers and adults recognized a parody of "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and only 54% connected David with the Psalms. Though half of the 9-year-olds said they had

heard of Cupid, only 28% were able to give an acceptable description of him. The story of Job went unrecognized by many 13- and 17-year-olds.

On the other hand, a good many exercises seemed to be relatively easy, especially for the older participants. More than three quarters of the teenagers and adults recognized Sherlock Holmes from a silhouette profile; 87% of the 17-year-olds identified Moby Dick (probably because it is often taught in high school); more than 90% of the 17-year-olds and adults correctly identified allusions to Samson, Noah and Tom Sawyer.

The group results in this theme are particularly interesting since they are far less stable on some exercises than they are for most. On a typical Literature assessment exercise, one region tends to dominate through the three lower age levels, females show a consistent advantage across ages, while Blacks, certain extreme STOC groups, and the lower parental education groups tend to register percentages far below the national level. But on some of the exercises in this theme, the customary patterns disappeared. Notice Exercise R320, for instance, a parody of Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith": at age 13 there was no Southeastern deficit or Black-White difference, but at age 17, the Southeastern percentage was 8 points, the Black percentage 19 points, below the national figure. The percentage of inner city 9-year-olds who responded correctly to the Alice in Wonderland illustration mentioned above was 24 points below the national figure and 45 points lower than the figure posted by the affluent suburb group; but at age 13, there was no significant difference between the performance of inner city children and all 13-year-olds. It is possible that these radical changes in performance reflect somewhat the tumult in the English curriculum over the last four or five years. Seventh and eighth graders today are being exposed to materials that differ considerably from those they would have encountered four years ago. But there are undoubtedly other factors involved in these atypical results and careful analysis may tell us even more about their implications.

In general, the Central region performed best at the two lower age levels; 9-year-olds in this group were particularly good at describing Paul Bunyan (their percentage of success was 13 points above the national figure). The Northeast region tended to do slightly better than the Central and Western regions at the two older age levels. Regardless of age, the Southeastern group was lowest; however, relative to its usual performance, the Southeastern region did particularly well in recognition of Biblical figures at ages 9 and 13.

At each age level, females demonstrated a slight advantage over all the exercises taken together. However, on certain

exercises there were very large differences between male and female performance. Nine percent more 9-year-old girls than boys recognized an illustration from Winnie the Pooh, for instance, and their advantage on Alice in Wonderland was even larger (10%). But on Moby Dick the 17-year-old males demonstrated a 12 point superiority and on Sherlock Holmes an 8 point advantage. In fact, our results over all the ages indicate a male advantage for masculine figures such as Robin Hood, Paul Bunyan, Daniel Boone, Samson and John Henry, along with better than average recognition of adventurous works such as Moby Dick, Treasure Island and Gulliver's Travels. Females outperformed males on poems, nursery rhymes and works such as Charlotte's Web; Alice in Wonderland and Winnie the Pooh. The sexes seem to have about equal success in recognizing Biblical figures.

Relative to their usual subnational performance, Blacks and people in the extreme inner city category did unusually well in recognizing characters like Tom Sawyer, Achilles and John Henry but quite poorly on works such as Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz, Winnie the Pooh or Charlotte's Web. At all four age levels, the extreme affluent suburb group consistently performed above the national level, convincingly indicating that they are more familiar with literature than people in the other groups.

Following is a discussion of the overall theme results for each age group. The median percentages used in this overview enable us to compare the performances of various groups to the national performance over a number of exercises.¹

In Exhibits E-H, each box represents the difference in performance between a group and the nation as a whole on a particular exercise. For example, in Exhibit E, the bottom box in the SE column shows that the Southeast was 23% below the national percentage on that exercise. The arrows depict the median of the differences for a group, enabling the reader to see how far above or below the national level each group's median difference lies. For example, the median difference for the Southeast in the same exhibit is -7%. Empty boxes correspond to exercise differences which were considered atypically above or below the group median difference. These exercises are referred to in the discussion as unusually high or low results.

¹Median percentages and median differences were based upon the "acceptable response" results for most exercises. For Exercises U331A-R333I, medians were based on result 2, percentages of "adequate descriptions." In no case were the summary results for multipart exercises (e.g., M328Z) used to compute medians.

Exhibit E

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 9

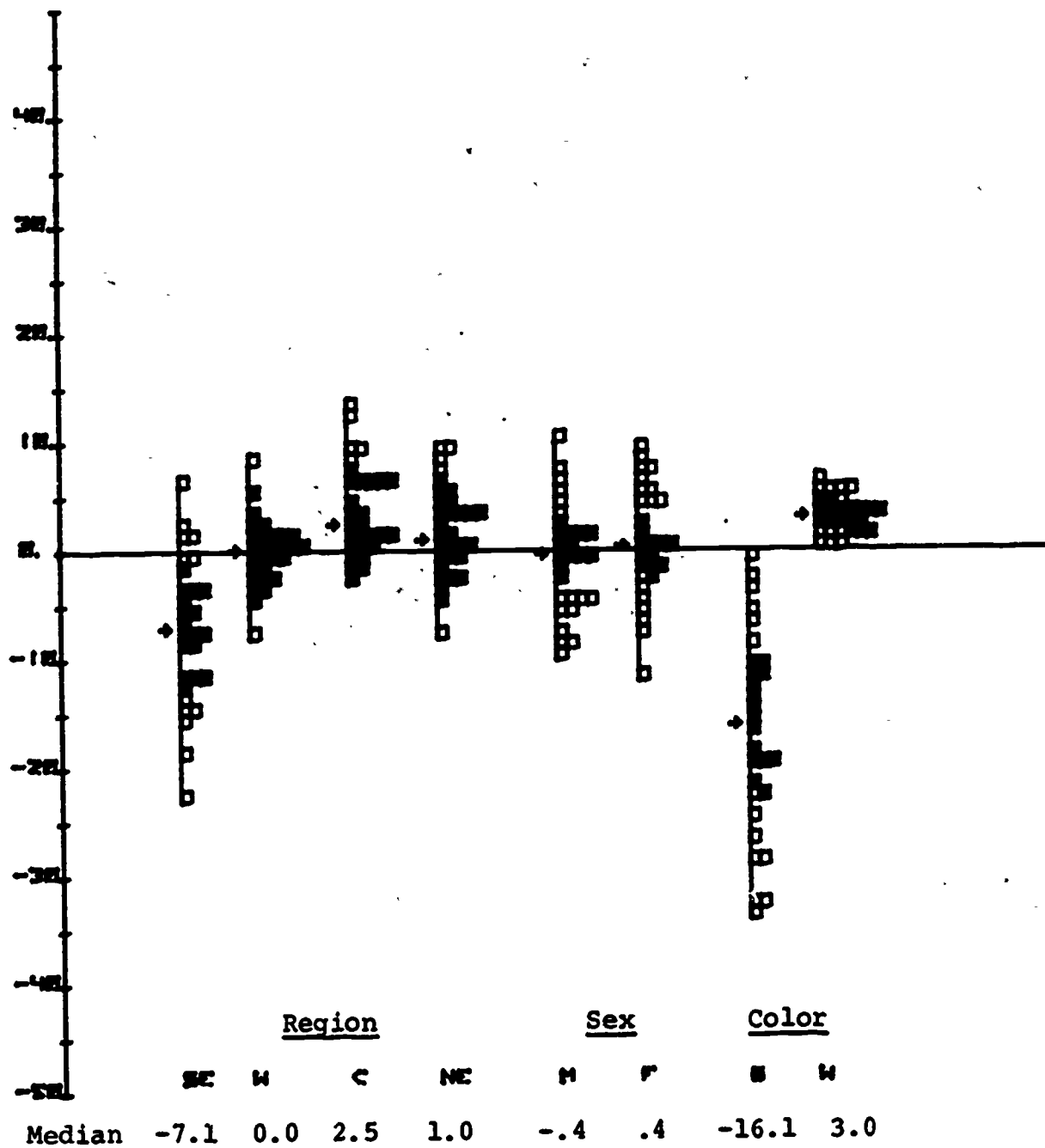
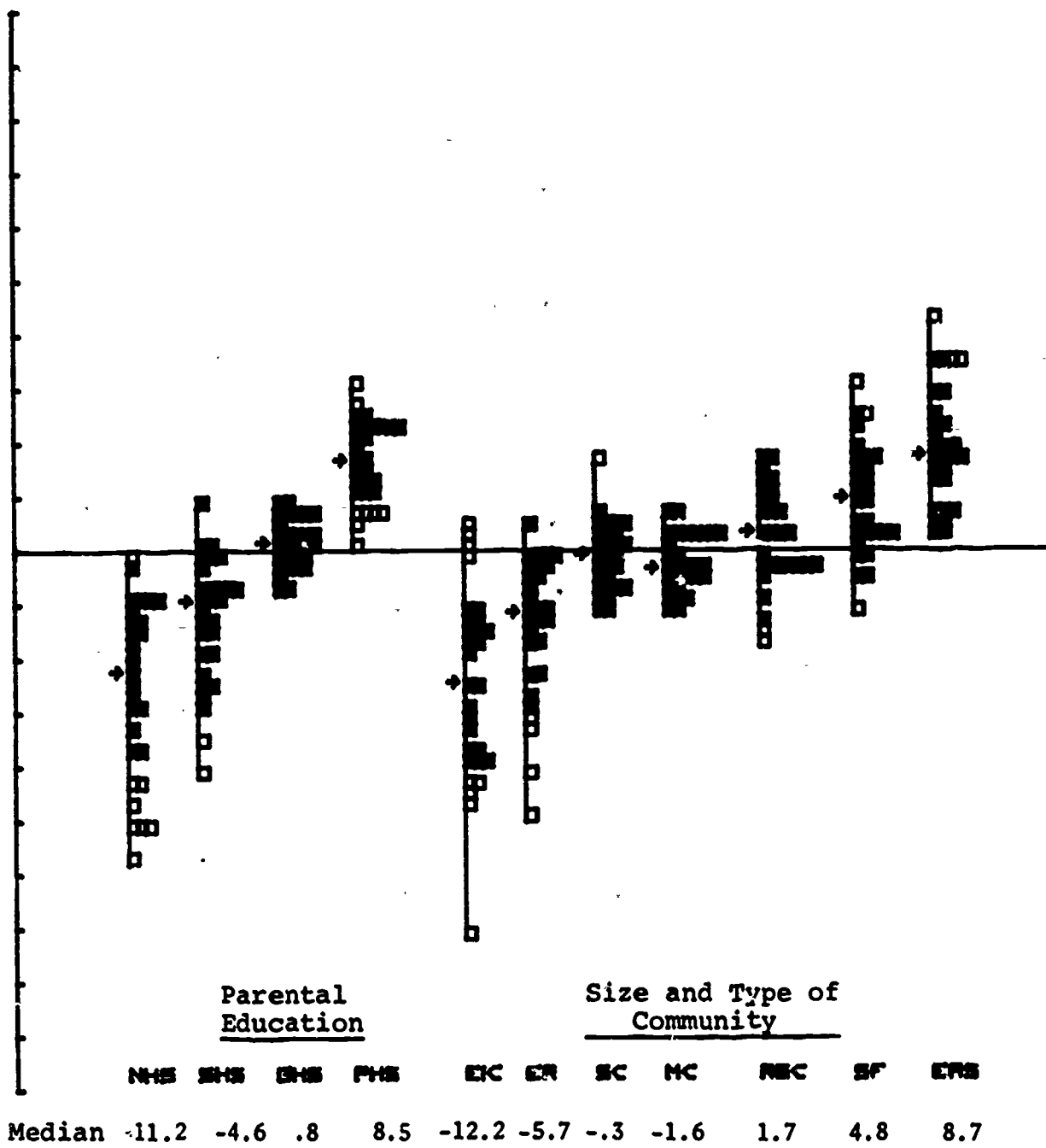


Exhibit E

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 9



Overall Group Results for 9-Year-Olds

Nine-year-olds answered 29 exercises. Their percentages of success ranged from less than 1% to 85.5% and their median national percentage of success was 44.4%--in other words, half their percentages were above 44.4%, half were below.

The Southeast group's median difference was -7.1%. Relative to its median difference, this group did well on exercises requiring identification of Biblical figures and Daniel Boone. However, Southeast results were relatively low for such characters as Rumpelstiltskin or Winnie the Pooh.

The Western regional group's median difference was almost zero. However, on Exercise R306, requiring identification of an illustration from Charlotte's Web, the group's percentage was 8 points over the national figure.

The Central region's median difference was 2.5%. More children in this regional group were familiar with Paul Bunyan (Exercise R332G) than were in any other region.

The median difference was 1% for the Northeast group. This group displayed its greatest positive differences from national performance in identifying Pinocchio (U313), Rumpelstiltskin (R332I), Thumbelina (U333G) and the Wizard of Oz (U314). It did least well on exercises requiring familiarity with the Old Testament Joseph and with Paul Bunyan.

Nine-year-old girls performed slightly better than the nation, boys slightly worse. Nevertheless, the sexes excelled in different sorts of exercises. Relative to their usual performance, males did unusually well on exercises requiring identification of Robin Hood (U331G), Daniel Boone (R331I), the Trojan Horse (U333C), Paul Bunyan (R332G) and Thor (R332C). Girls did poorly on these same exercises but excelled on exercises requiring knowledge of Alice in Wonderland (R305), Winnie the Pooh (R303), Charlotte's Web (R306), nursery rhymes and fairy tales.

The median difference for Blacks was -16%. They were best at recognizing Achilles, Tom Sawyer, Thor and the Trojan Horse. The White median difference was 3%. This group did particularly well on exercises dealing with Pinocchio, fairy tales and longer works like Alice in Wonderland.

The no high school group's median difference was -11.2%, the some high school group's difference was -4.6% and the graduated from high school group's was .8%. Students with at least one parent who went beyond high school had a group median difference of 8.5% and did especially well on Exercise R303, an illustration from Winnie the Pooh.

The median difference for the extreme inner city group was -12.2%. The extreme rural group's median difference was -5.7%. As Exhibit E illustrates, the small city, medium city and rest of big city STOC groups performed about as the nation did. The suburban fringe group's median difference, however, was almost 5%, and median difference for the extreme affluent suburb group was 8.7%.

Overall Group Results for 13-Year-Olds

This age group answered 33 exercises. Percentages of success ranged from 7.7% to 94.2%, and the national median was 66.5%.

The median difference for the Southeastern regional group was -4.6%. The group did particularly well on Exercise R334, a question about Job.

The median difference for the West was 1.2%. As at age 9, this group was outstanding when asked to identify an illustration from Charlotte's Web.

The median difference for the Central region was 2.1%; for the Northeast it was 1.3%. This last group did unusually well on exercises dealing with Gulliver's Travels, Treasure Island and Sherlock Holmes.

The median difference for males was 1 percentage point below the median difference for girls. As at age 9, the males did best on exercises requiring familiarity with masculine figures like John Henry (U329D), Samson (R328A), Galahad (R329C), Don Quixote (R307) and adventure stories like Treasure Island (U316). Females did relatively poorly on those exercises but excelled the males in exercises dealing with Charlotte's Web, Alice in Wonderland, Winnie the Pooh and Hansel & Gretel (U312).

The median difference for Blacks was -17.4%. However, on some particular exercises (allusions to John Henry or Job, for instance, or Exercises R329C, R320 and half a dozen more) their differences from the national percentage were not particularly great.

The median difference for Whites was about 3%.

Once again, as Exhibit F reveals, there was a steady rise in median differences within the parental education groups. The figure for the no high school group was -11.9%, with particularly high percentages on the Galahad and Job items (R329C and R334). For the some high school group, the median difference was -5.9% and for the graduated from high school group it was .3%. The post high school median difference was 6 percentage points.

Exhibit F

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 13

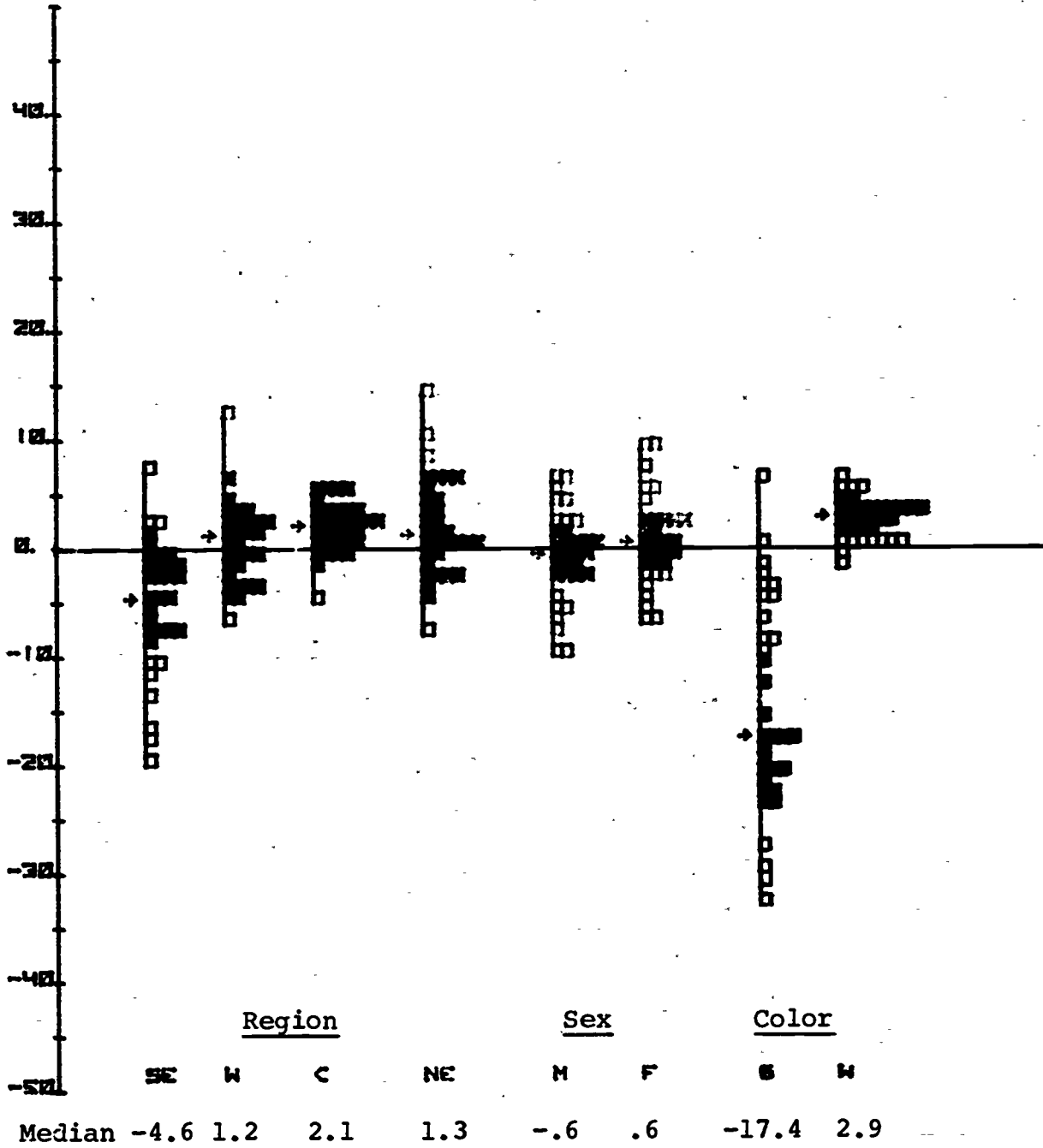


Exhibit F

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 13

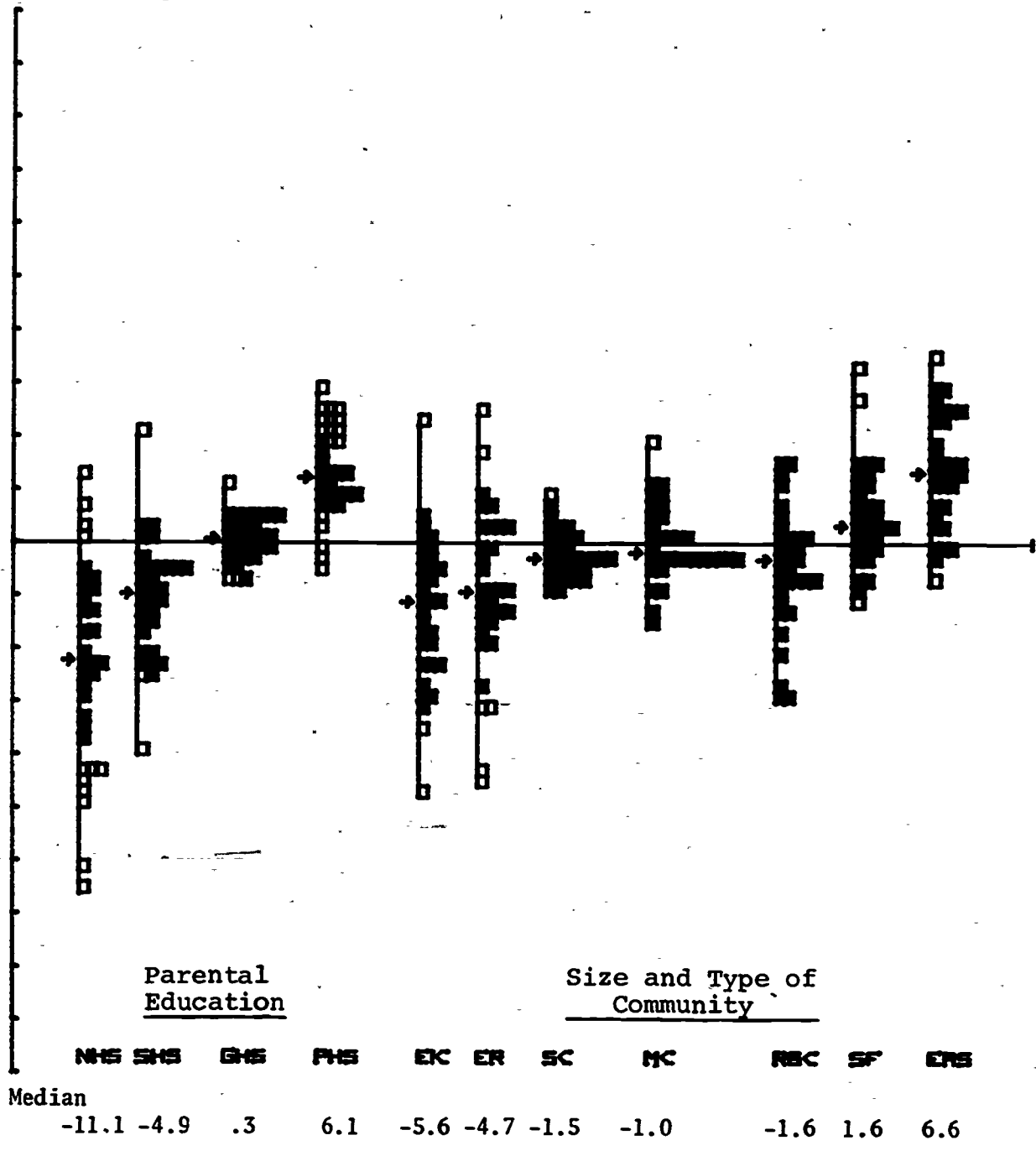


Exhibit G

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 17

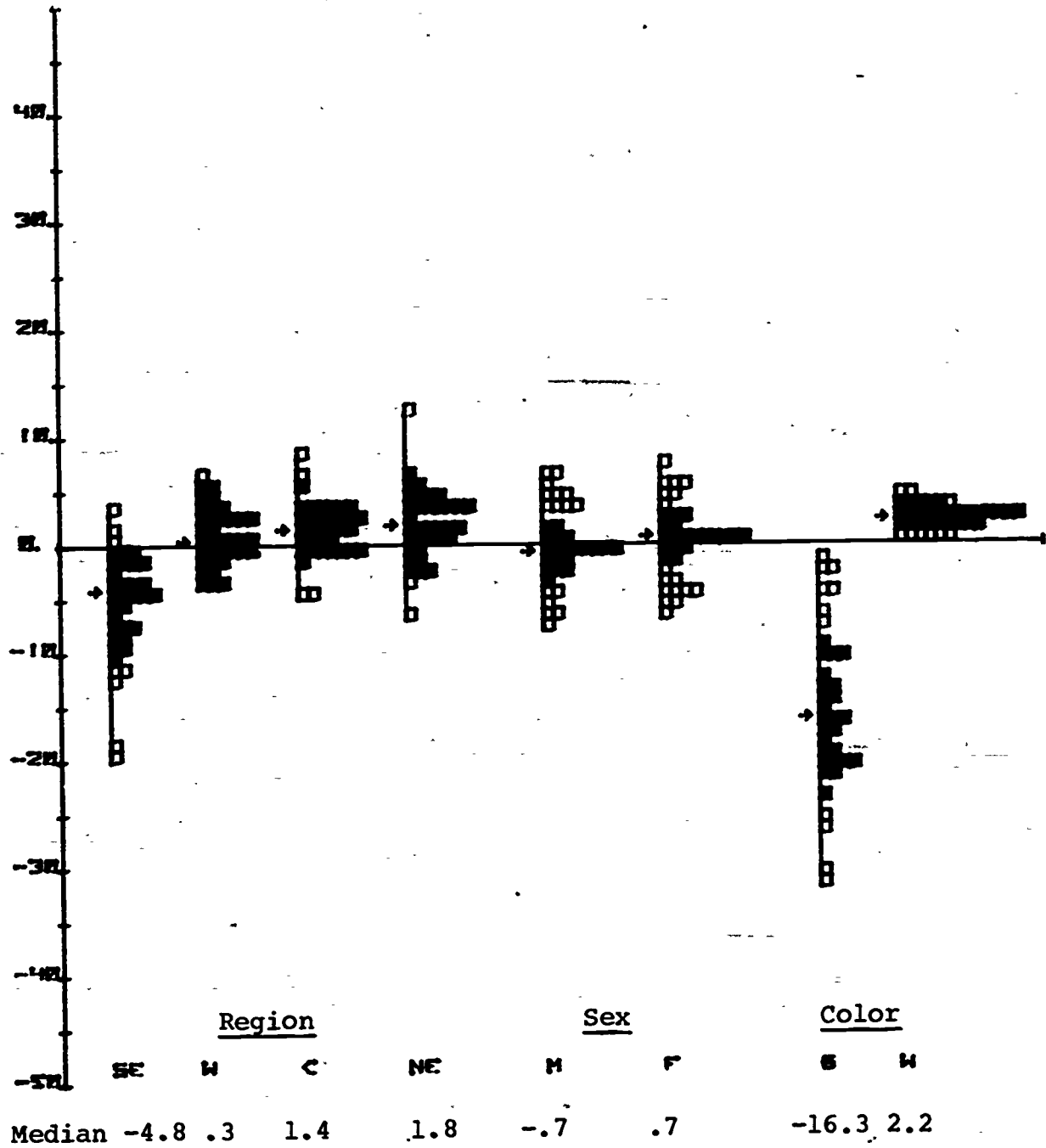
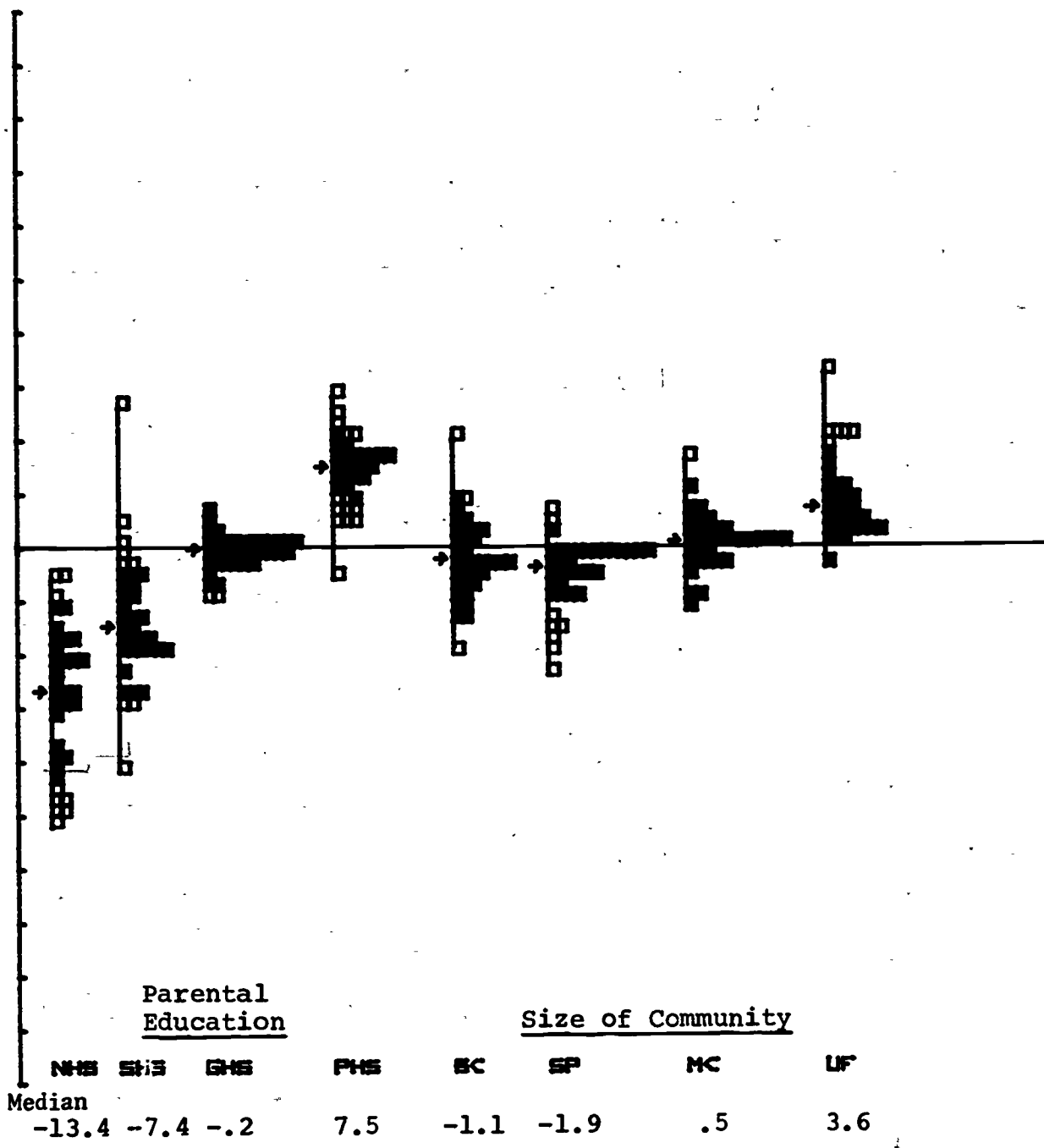


Exhibit G

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 17



The extreme inner city group's median difference was -5.6%. The rural group's difference was -4.7%. Its most distinctive performance was on Exercise R334, requiring recognition of the story of Job.

Four of the remaining STOC groups display median differences close to zero. However, the extreme affluent suburb group's median difference was 6.6%.

Overall Group Results for 17-Year-Olds

Seventeen-year-olds were presented with 36 exercises. Their percentages of success ranged from 12.3 to 96, and their median percentage was 63.2.

The Southeast's median difference was -4.8%. This group performed particularly well on exercises requiring identification of Sir Galahad, Job and the poem "Sea Fever." The Western median was only .3%, but the Central region's was 1.4%. Central teenagers did especially well on the Winnie the Pooh illustration (R303). The greatest positive median difference appeared for the Northeast (1.8%). This group's difference from a national percentage was particularly great on Exercise U318, an illustration from Gulliver's Travels.

As at the other ages, the male median difference was negative (-.7%). But again males performed best on exercises dealing with masculine figures like John Henry (U329D), Mercury (U330D), Sherlock Holmes (R308), Samson (R328A), Don Quixote (R307) and Gulliver (U318). Females, while performing relatively poorly on such exercises, did exceptionally well identifying illustrations from Alice in Wonderland (R305) and Winnie the Pooh (R303), and Biblical figures like David (R330C), Job (R334) and Cain and Abel (U339).

The median difference for Blacks was -16.3%. They did relatively well on questions about Samson, "Jabberwocky" (U322), Solomon (U330E), John Henry (U329D), Galahad (R329C) and Robin Hood (U329E).

The median of the differences from national percentages for the White group was 2.2%.

As Exhibit G reveals, the median differences for the parental education groups differed considerably. The no high school group's median difference was -14%, the some high school group's was -7.4%, the graduated from high school group's was .2% and the post high school group's was 7.5%. This last group did unusually well on four of the illustrations: U318 (Gulliver), R308 (Sherlock Holmes), R303 (Winnie the Pooh), U315 (Rip Van Winkle).

Median differences for the type of community groups were undramatic. The big city group's figure was -1.1, the small place group's was -1.9, the medium city group's was .5 and the urban fringe group's was 3.6.

Overall Results for Young Adults

Results for the 24 exercises answered by adults ranged from 14.6% to 95.1%. The median national percentage at this age level was 73%.

The median of the differences from national percentages was -8.8% for the Southeast and 2.6% for the West. The Central region's median difference was .5% and the Northeast's was 3.6%. This last region did unusually well identifying an illustration from Rip Van Winkle.

The median difference for male adults was .6%, as Exhibit H reveals. Relative to their usual performance, males excelled on exercises dealing with John Henry (U329D), Troy (R336), Moby Dick (R309) and Sherlock Holmes (R308).

Females did poorly on these exercises but did exceptionally well on questions about Alice in Wonderland (R305), Chicken Little (U328C), Adam (R328E) and Paul Revere (U319B).

The median difference for Blacks was -18.1%. Their results were atypically high for an exercise about Faust (U340). The median difference for Whites was 2.4%.

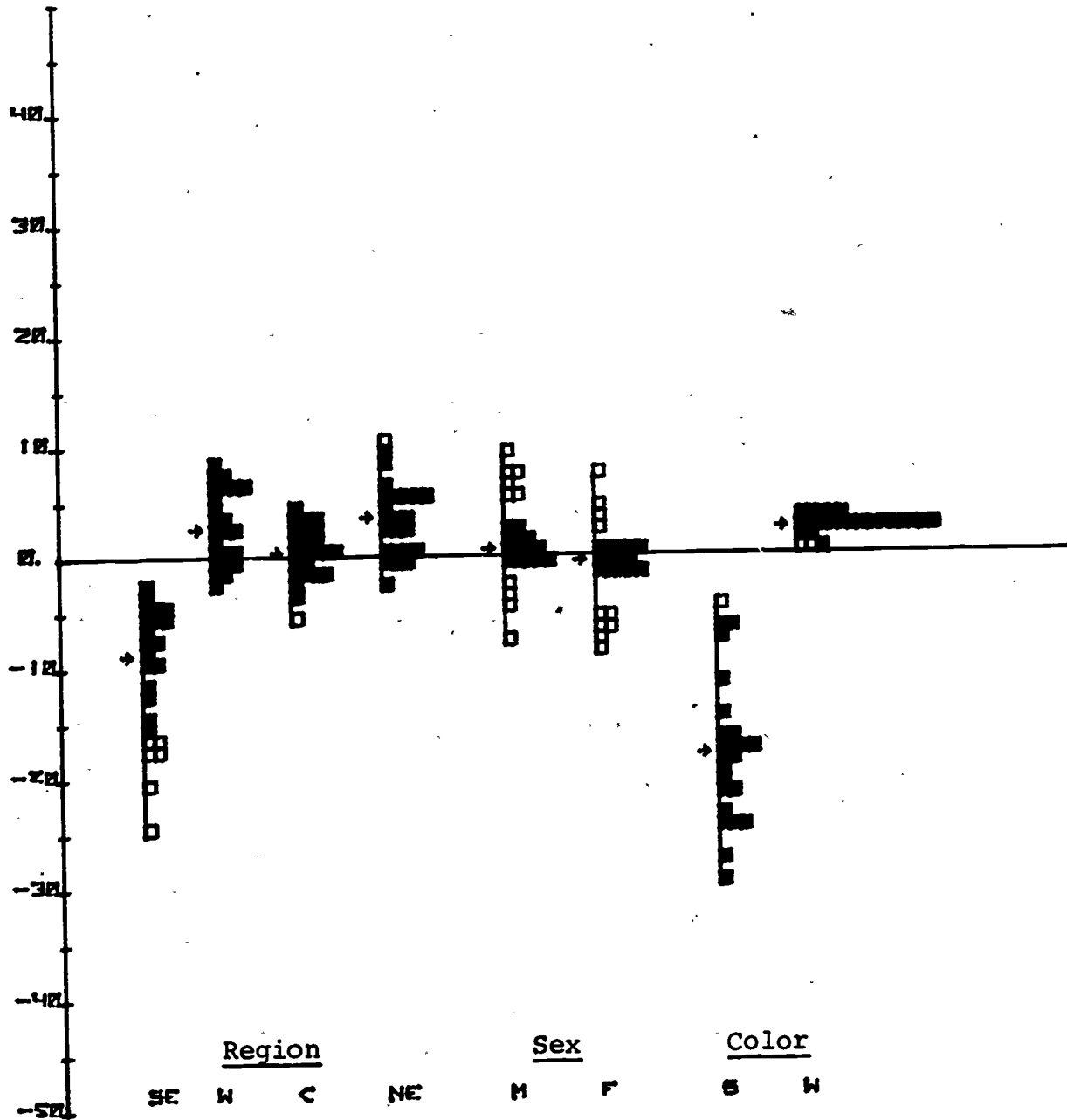
As at the other ages, the median differences for the parental education groups followed a definite pattern. The no high school figure was -7.9%, the some high school median difference was -1.4%, the graduated from high school was 2.8% and the post high school's was 9.7%. This last group had a percentage of success 19 points higher than the nation's on the Don Quixote illustration (R307), 17% higher on a parody of "Casey at the Bat" (R321) and 16 points higher on a parody of "The Village Blacksmith" (R320).

The median difference for the big city group was -4.8%; for the small place and medium city groups it was close to zero; and for the urban fringe group it was 2.2%.

As Table 4 reveals, several groups diverged from the national level to different degrees at different ages. Southeast 9-year-olds, for instance, showed a median difference of -7%; at ages 13 and 17, the group's median difference was -5%, but at the adult level it plunged to -9%. The Central region begins at age 9 with the largest positive median difference of all the regional groups; but at each age its advantage diminishes until, at the adult level, both the West and the Northeast display greater median differences.

Exhibit H

Distribution of Effects by Group, Adults



	<u>Region</u>				<u>Sex</u>		<u>Color</u>	
	SE	W	C	NE	M	F	S	W
Median	-8.8	2.6	.5	3.6	.6	-.6	-18.1	2.4

Exhibit H

Distribution of Effects by Group, Adults

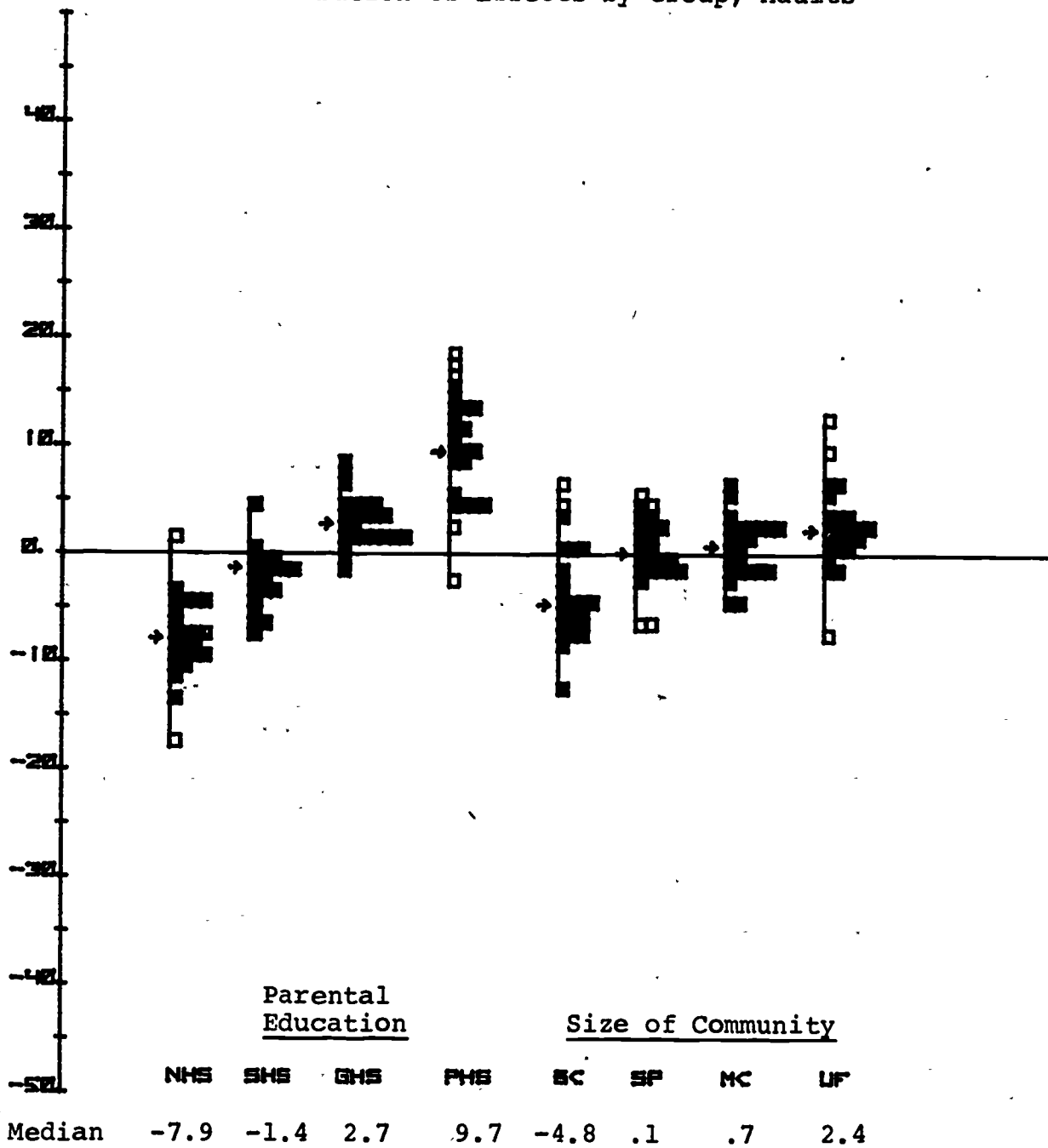


TABLE 4. Group Median Differences on
All Theme 3 Exercises

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Region				
Southeast	-7.2	-4.7	-4.9	-8.9
West	0.0	1.2	0.3	2.5
Central	2.4	2.0	1.3	0.4
Northeast	1.0	1.2	1.7	3.5
Sex				
Male	-0.4	-0.6	-0.8	0.5
Female	0.3	0.5	0.6	-0.6
Color				
Black	-16.1	-17.4	-16.3	-18.1
White	3.0	2.8	2.1	2.3
Parental Education				
No High School	-11.2	-11.2	-13.5	-7.9
Some High School	-4.7	-4.9	-7.4	-1.4
Graduated from High School	0.8	0.3	-0.2	2.7
Post High School	8.4	6.1	7.5	9.6
Size and Type of Community				
Extreme Inner City	-12.2	-5.6	-8.5	
Extreme Rural	-5.8	-4.7	-2.5	
Small City	-0.4	-1.6	-1.0	
Medium City	-1.7	-1.0	0.6	
Suburban Fringe	4.8	1.6	1.8	
Rest of Big City	1.6	-1.6	-0.6	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	8.7	6.6	7.6	
Size of Community				
Big City	-1.2	-0.1	-1.2	-4.8
Urban Fringe	5.1	4.0	3.5	2.2
Medium Size City	-1.0	-0.7	0.4	0.7
Smaller Places	-1.7	-2.1	-2.0	0.0

NOTE: Some of the numbers in this table differ by .1% from those in the previous exhibits. These differences are entirely due to the use of different rounding procedures.

CHAPTER 4

THEME 4: A SURVEY OF READING HABITS

Theme 4: A Survey of Reading Habits contains two kinds of exercises. The first kind was designed to determine attitudes toward literary instruction and the second kind was designed to discover what types of literature individuals read and how often they read. The national results indicate not only that a great majority of Americans read works of literature, but that the majority feels that it is important to read and to teach literature in school.

The first two exercises in this theme, for instance, ask 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults if they feel it is important to teach literature in school. At age 13, slightly more than three out of four children agreed that it is important, and in the two older age groups, the proportion was about nine out of ten. Although people had difficulty explaining their answers, about half or more of the individuals in each age group gave reasonable statements about why they believe teaching literature is important. At age 13, 49% gave reasonable statements; at age 17, the figure was 62%; and among adults, 49%.

Seventeen-year-olds and young adults were also asked if they think that reading great literature is of any value. Only 10% of the 17-year-olds and 8% of the adults reported that they thought reading great literature was of no value. Among both groups, about four out of five individuals reported that they did feel that reading great literature had value, and more than three out of five listed at least one reasonable explanation of the value of reading great literature. At least one out of every five individuals in both groups listed two or more good reasons for reading great literature.

After reporting sentiments such as these, what do Americans say they actually read? In Exercise R410, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and young adults were asked if they read any of eight types of literature, and if they could remember specific titles. The types were: long stories or novels, short stories, biographies or autobiographies, plays, poems that tell a story (i.e., epic or narrative poems), other poetry, essays and books of literary history or criticism. Nationally, 98% of the 13-year-olds reported that they read on their own--that is, apart from any

school assignment--at least one of the eight types; 95% of the 17-year-olds and 89% of the adults made the same report.

The percentages remained high even when the respondents were asked to name the titles of the works they reported they had read. Among 13-year-olds, 86% remembered titles; among 17-year-olds, the figure was 87%; and among adults, 76%.

Although the proportions reporting titles in a wide variety of categories were not large, the figures indicate that Americans do read a number of types of literature. Among 13-year-olds, 22% named titles in only one of the eight categories, 26% named titles in two categories, 20% named titles in three categories and 18% named titles in four or more categories. Among 17-year-olds and adults, the figures were similar, but almost one in four of the 17-year-olds and 22% of the adults named titles in four or more categories.

The parts of Exercise R410 concerned with novels and with poems are particularly interesting, since these are the two types of literature most stressed in traditional education. In the first, 72% of the 13-year-olds reported that they read novels or long stories on their own; 79% of the 17-year-olds and 76% of the adults made the same claim. The percentages reporting titles were lower than these, but they still represent a majority at each age. Half the 13-year-olds, 69% of the 17-year-olds and 64% of the adults reported titles.

The proportions at each age level that reported reading poems are smaller than the proportions for novels, but the figures still indicate a significant interest in poetry nationally. More than 46% of the 13-year-olds reported that they read poetry on their own; 43% of the 17-year-olds and 30% of the adults reported that they did. The proportions giving titles are smaller, but still represent a sizable number of individuals. At age 13, 24% gave titles; at 17, 25%; and among adults, 18%.

Overall Group Results by Age

The median percentages used in this overview enable us to compare the performances of various groups to the national performance over all the exercises in this theme.

In Exhibits I-L, each box represents the difference in performance between a group and the nation as a whole on a

particular exercise. For example, in Exhibit I, the bottom box in the SE (Southeast) column shows that the Southeast was 6% below the national percentage on that exercise. Each arrow depicts the median of all the exercise differences for a group, enabling the reader to see how far above or below the national level each group's median difference (or median effect) lies. For example, the median difference for the Southeast in the same exhibit is .7%. Empty boxes correspond to exercise differences which were considered atypically above or below the group median difference; these exercises are referred to in the discussion as having produced unusually high or low results for that group relative to its median difference.

Overall Group Results for 9-Year-Olds

The national median response percentage for 9-year-olds was computed using the 11 response percentages listed in Appendix A. Response percentages ranged from 32.5% to 65.0%, and the median national response percentage was 43.6%.

As Exhibit I reveals, the median difference for the Southeast (SE) was .7%. In other words, half its differences were above .7%, half were below. However, on Exercise R409, surveying magazine reading habits, the group's response percentage was 6% below the national response percentage, an atypically large negative difference for that group.

The median effect for the West (W) was -2.8%; however, on a survey of fiction reading habits (R404A), the Western percentage was 4 points above the national response rate.

The median difference for the Central group (C) was 1.9%; for the Northeast (NE) group it was -.9%.

The male (M) median difference was -1%. However, males performed atypically well on items surveying nonfiction reading habits, e.g., R404C, R404A, R404D and R404E.

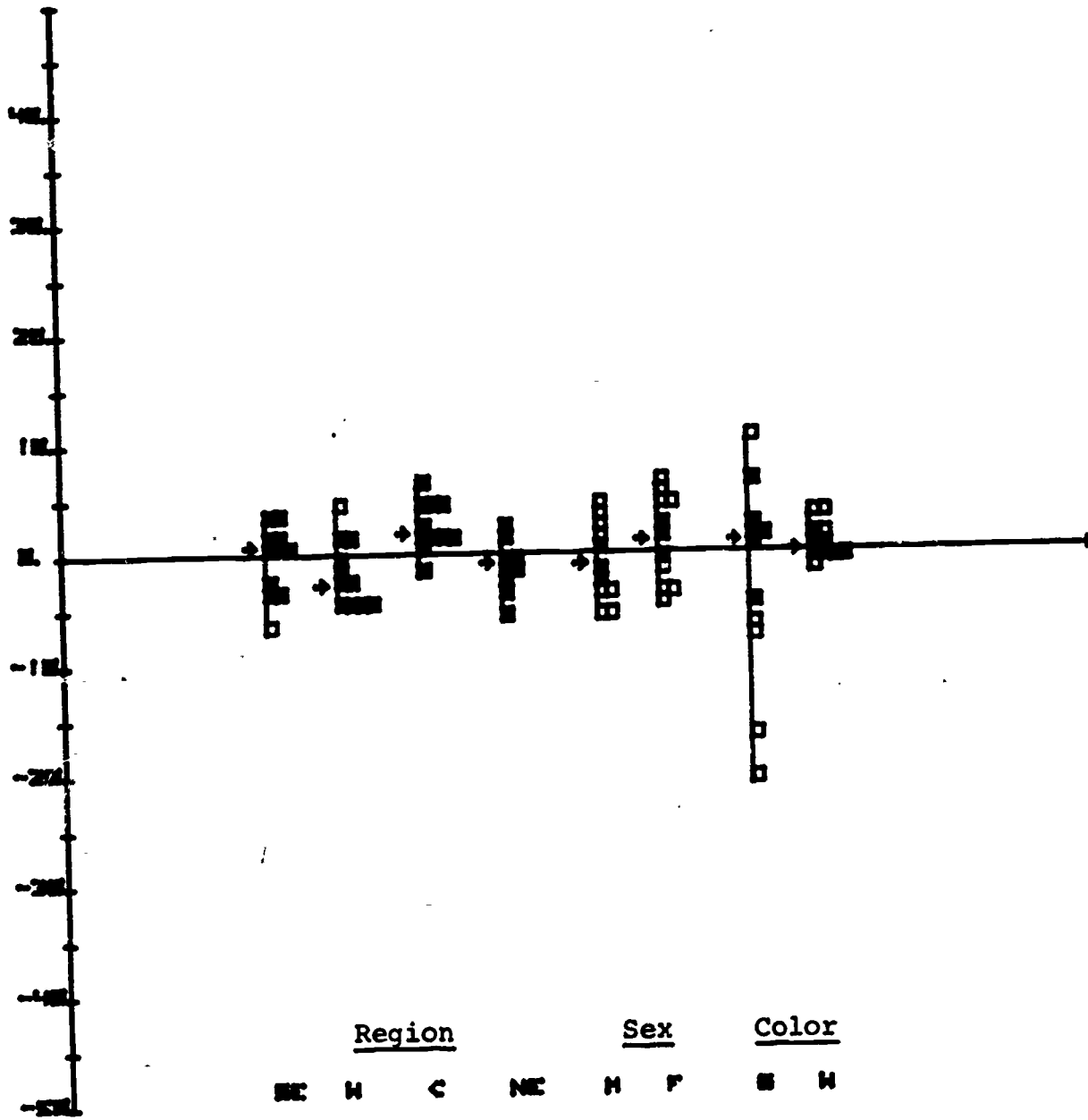
The female (F) median difference was 1%. Though the 9-year-old girls' response percentages were lower than the males' on the nonfiction questions just mentioned, their results were unusually high on questions about the frequency with which they read poetry and fiction, e.g., R407D, R406, R404A and R404B.

The median difference for Blacks (B) was 1%, but on a question asking them if they liked to read poetry often (R404B), their response percentage was almost 10 points above the nation's.

The White (W) median effect was almost zero; in other words, half of the White differences were above the national percentage

EXHIBIT I

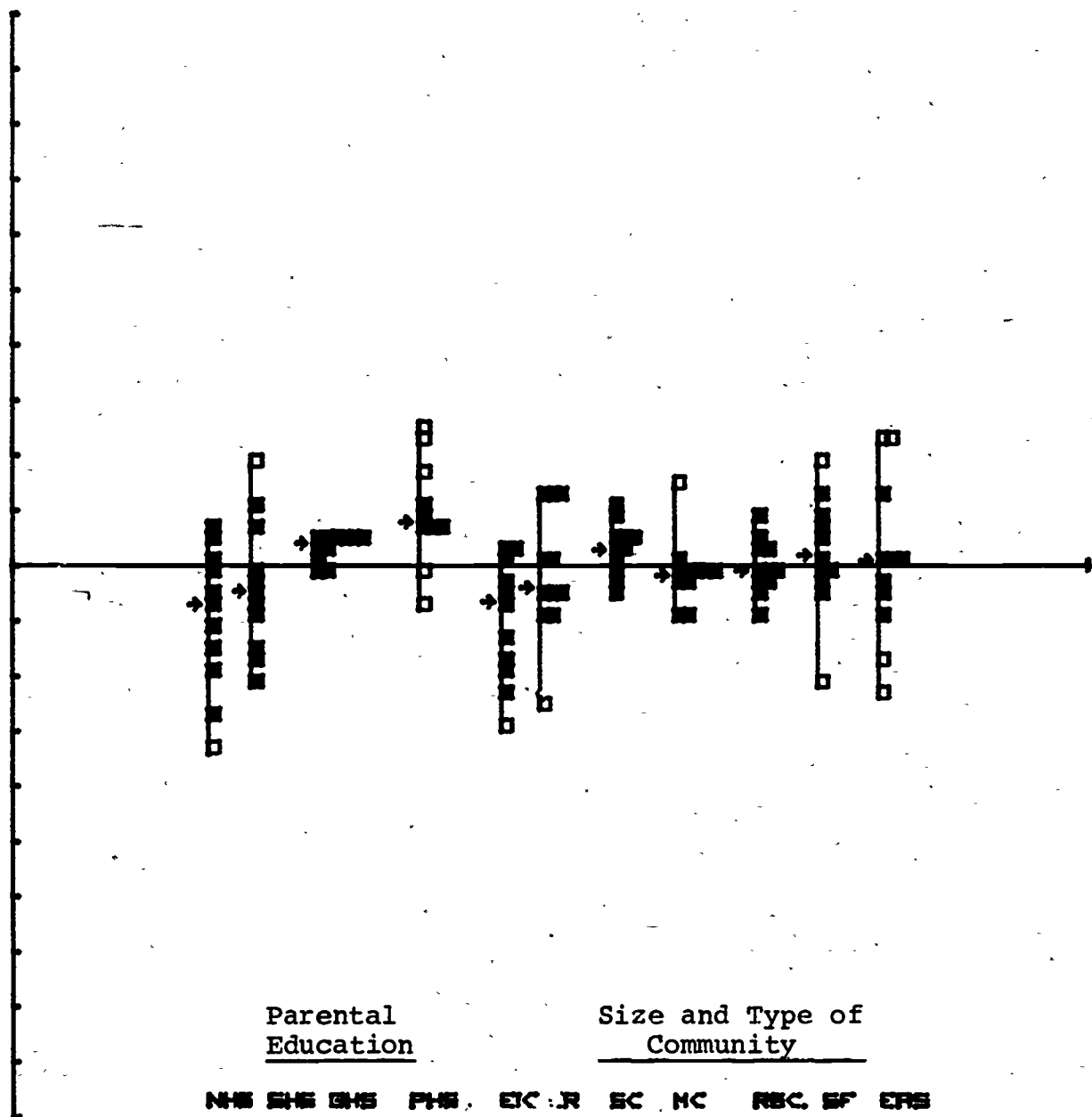
Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 9



	<u>Region</u>			<u>Sex</u>		<u>Color</u>		
	SE	W	C	NE	M	F	S	W
Median	0.7	-2.9	1.8	-1.0	-1.1	1.0	0.9	0.0

EXHIBIT I

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 9



and half were below it. Particularly great positive effects appeared on questions about their magazine reading habits (R409) and their involvement in fiction and biography (R407A, R408).

The median difference for the no high school group (NHS) was -3.5%, for the some high school group (SHS) it was -2.4%, for the graduated from high school group (GHS) it was about 2% and for the post high school group (PHS) it was 3.9%. Particularly high results appeared for this latter group on surveys of fiction, biography and magazine reading habits (R407A, R408 and R409).

The median differences for the STOC groups ranged from the -3.3% of the extreme inner city group (EIC) to the 1.4% figure for the small city group (SC). The rural group's (ER) difference was -2.1% and the rest of big city group's (RBC) was -.5%. The suburban fringe group (SF), with a median difference of .9%, registered an atypically greater positive difference from the national performance on R404D, a question about how often people read nonfiction.

The medium city group (MC) performed unusually well on R404A ("Do you like to read make-believe stories?") and had an overall median difference of -.9%. Finally, the extreme affluent suburb group (EAS) had a median effect of .4% and performed atypically well (12 points above the nation) on surveys of fiction and magazine reading frequency.

Overall Group Results for 13-Year-Olds

The national median response percentage for 13-year-olds was computed with 27 response percentages (listed in Appendix A) ranging from 1.4% to 61.6%; the median response percentage was 36.8%.

As Exhibit J reveals, the Southeast median difference was .7%. However, on two exercises (R405B and R405C, surveys of poem and play reading habits) this group's percentage was more than 8 points above the nation's. The West's median effect was 1.5% and it performed unusually well on R410A, "Have you read any novels on your own?" The Central region's median effect was -.9% and the Northeast's, -.8%. Effects for the latter group were atypically high on R411A (a fiction survey) and R411F ("Have you read any books a second time?").

The median difference for males was -2.5%, for females, 2.4%. Male differences were again atypically high on surveys of nonfiction reading habits. See, for instance, R405G (news magazines), R405D, R405F (editorials), R410C and R411C (biographies). Female effects were unusually high on items dealing

with fiction, e.g., R410A, R411A, R405A. Females also displayed higher than usual differences on questions about the importance of literature (R401) and the number of times people reread works (R411G and F).

As Exhibit J reveals, there was a wide distribution of Black effects and a narrow distribution for Whites. The Black median difference was -3.6%, but on several exercises their response percentage was at least 3 points above the national response. On R405B and R405C the percentages of Blacks indicating they like to read poetry and plays often were 21 points above the national level.

The White median difference was .7%. Atypically high positive effects appeared on R411A, G and F which dealt with rereading habits; on surveys of fiction books read (R410A, R405A); and on R401, an attitude question about the importance of reading literature.

The median effect for the no high school group, which also showed a wide distribution of results, was -4.8%. However, on R405B, "Do you like to read poems often?", this group's percentage was 15 points higher than the nation's; and on R405C, asking the same question about plays, it was 11% higher. On another question about plays, requiring verifiable play titles, this group's response percentage was 5 points above the national figure.

The some-high school parental education group's median difference was -.6%, and it too had atypically high positive effects on R405B and C.

The graduated from high school group's median difference was -1.1%. Its positive difference was unusually great on R405E ("Do you like to read short stories often?") and R401, "Why do you think it's important to study literature?"

The median difference for the post high school group was 4.4%. However, its difference was around 10% on questions asking for titles of novels and biographies read (R410A, C). Its positive differences were also atypically high on most parts of Exercise R411.

No STOC group had a median difference higher than 2.8% (the affluent suburb group) or lower than -2.2% (the extreme inner city). However, there were some atypically high positive results worth mentioning. The inner city group's effect was about 10% on R405B ("Do you like to read poems often?") and on R411B (verified play titles). The extreme rural group's response percentage was 12 points above the nation's on R406, "Do you read for enjoyment often?" Though the rest of big city group had a median difference of .4%, it was 13 points above the

EXHIBIT J

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 13

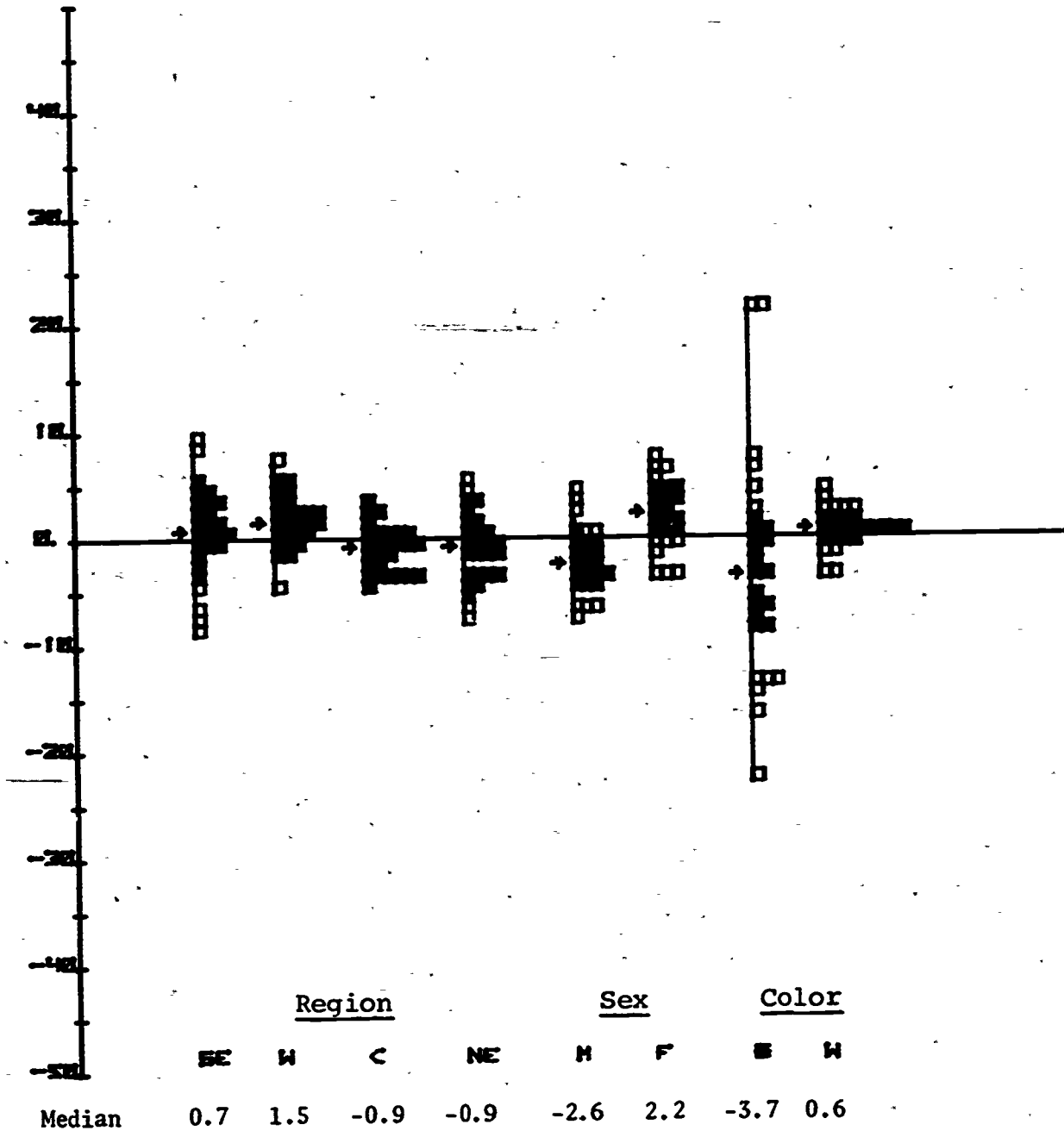


EXHIBIT J

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 13

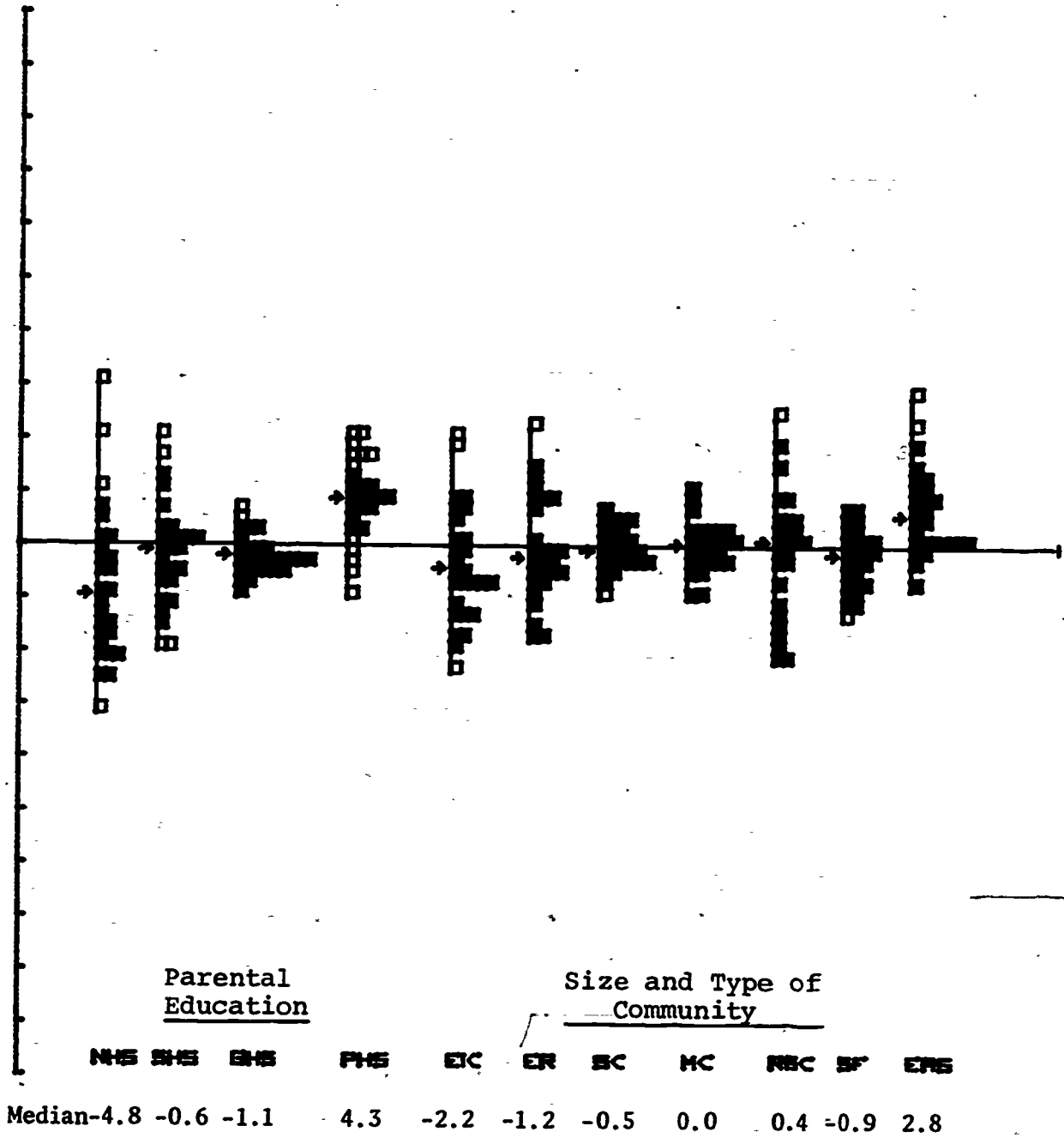


EXHIBIT K

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 17

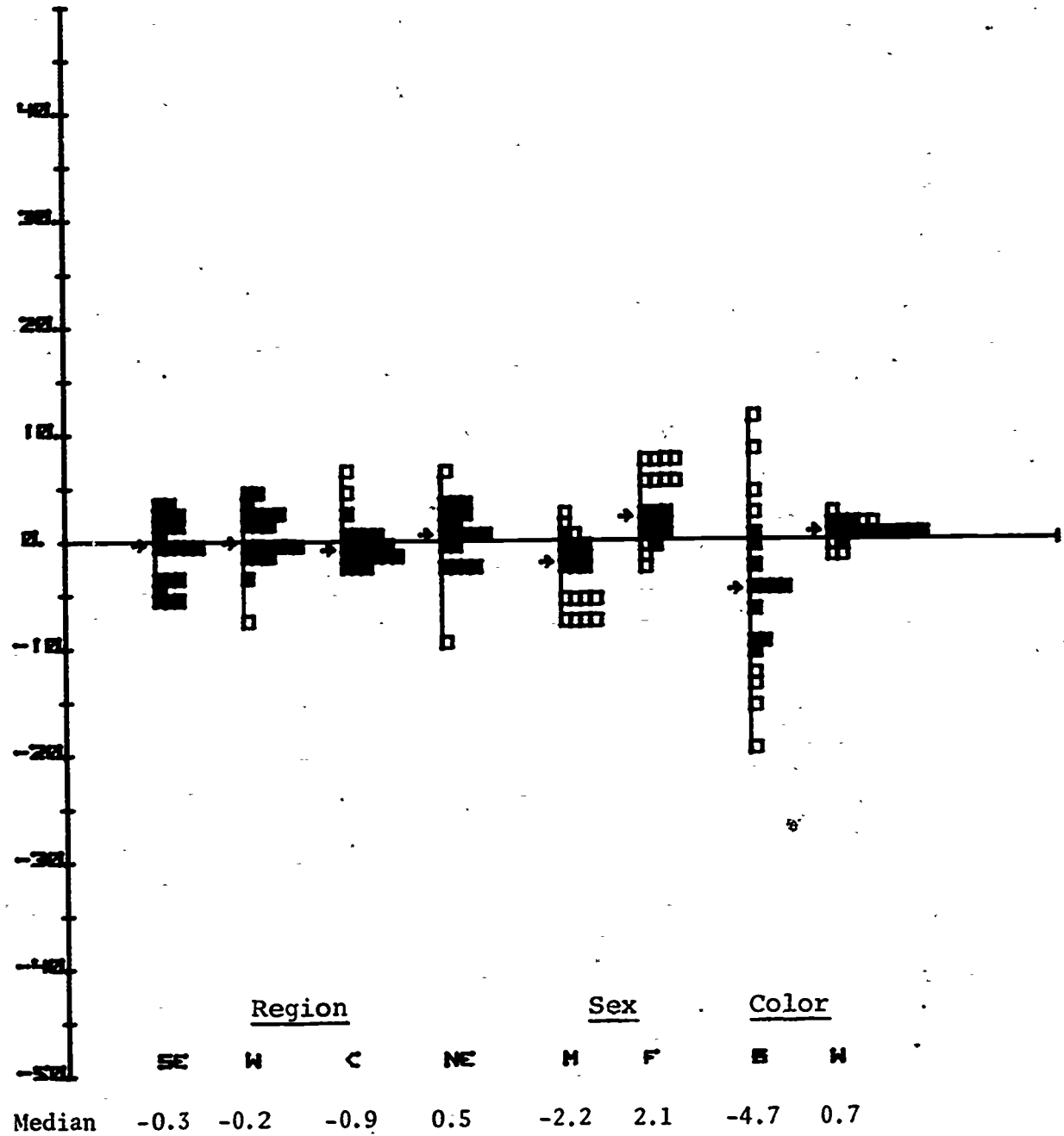
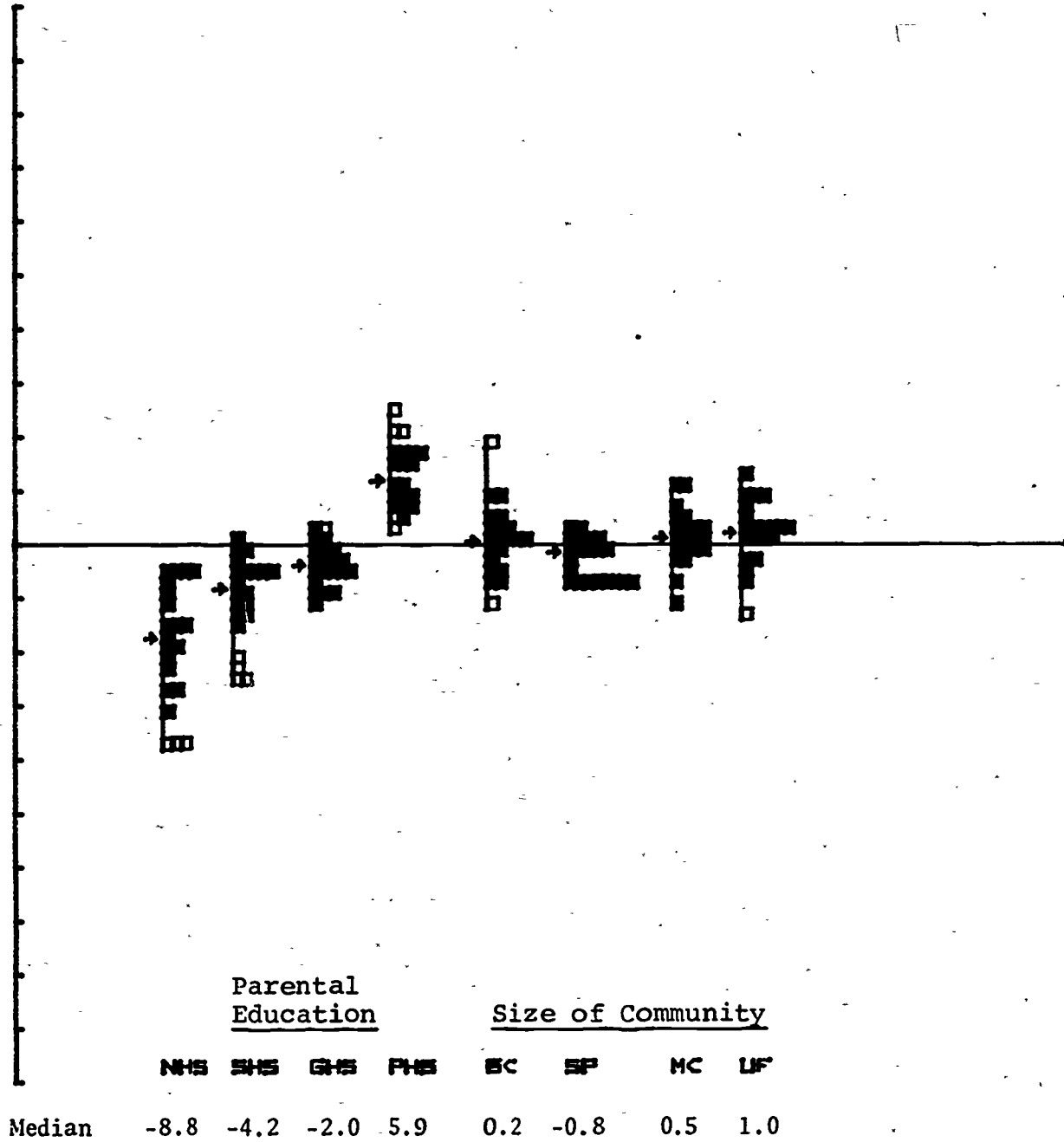


EXHIBIT K

Distribution of Effects by Group, Age 17



national level on R411A, which required verifiable novel titles. The extreme affluent suburb group's effect was 12% on a similar item (R410A) and 15% on R410C, which required verifiable biography titles.

Overall Results for 17-Year-Olds

The national median response percentage for 17-year-olds (43.1%) was based on 21 results (listed in Appendix A) ranging from 4.9% to 97.0%.

As Exhibit K reveals, the median differences for all four regions were all within + or -1%. The Central group's effect was atypically high on two items: R411B (verifiable play titles) and R402 ("Do you think literature should be taught in every school?"). The Northeast had an atypically high positive effect on R410D, which called for verifiable play titles.

The median difference for males was -2.1%. Their positive effects were unusually high on Exercises R411C (biographies), R410G (essays) and R410H (literary history). Females, with a median difference of 2.2%, showed their greater positive group effects on R410A, D and F (novel titles, play titles and poem titles) and R411A, B, E and H (dealing with novels, plays and rereading habits).

Effects for Blacks ranged from -19% to 11.5%; their median effect was -4.7%. Atypical positive differences occurred in R410C and R411C (both surveying biography reading habits) and R410D and R411B (both dealing with plays). The White median difference was .7%, but on a few questions about rereading and novel titles (R411G and F, R410A) the group's differences were higher.

At this age, as at the other ages, there was a steady increase in median difference percentages among the parental education groups. The no high school group's median difference was -8.7%, the some high school group's difference was -4.1%, the graduated from high school group's was -1.9% and the post high school group's was 5.9%. This last group posted particularly large positive differences on R410A and R411A, requiring novel titles. It also did well on that part of R403 which required reasons why literature should be taught in every school.

The median effects for the size of community groups ranged from -.8% to 1.0%. However, the big city group registered an atypically high positive difference on R410D, which required verifiable play titles.

Overall Results for Adults

The national median response percentage for adults was 35.7%. It was based upon 21 results (listed in Appendix A) ranging from 4.8% to 95.8%.

As Exhibit L illustrates, the Southeast regional group's median effect was -7.3%, the West's was 1.6%, the Central region's was -1.9% and the Northeast's was 2.9%. The West had unusually high positive differences on R411G and F (about rereading works), R410A (requiring novel titles) and that part of R403 requiring reasons why literature is valuable.

The male median effect was -1.8%. Adult males did particularly well on the attitude questions R402 and R403. Females, with a median effect of 1.7%, had unusually high positive effects on R410A and R411A, both of which required verifiable titles of novels people had read.

The Black median difference was -7.5% and the White's was 1.0%.

The parental education groups performed as they usually do. The no high school group's median difference was -9.4%, and the some high school group's median difference was -2.1%. This last group showed an atypically great positive effect on R402, "Should literature be taught in every school?"

The third parental education group's median effect was -.2%. However, on R410A, assessing novel reading frequency, this group's response percentage was almost 8 points above the nation's.

The post high school group's median difference was 12%. Effects were around 20% on R411F, G and H (assessing rereading tendencies) as that part of R403 requiring reasons why literature is important.

Three of the size of community groups displayed median differences around 2.5%; the small places group, however, had a median difference of -2.5%.

EXHIBIT L

Distribution of Effects by Group, Adults

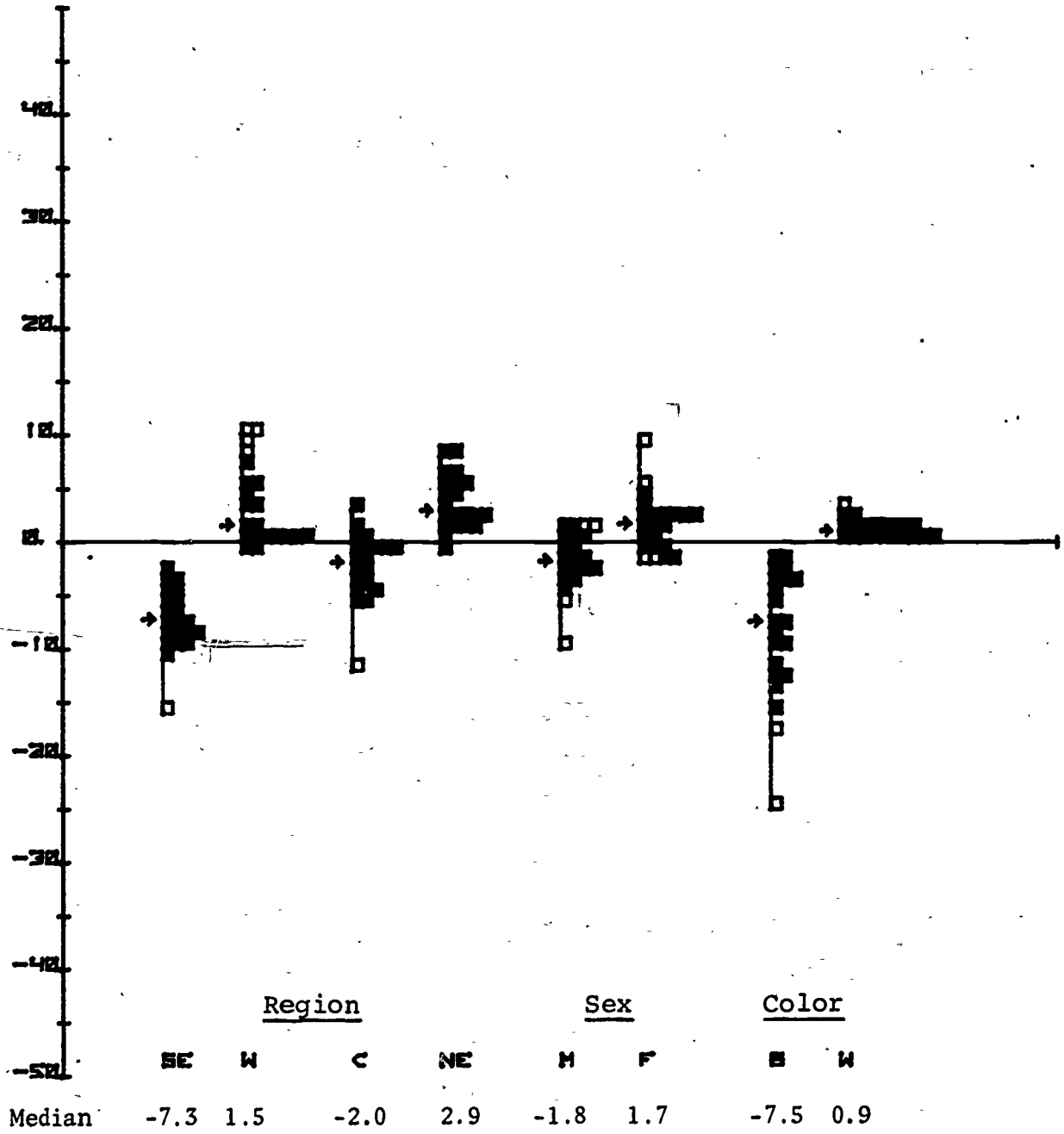


EXHIBIT L

Distribution of Effects by Group, Adults

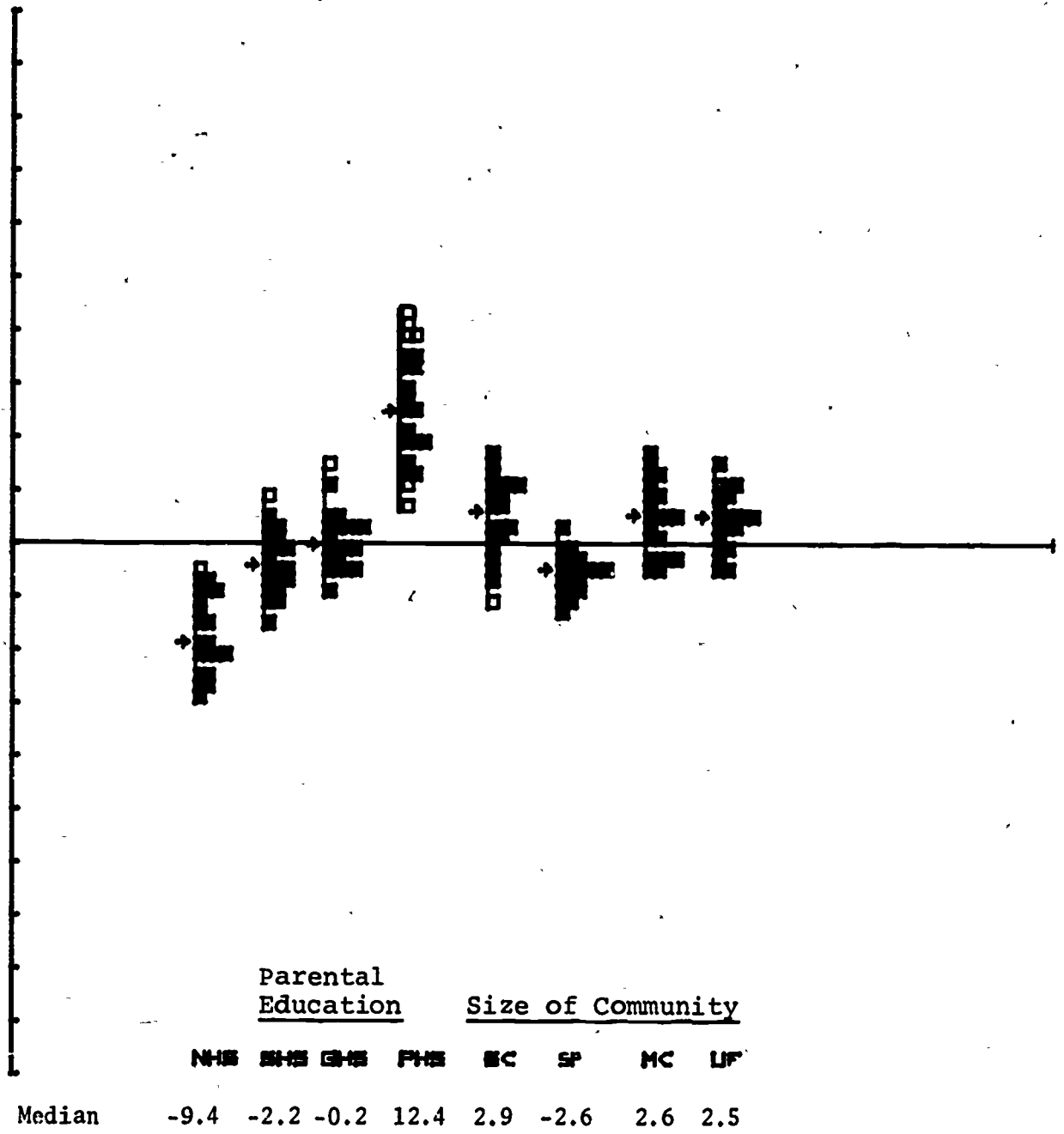


TABLE 5. Group Median Differences on All Theme 4 Exercises

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Region				
Southeast	0.7	0.7	-0.3	-7.3
West	-2.9	1.5	-0.2	1.5
Central	1.8	-0.9	-0.9	-2.0
Northeast	-1.0	-0.9	0.5	2.9
Sex				
Male	-1.1	-2.6	-2.2	-1.8
Female	1.0	2.2	2.1	1.7
Color				
Black	0.9	-3.7	-4.7	-7.5
White	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.9
Parental Education				
No High School	-3.6	-4.8	-8.8	-9.4
Some High School	-2.5	-0.6	-4.2	-2.2
Graduated from High School	1.9	-1.1	-2.0	-0.2
Post High School	3.8	4.3	5.9	12.4
Size and Type of Community				
Extreme Inner City	-3.4	-2.2	-2.7	
Extreme Rural	-2.1	-1.2	-1.1	
Small City	1.3	-0.5	-0.9	
Medium City	-1.0	0.0	1.8	
Suburban Fringe	0.8	-0.9	0.8	
Rest of Big City	-0.5	0.4	-1.7	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	0.3	2.8	3.4	
Size of Community				
Big City	-1.8	0.3	0.2	2.9
Urban Fringe	1.4	0.0	1.0	2.5
Medium Size City	-1.6	0.0	0.5	2.6
Smaller Places	0.4	-0.4	-0.8	-2.6

Table 5 lists all the preceding group median differences by age. The median differences for the Southeast, for Blacks and for the no high school group moved farther below the national level at each age level. For the Southeast, the drop was most dramatic between the 17-year-olds and the adults, indicating that the older people are not reading nearly as often as the teenagers are. The post high school group, as usual, did better relative to the nation at each succeeding age level.

CHAPTER 5

GROUP PERFORMANCE ON THEMES

When the median differences discussed in the previous chapter are reorganized in order to determine the theme(s) upon which each group performed best relative to the nation, some interesting patterns emerge (Table 6). The Southeast, for instance, performed best on Theme 4: A Survey of Reading Habits, at all four age levels. The same was true for Blacks and true for the no high school and rural groups at ages 9, 13 and 17. The exercises in the fourth theme were all "self-report" survey items assessing attitudes toward literature, reading frequency and reading tastes; they did not assess skills or knowledges.

Males performed best relative to the nation on Theme 3 at all age levels. The exercises in this theme required knowledge of specific facts, particularly the names of important literary works or characters. Other groups which performed best relative to the nation on Theme 3 were the Northeast (at ages 17 and adult) and the extreme affluent suburb group (at ages 9, 13 and 17). This could indicate that the English curricula used in the Northeast and in the suburban schools place a good deal of emphasis upon factual knowledge; however, it could also reflect wider reading backgrounds for people in those groups.

Theme 2 exercises required adequate written or verbal responses to works of literature. Several groups performed best relative to the nation on this theme, indicating that of the various skills the assessment required of them, their strongest was the ability to respond well to literary works. Northeastern 9 and 13-year-olds showed strength in this area as did 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds and adults in the Western United States and in the post high school parental education group. Teenage women also performed best when asked to respond, in contrast to the males, whose forte is apparently factual recall.

The Theme 1 exercises assessed such skills as recognition of formal similarity comprehension of metaphors and sensitivity to mood and tone. It could well be that the groups which performed best on this theme (the Central region, Whites, the medium size city STOC group) reflect exposure to curricula derived from the New Criticism (now quite old) and its emphasis upon language.

TABLE 6. Best Group Performance (Relative to the Nation) on a Theme

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Southeast	Theme 4	Theme 4	Theme 4	Theme 4
West	3	2,4	2	2
Central	1	1,3	2	1
Northeast	2	2	3	3
Male	3	3	3	3
Female	1	2	2	4
Black	4	4	4	4
White	3	1	1	1
No High School	4	4	4	3
Some High School	2	4	4	1
Graduated High School	4	1,3	3	1
Post High School	3	2	2	2
Extreme Inner City	2	4	4	
Extreme Rural	4	4	4	
Small City	4	1,4	1	
Medium City	1	1	4	
Suburban Fringe	3	2	2	
Rest of Big City	3	2	2	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	3	3,2	3	
Big City			4	4
Urban Fringe			2,3	2
Medium Size City			2	2
Smaller Places			4	1,3

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS BY OBJECTIVES

There were three major Literature objectives. The first, read literature of excellence, assumed that it is important for people to read widely and know something of the Western literary tradition. Accordingly, the first subobjective was: be acquainted with a wide variety of literary works, by many authors, in all genres, from diverse cultures, from diverse periods. The second subobjective was: understand the basic metaphors and themes through which man has expressed his values and tensions in Western culture. The end of both goals is not simply that one know works and themes but that one be able "to use this knowledge when confronting a new situation, either in literature or in life."

The second major objective was: become engaged in, find meanings in and evaluate a work of literature. The first subobjective was: respond to a work of literature. The objectives did not assume that one kind of response would necessarily be better or more desirable than any other--they simply expressed the hope that people would confront and react to a work of literature.

The second subobjective was: find meanings in a work of literature. Especially important in this subobjective is the goal, read a work with literary comprehension, which attempted to measure in some way all the Theme 1 exercises.

The third subobjective was: evaluate a work of literature. The objectives did not specify criteria for evaluation but did insist that criteria be expressed in any written or verbal evaluation of a work.

The third major objective was: develop a continuing interest and participation in literature and the literary experience. More relevant to 17-year-olds and adult than to the younger age groups, this goal was an expression of hope that literary experience will play a continuing role in the life of the individual outside of school and after graduation from school. The sub-objectives were: be intellectually oriented to literature, be affectively oriented to literature, be independently active and curious about literature and relate literary experience to one's life. These are all very difficult goals to measure, of course,

but they constitute for many educators the primary rationale for the teaching of literature.

The group results for Objective I achievement appear in Table 7. The percentages are median differences based on exercises included in Themes 3 and 4. At age 9, there were 38 Objective I exercise results; at age 13, there were 54; at age 17, 49; and at the adult level, 38.

TABLE 7. Group Median Differences on Objective I Exercises

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Region				
Southeast	-3.8	-2.1	-3.5	-8.1
West	-0.5	1.4	0.4	2.5
Central	2.2	0.6	0.2	-0.7
Northeast	0.4	0.3	1.7	3.2
Sex				
Male	-0.7	-1.4	-1.0	-0.2
Female	0.6	1.3	0.9	0.0
Color				
Black	-13.1	-8.7	-12.7	-13.1
White	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.6
Parental Education				
No High School	-9.2	-7.9	-11.9	-7.9
Some High School	-4.3	-2.9	-6.0	-1.7
Graduated from High School	1.2	-0.7	-0.6	1.5
Post High School	7.4	5.8	7.2	10.0
Size and Type of Community				
Extreme Inner City	-9.2	-3.4	-5.9	
Extreme Rural	-4.6	-2.8	-2.5	
Small City	0.0	-0.9	-1.2	
Medium City	-1.1	-0.2	0.8	
Suburban Fringe	3.7	0.8	1.6	
Rest of Big City	-0.3	-0.2	-0.8	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	8.1	5.2	5.3	
Size of Community				
Big City	-1.6	0.3	0.2	-0.1
Urban Fringe	4.7	1.6	2.0	2.5
Medium Size City	-1.1	-0.3	0.7	1.8
Smaller Place	-1.1	-1.2	-2.0	-1.3

The Southeast's median difference was between 2 and 4 points below the national level at ages 9, 13 and 17; however, the median difference for adults was -8.1%. This indicates that, insofar as the exercises measure achievement of Objective I, Southeast adults are reading less "literature of excellence" than school age southeasterners are; also, the adults are probably less familiar with important literary works and characters. Much of this difference is surely attributable to the fact that the younger people, unlike the adults, are compelled to read in school.

The median differences for the West and Northeast contrast with those for the Southeast, for in those groups the adults show the best performance relative to the nation. Though it is also true in these areas that school age people are compelled to read, a higher percentage of the adults nonetheless appear to "read literature of excellence" and recognize important works and characters. The same pattern appears for the post high school parental education group, as one might expect.

Finally, the median differences indicate that the most active readers live or attend schools in the "fringe" areas around big cities, that is, in the suburbs.

Table 8 presents the group median differences derived from all exercises designed to measure performance of Objective II. There were two kinds of exercises involved: the multiple choice items, most of which appear in Theme 1; and the items requiring written or verbal responses, most of which appear in Theme 2. Consequently, the median percentages are based upon two sorts of percentages: percentages of success and percentages of adequate or superior responses. At age 9, the median percentages and differences were based on 26 exercise results; at age 13, 39 results; at age 17, 36 results; and at the adult level, 29 results.

The groups showing negative median differences performed less well than the nation as a whole on the two subobjectives most thoroughly covered by the assessment: read a work with literary comprehension and respond to a work of literature. It is logical to assume that failure to read with literary comprehension (which means failure to understand figurative language and its operation) correlates highly with failure to respond adequately.

Several groups performed worse, relative to the nation, at each succeeding age level. This pattern is easily apparent for the Southeast and for Blacks. The opposite situation appears for the West and the post high school group, both of which improved their relative positions at the higher age levels.

TABLE 8. Group Median Differences on Objective II Exercises

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Region				
Southeast	-4.1	-5.3	-5.0	-7.8
West	-0.5	1.0	0.0	2.0
Central	2.5	1.0	1.8	0.1
Northeast	0.8	1.8	1.1	1.3
Sex				
Male	-0.7	-1.7	-1.3	0.0
Female	0.6	1.7	1.2	-0.1
Color				
Black	-11.1	-14.5	-15.2	-20.0
White	1.9	2.5	2.1	2.7
Parental Education				
No High School	-6.3	-11.1	-10.6	-9.7
Some High School	-3.9	-4.2	-7.2	-1.4
Graduated High School	-0.1	0.0	-0.7	3.4
Post High School	5.1	6.4	5.9	11.5
Size and Type of Community				
Extreme Inner City	-9.4	-6.8	-7.9	
Extreme Rural	-2.8	-4.2	-2.4	
Small City	0.3	-0.4	-0.1	
Medium City	-1.5	0.3	-0.3	
Suburban Fringe	1.8	1.7	0.9	
Rest of Big City	-0.5	-1.1	-0.5	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	6.2	6.1	6.0	
Size of Community				
Big City	-1.8	-1.0	-1.5	-1.6
Urban Fringe	3.6	2.8	2.9	0.8
Medium Size City	-1.0	-0.3	-0.2	1.6
Smaller Places	-0.4	-1.6	-1.2	0.1

The group median differences for Objective III appear in Table 9. These are based upon 11 exercise results at age 9, 27 results at age 13 and 21 results for 17-year-olds and adults.

Insofar as the results accurately reflect extra curricular participation and interest in literary experience, it appears that some groups show an increase in involvement with each

TABLE 9. Group Median Differences on Objective III Exercises

Group	Age			
	9	13	17	Adult
Region				
Southeast	0.7	0.7	-0.3	-7.3
West	-2.9	1.5	-0.2	1.5
Central	1.8	-0.9	-0.9	-2.0
Northeast	-1.0	-0.9	0.5	2.9
Sex				
Male	-1.1	-2.6	-2.2	-1.8
Female	1.0	2.2	2.1	1.7
Color				
Black	0.9	-3.7	-4.7	-7.5
White	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.9
Parental Education				
No High School	-3.6	-4.8	-8.8	-9.4
Some High School	-2.5	-0.6	-4.2	-2.2
Graduated from High School	1.9	-1.1	-2.0	-0.2
Post High School	3.8	4.3	5.9	12.4
Size and Type of Community				
Extreme Inner City	-3.4	-2.2	-2.7	
Extreme Rural	-2.1	-1.2	-1.1	
Small City	1.3	-0.5	-0.9	
Medium City	-1.0	0.0	1.8	
Suburban Fringe	0.8	-0.9	0.8	
Rest of Big City	-0.5	0.4	-1.7	
Extreme Affluent Suburb	0.3	2.8	3.4	
Size of Community				
Big City	-1.8	0.3	0.2	2.9
Urban Fringe	1.4	0.0	1.0	2.5
Medium Size City	-1.6	0.0	0.5	2.6
Smaller Place	0.4	-0.4	-0.8	-2.6

increase in age; other groups, however, demonstrate a decline in involvement. While the Northeast, West, post high school and big city groups tend to improve their standings relative to the nation, the Southeast, Central, Black, no high school and small place groups fall farther below the national level at the higher ages. This indicates that the groups which generally perform below the national standard do not evidence "continuing interest and participation in the literary experience" which could

conceivably improve their performance. Probably this is because fewer people in those groups read as well or as often as do so in other groups and in the nation as a whole.

CHAPTER 7

AGE COMPARISONS

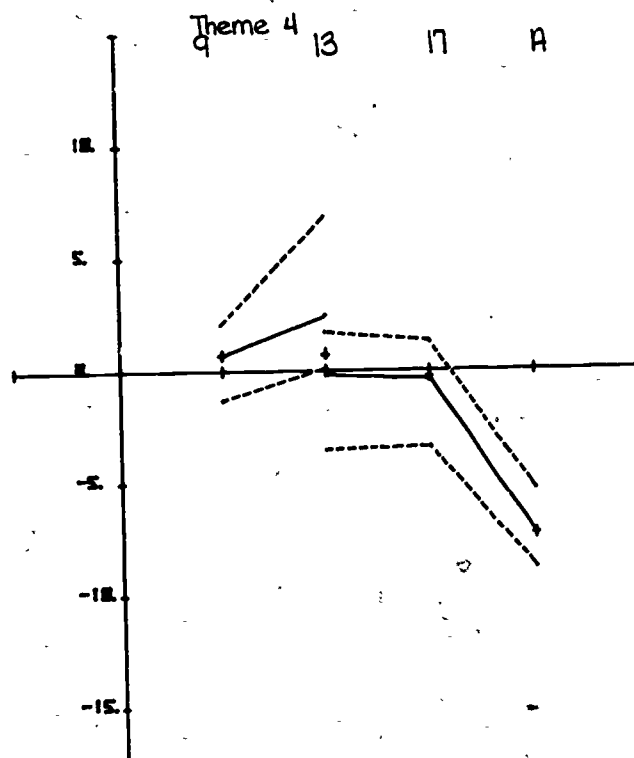
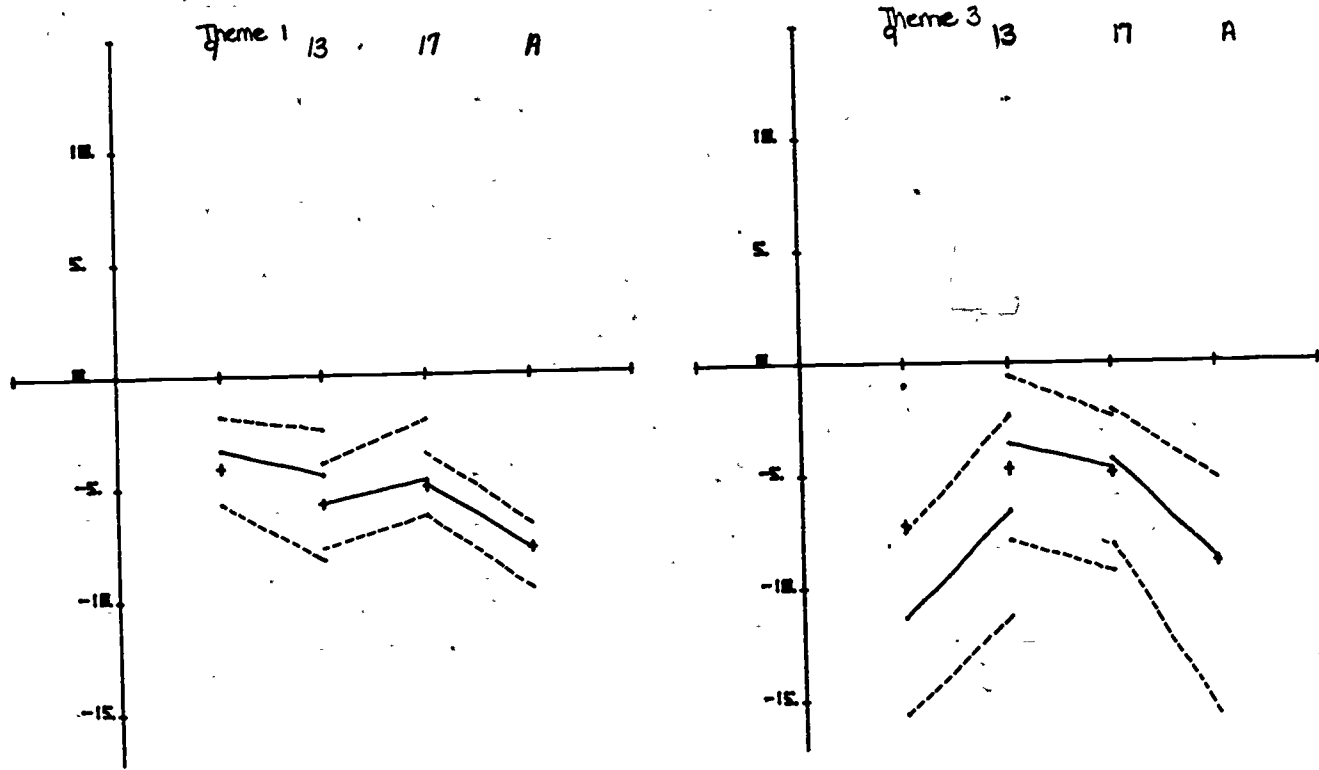
The following graphs display several kinds of information about age by age results for Themes 1, 3 and 4 and Objectives I, II and III. Theme 2 is not included because there were too few exercises in it for medians to be at all useful. The plotted points connected by solid lines represent the median differences (or effects) for overlap exercises only--that is, exercises administered at two age levels. Each of these lines displays only one age to age comparison: either age 9 results compared to age 13, age 13 compared to age 17 or age 17 compared to adult. If a line running from left to right slopes away from the \emptyset line, the median difference for the older of two age levels is farther from the national level of performance; if a line slopes toward the \emptyset line, the median difference for the older of two age levels is closer to the national level of performance. The broken lines above and below each solid line depict the upper and lower quartiles (seventy-fifth percentile and twenty-fifth percentile). They enable the reader to see immediately the range covered by 50% of the overlap exercise effects and to determine the degree to which the slope of a line accurately reflects a trend from age to age. Finally, the crosses (+) depict for each age the median difference based upon all exercises administered at that age level in a theme. These points enable the reader to compare overlap median differences to median differences based on all exercises in a theme.

We can clarify this by discussing the first graph in Exhibit 1. From this graph we learn that: (1) Southeastern 9-year-olds performed better relative to a national population of 9-year-olds than Southeastern 13-year-olds performed relative to a national population of 13-year-olds. The slope of the 9-13 line is away from (in this case, farther below) the national performance level, and this trend appears to be stable, since the quartile lines also slope downwards. (2) On at least 75% of the 9-13 overlap exercises, the Southeastern percentage was lower than the national percentage. (3) The median differences based on all the Theme 1 exercises taken at each age (not just overlap exercises) were lower at each age than the overlap medians, indicating that people performed a bit better on overlap exercises than they did on all exercises. (4) Seventeen-year-olds performed slightly better than 13-year-olds, relative to their national population. The 13-17 line slopes upward and the quartiles also reflect this

improvement in performance. (5) There was very little difference between performance on 13-17 overlap exercises and performance on all Theme 1 exercises, since the overlap median points are almost identical to the crosses. (6) Southeastern adults performed much worse, relative to a national population of adults, than did 17-year-olds relative to their national population. The narrowness of the quartiles suggests that this is a very stable trend.

AGE COMPARISONS

EXHIBIT 1. Age Comparisons for the Southeast Region



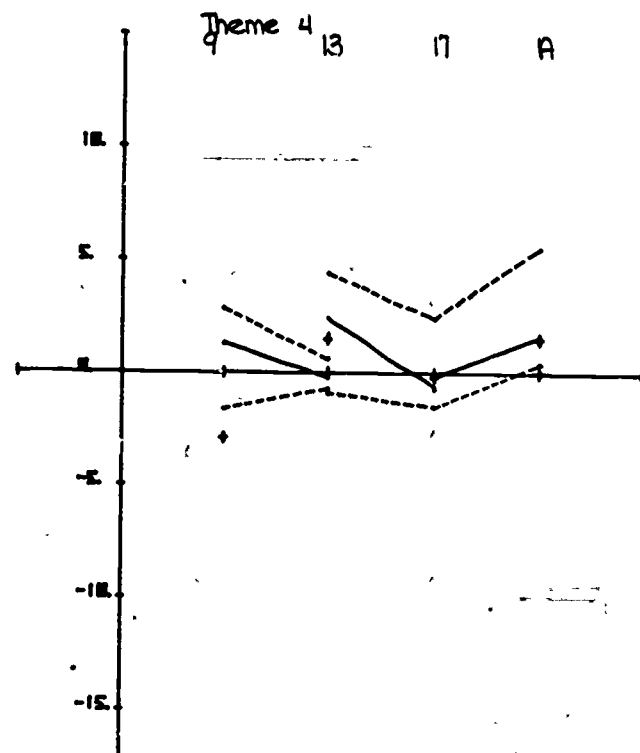
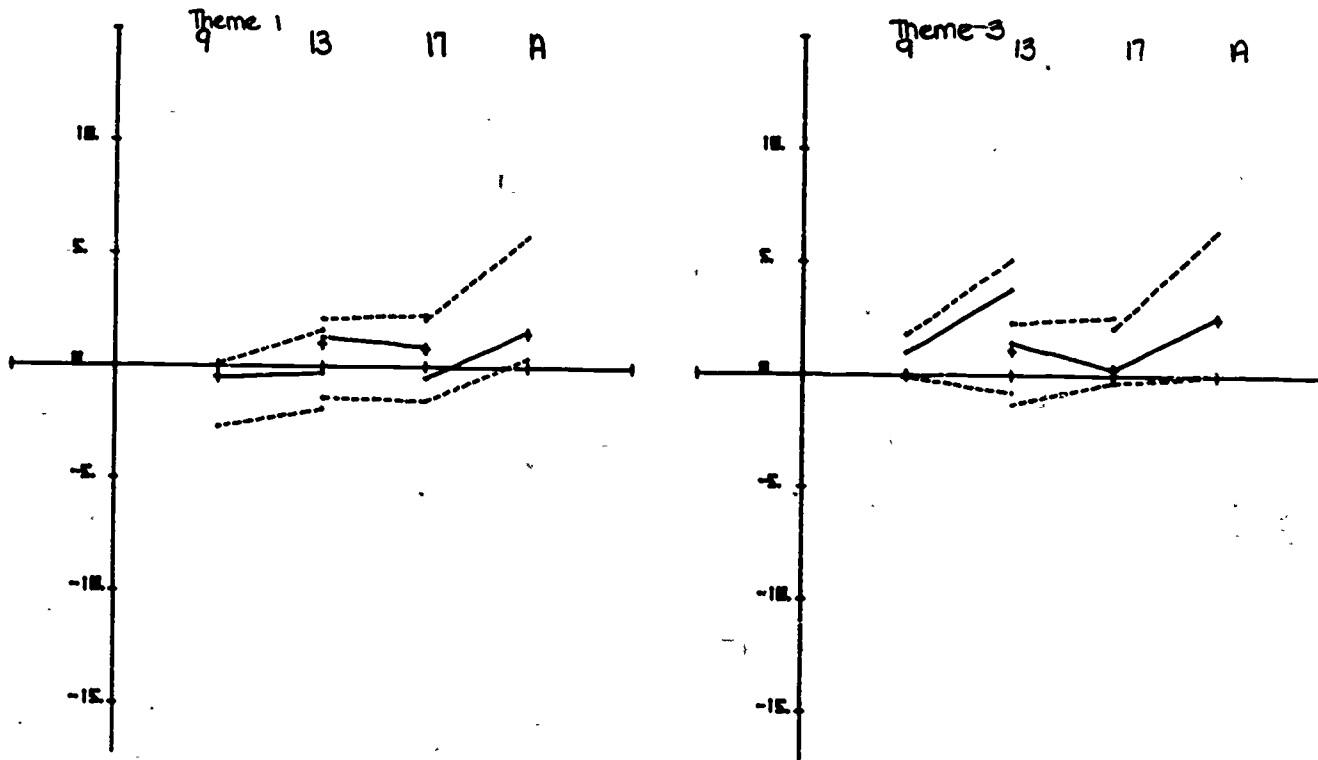
The Southeast

Age comparisons for Theme 1 have just been made on the preceding page. Since median effects for Objective II overlap exercises are very similar to those for Theme 1, we can conclude that between ages 9 and 13 this group's performance on skills associated with Objective II declines somewhat, relative to the nation; however, between ages 13 and 17 there is an improvement in performance of Objective II skills. Finally, Southeastern adults perform considerably worse on Objective II exercises, relative to a national adult population, than 17-year-olds do, relative to their national population.

Theme 3 (Objective I) results present a different pattern. Between the ages of 9 and 13, southeasterners make considerable progress in approaching the national level of performance. It would appear that in these years they are exposed to a great deal of specific information about literary works and characters. Between the ages of 13 and 17, however, southeasterners cease to gain on the nation and instead fall somewhat behind the national pace. The fall is accelerated considerably between the 17-year-old and adult levels.

Theme 4 (Objective III) median differences present yet another pattern, probably because these exercises were almost all self-report survey and attitude questions. At age 9, about 60% of the group's percentages were above the national level; at age 13, 75% of the results were at or above the national figure. Between the ages of 13 and 17, there is little change in performance. Teenagers in the Southeast appear to respond pretty much as all teenagers do. Once again, however, there is a considerable plunge below the national level between the 17-year-olds and the adults.

EXHIBIT 2. Age Comparisons for the Western Region



The West

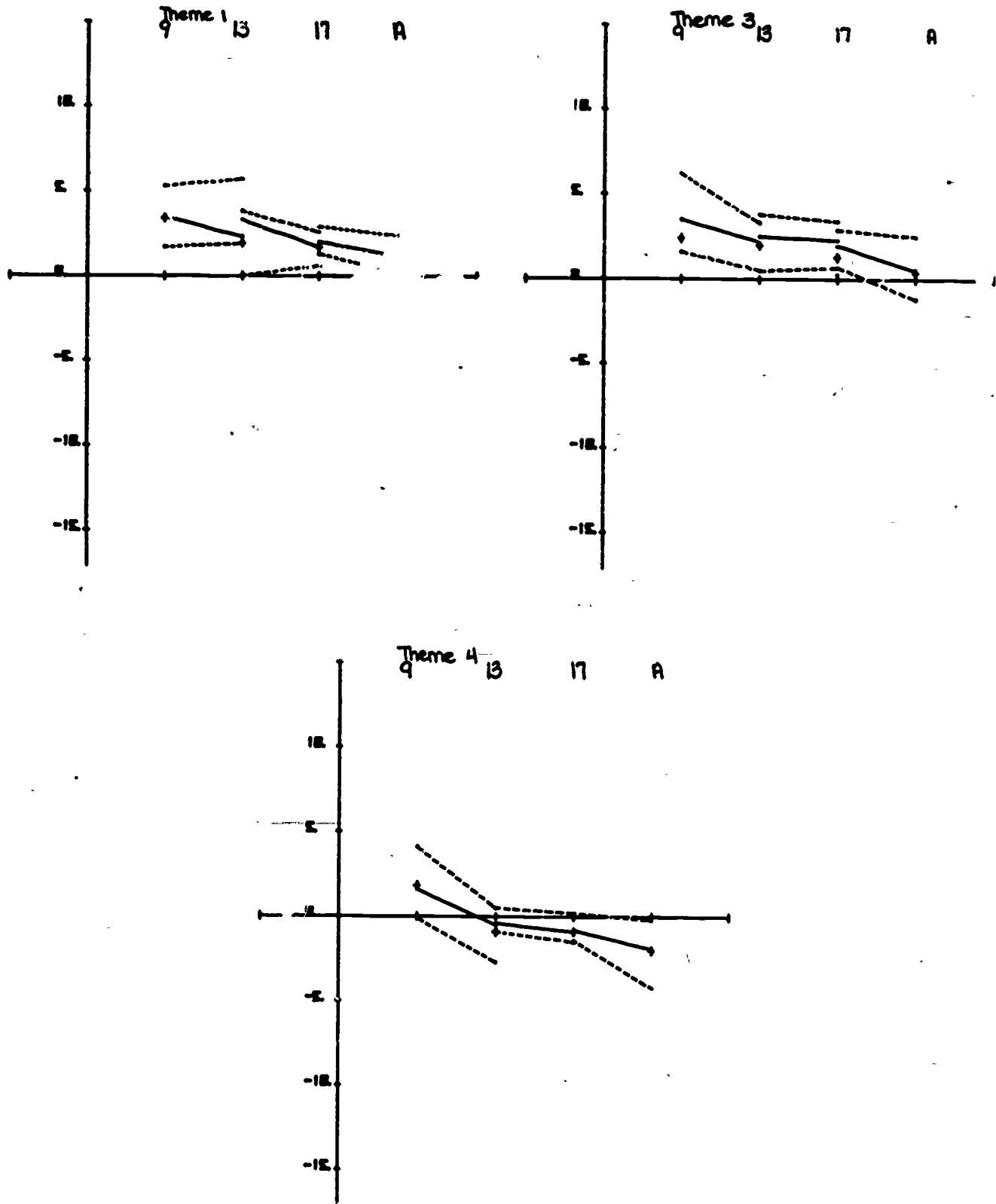
The West's median differences for overlap exercises in Theme 1 (Objective II) were near the national level at all ages. Between ages 9 and 13, performance improved (relative to the nation) very slightly. Between ages 13 and 17, performance remained about the same. But--and this is a distinctive feature of the Western regional group--between the 17-year-old and adult levels, performance improved relative to the nation. At age 17, fewer than 50% of the West's percentages were above the national level; but the adults were above their national population on more than 75% of the overlap exercises assessing skills related to the understanding of imaginative language.

Median differences for Theme 3 (Objective I) overlap exercises reveal an improvement in performance between ages 9 and 13. The quartile points indicate, however, that the distribution of effects at age 13 covered a much wider range than it did at age 9. Differences in the distributions at ages 13 and 17 make the trend from 13 to 17 difficult to discern, though it would appear that the older students did not do quite as well, relative to the nation, as the 13-year-olds did. The trend from age 17 to the adult level is clear, however: the older people performed better than the 17-year-olds relative to the nation. Apparently the adults in the West continue to read after leaving school or have a broader knowledge of literary works and characters.

Evidence that the Western adults do continue to read literature after leaving school appears in the Theme 4 (Objective III) survey results: once again they improve upon the relative standing of the 17-year-olds. The 17-year-olds, in fact, do not perform as well relative to the nation as 13-year-olds do on identical survey questions. There is also a slight decline in relative standing between ages 9 and 13.

In contrast to the pattern revealed for the Southeast group, it appears that in all themes, Western adults improve upon the group's standing at age 17 relative to a national population.

EXHIBIT 3. Age Comparisons for the Central Region



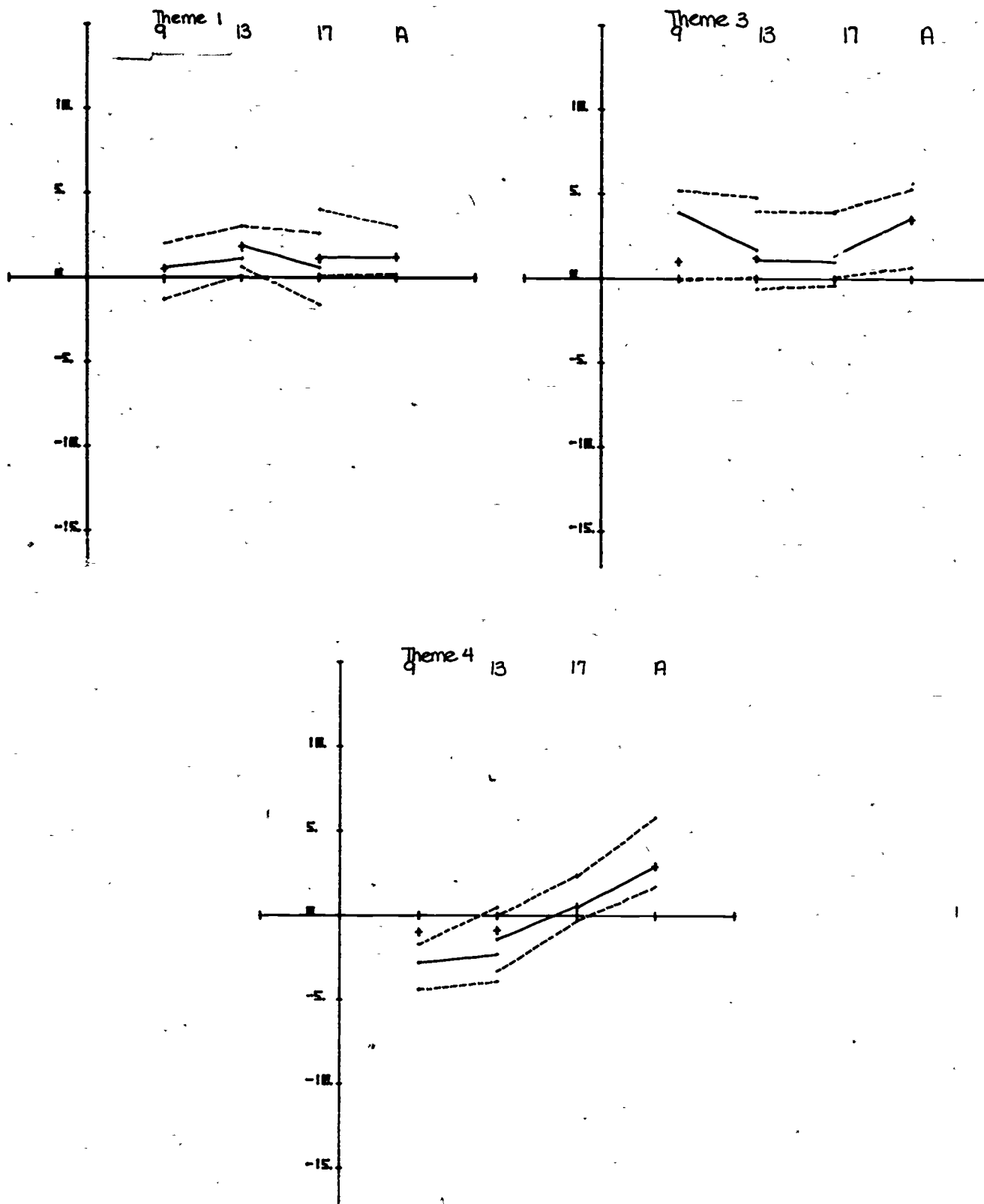
The Central Region

The median differences for the four age groups in Theme 1 do not seem to indicate much change in performance from age to age. At least 75% of the effects were positive at each age, and the downward slope of each line is too slight to mean anything significant.

Very much the same situation appears in Theme 3 (Objective I), except that a smaller proportion of adult percentages were above the national level than were at age 17.

Theme 4 (Objective II.) overlap median differences reveal that 9-year-olds performed better relative to the nation than did 13-year-olds. The relative position of 13 and 17-year-olds remained much the same, but adult performance dropped off slightly from the 17-year-old performance.

EXHIBIT 4. Age Comparisons for the Northeastern Region



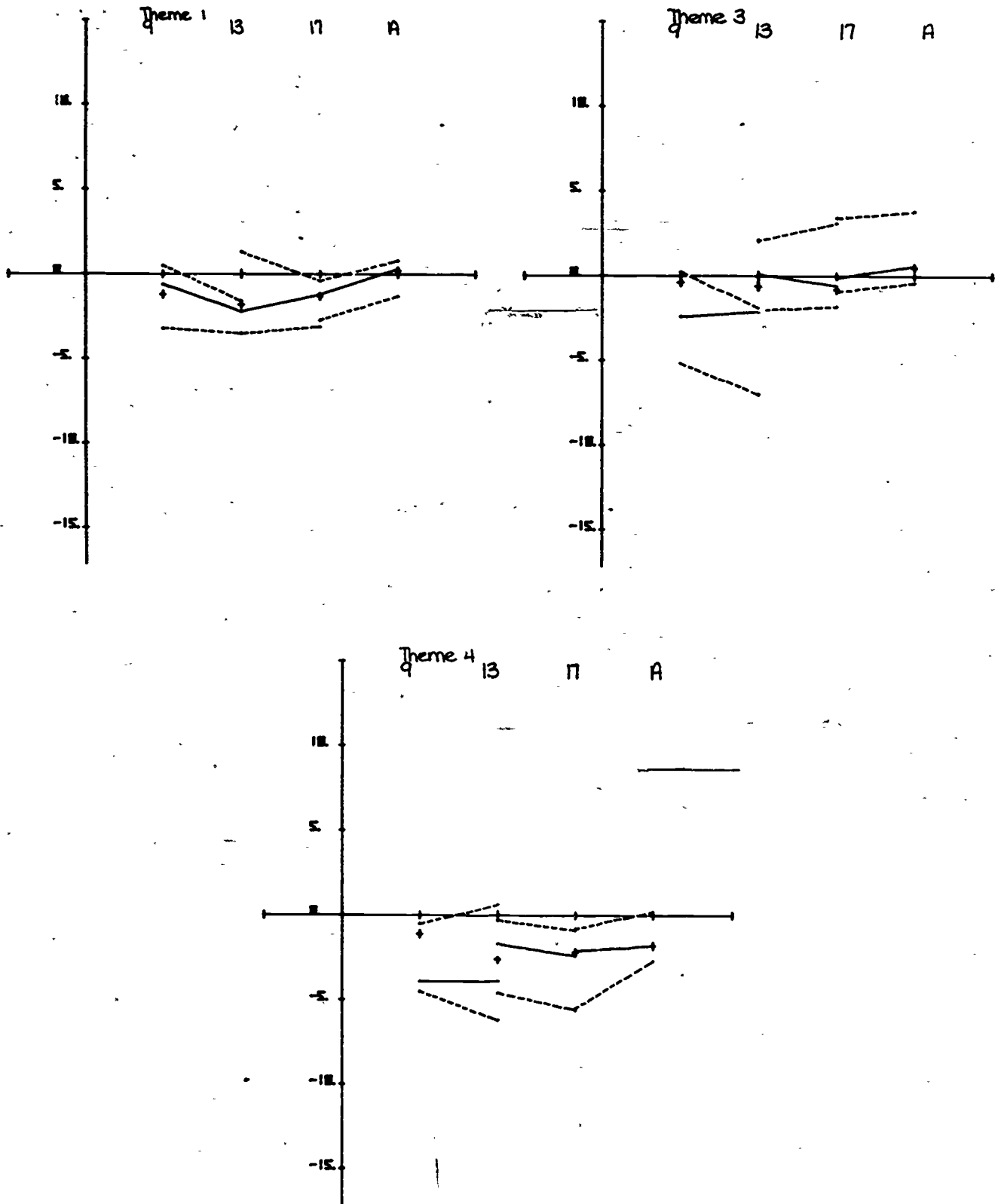
The Northeast

On Theme 1 (Objective II), there was a slight improvement in relative performance between ages 9 and 13 and a slight decline between ages 13 and 17. Northeastern adults did as well as 17-year-olds relative to the national performance.

Theme 3 (Objective I) median differences for overlap exercises reveal a somewhat different pattern. Relative to the nation, 13-year-olds did not distinguish themselves quite as much as 9-year-olds, even though 75% of the effects were above the national level at each age. The position of the crosses at each age suggests, however, that at age 9 the overlap exercises were easier than most exercises. Thirteen and 17-year-olds performed very much the same relative to the nation, but the 17-adult comparison suggests that adults were a bit more knowledgeable about literary works and characters.

Theme 4 (Objective III) results suggest a steady improvement from age to age relative to the nation. It would appear, then, that adults in this region continue to read beyond their formal education and lay claim to wider reading backgrounds than their high school neighbors.

EXHIBIT 5. Age Comparisons for Males



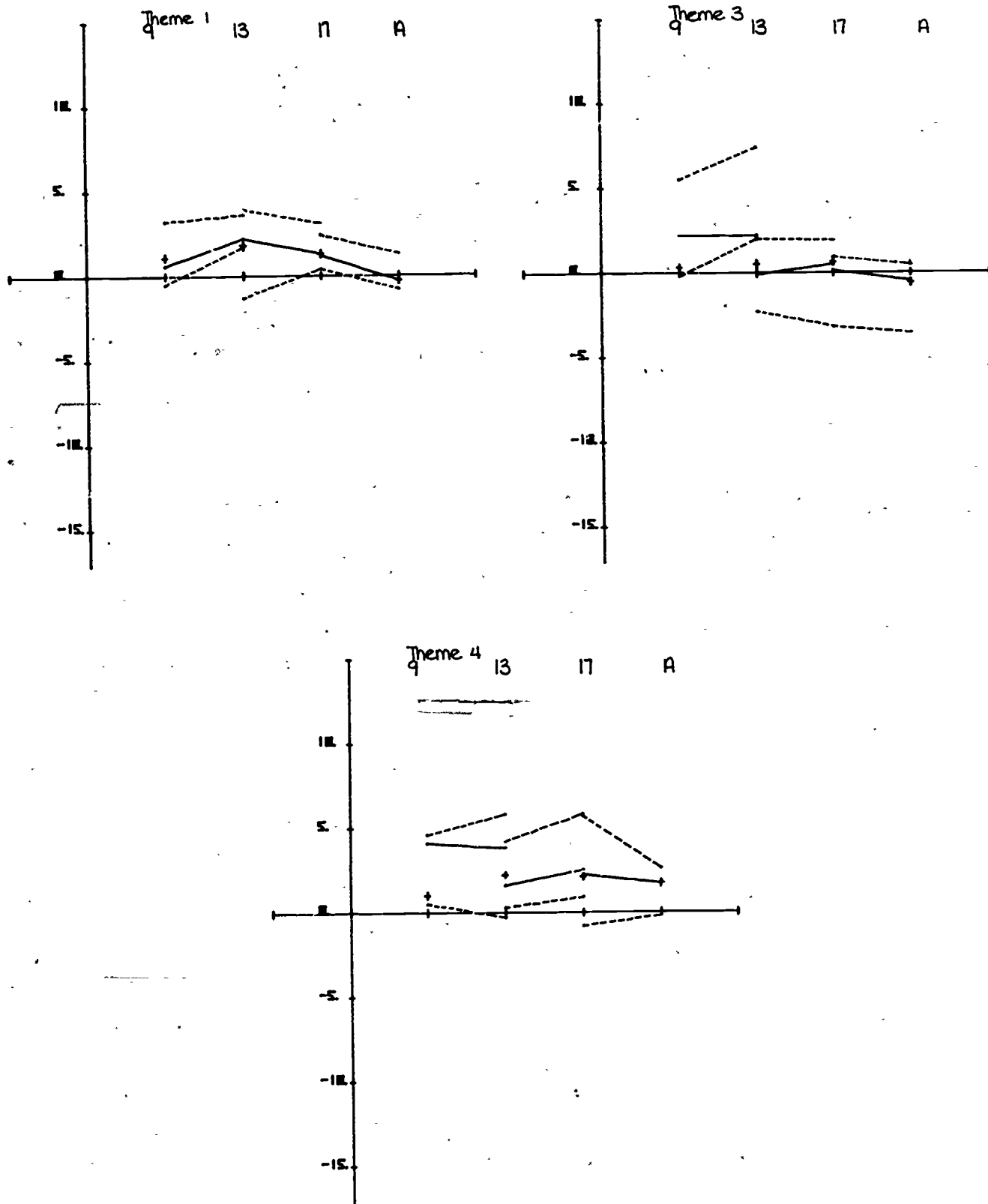
Males

Nine-year-old boys do not differ as much from the national level of performance as 13-year-old boys do on the very same Theme 1 (Objective II) exercises. The variability in the effects is, however, greater at age 9 than at age 13. The same is true of age 13 results compared to those achieved by 17-year-olds. For this reason it is safest to say that the 9-13 and 13-17 comparisons reveal little change. There does appear to be an improvement in standing (relative to the nation) between the age of 17 and achievement of adulthood, but this may simply reflect a decline in achievement among women, who comprise more than half the national population.

On Theme 3 overlap exercises there was little change from age to age in median difference from the national level. However, the quartile lines indicate that a greater proportion of effects on 9-13 overlap exercises were below the national level at age 13.

Theme 4 results again reveal a shift in the distribution of 9-13 overlap effects at age 13; however, there is little evidence of any age to age trends.

EXHIBIT 6. Age Comparisons for Females

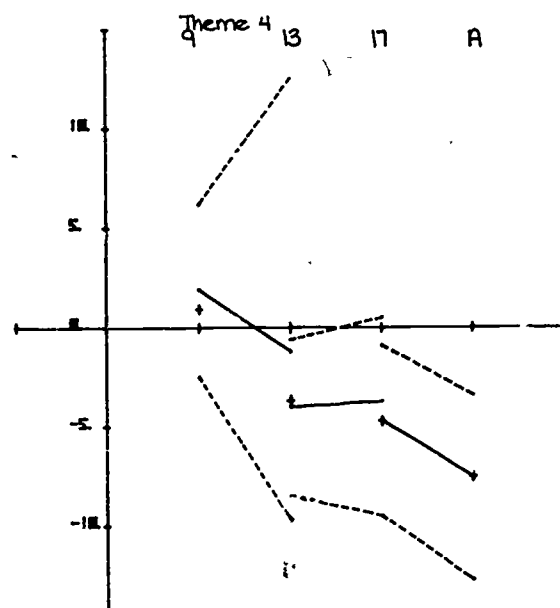
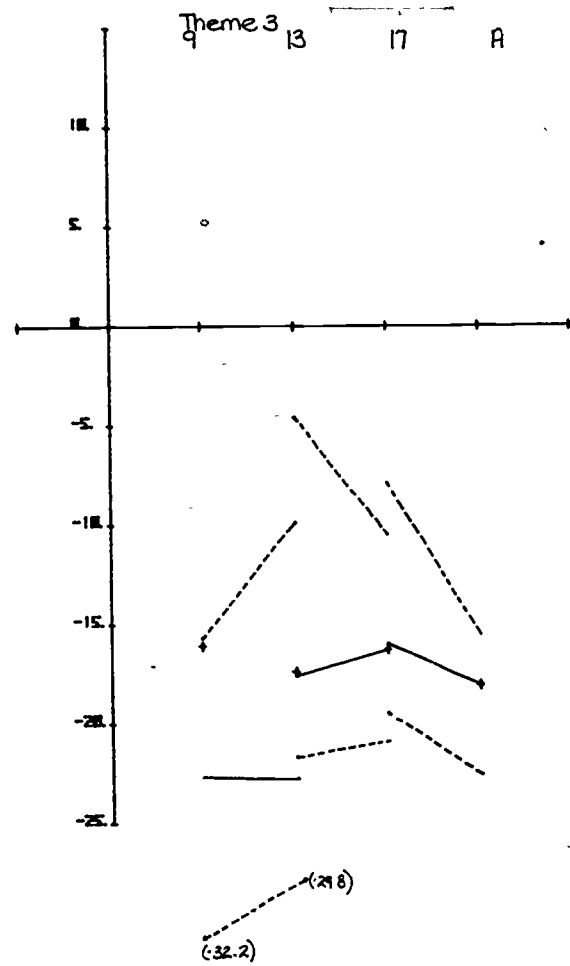
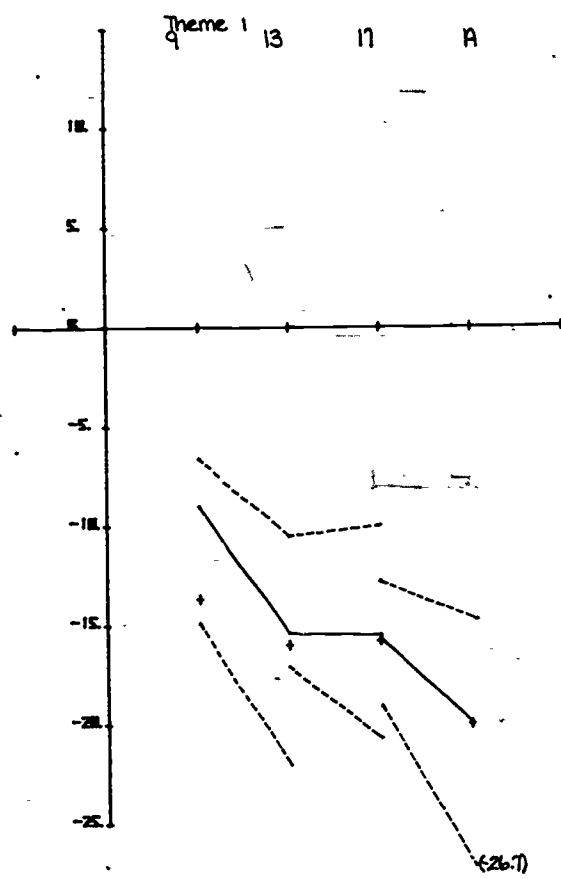


Females

As one might expect, the age trends for females mirror those for males. Thus, in Theme 1 (Objective II) there is a slight improvement from age 9 to age 13, very little 13-17 difference and an approach to the national level between age 17 and the adult level.

Theme 3 (Objective I) and Theme 4 (Objective III) median differences likewise reflect slight trends that are the reverse of those demonstrated by males.

EXHIBIT 7. Age Comparisons for Blacks



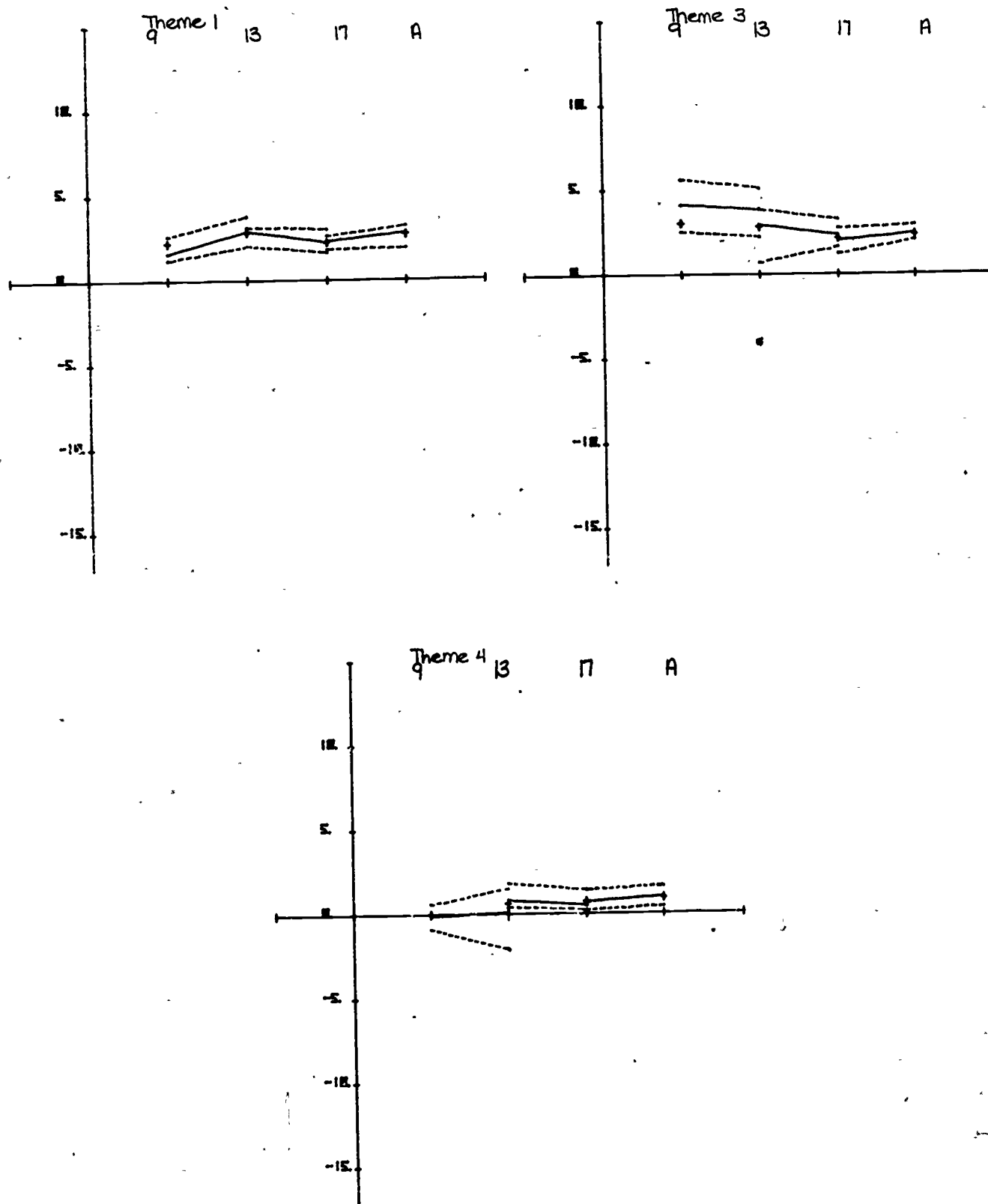
Blacks

Though the quartile lines for Theme 1 (Objective II) overlap lines indicate rather wide distributions of differences, the trends from age to age are clear: taking the same exercises, Black 13-year-olds do more poorly, relative to the nation, than do 9-year-olds. In other words, though Black 13-year-olds undoubtedly do better than Black 9-year-olds, they do not improve as much on 9-year-old performance as a national population of 13-year-olds improves upon a national population of 9-year-olds--thus, they fall farther below the national level. There is little change in their relative position between ages 13 and 17. However, after age 17, performance again drops farther below the national level.

The median differences for Theme 3 (Objective I) are more difficult to interpret since the variabilities are so great. Nonetheless, it is apparent that on overlap exercises dealing with literary works and characters, 13-year-olds do no worse, relative to the nation, than 9-year-olds. There do not seem to be very great changes in performance at the other age levels.

Theme 4 (Objective III) results make 9-13 comparisons risky, since the variability in effects was so much greater at age 13 than at age 9. Thirteen-17 comparisons indicate that on this theme, as on the others, there was little change between seventh grade performance and eleventh grade performance relative to national populations.

EXHIBIT 8. Age Comparisons for Whites

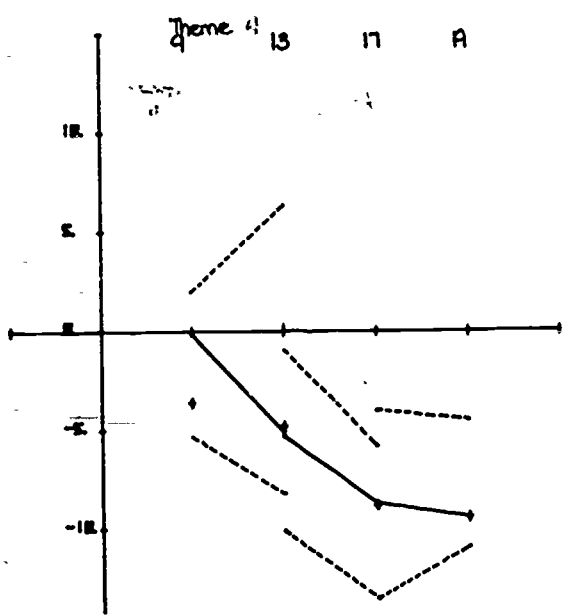
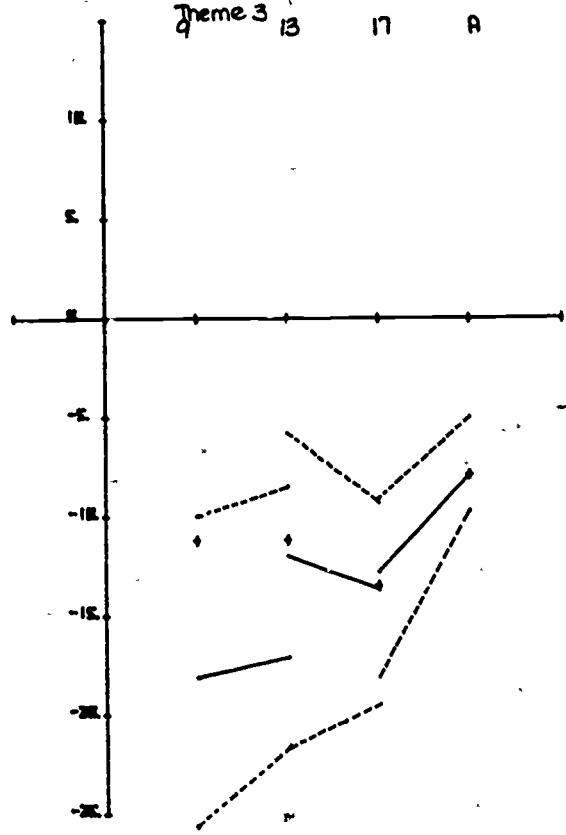
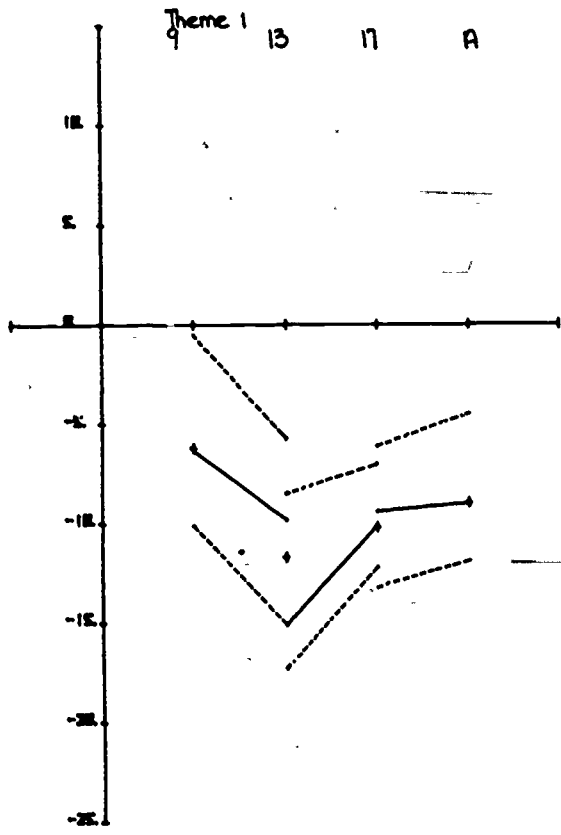


Whites

The quartile lines above and below the age trend lines for Theme 1 (Objective II) reveal that Whites as a group perform very consistently, with at least 50% of the effects within 2 percentage points of each other and with performance on overlap exercises differing little from performance on all Theme 1 exercises at each age. Relative to the nation, 13-year-olds improve upon the performance of 9-year-olds. Seventeen-year-olds remain in about the same relative position as 13-year-olds, adults as 17-year-olds.

Theme 3 (Objective I) and Theme 4 (Objective III) median differences reveal little relative improvement from age to age.

EXHIBIT 9. Age Comparisons for the No High School Group



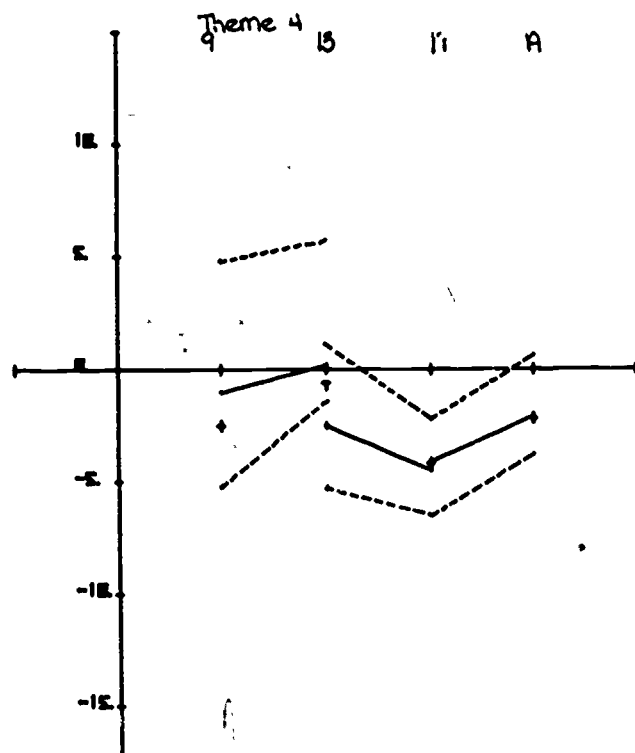
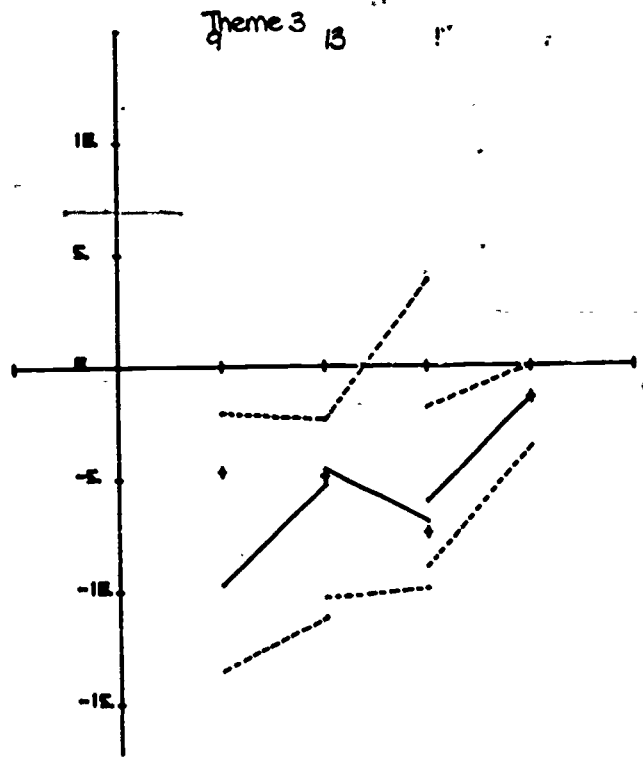
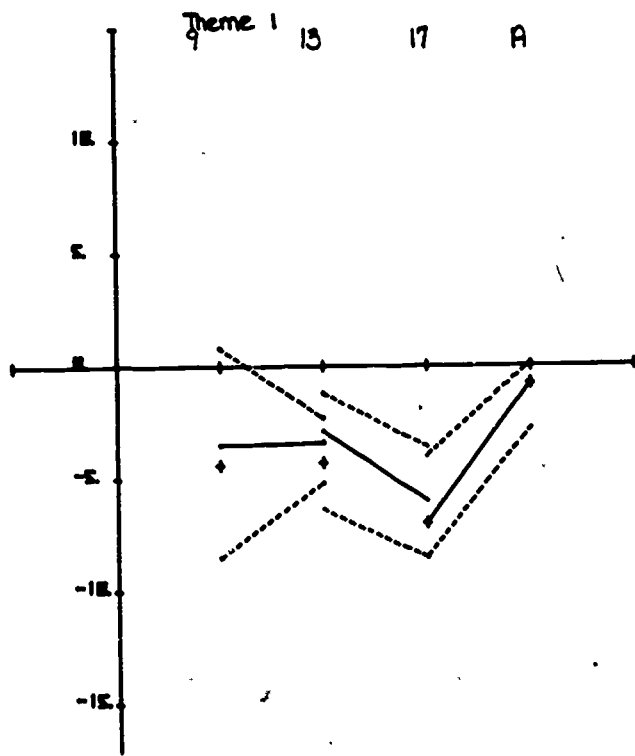
Parental Education: No High School

Overlap exercise effects for Theme 1 reveal a definite drop in the relative performance between the ages of 9 and 13. However, between the ages of 13 and 17, this group improves its performance relative to the nation. Adults whose parents have had no high school perform much as 17-year-olds do, relative to the nation.

Theme 3 (Objective I) results are hard to interpret because the variability in the effects is so great at ages 9, 13 and 17. It does appear that 9 and 13-year-olds performed worse on the overlap exercises than on all exercises in the theme. The only stable age trend appears to be between the 17-year-olds and the adults. Although the exercises in this theme require knowledge of specific works and characters, adults did considerably better, relative to the nation, than did 17-year-olds.

The median difference for Theme 4 point to a steady trend from age to age, away from the national level of performance. Since exercises in this theme assess reading habits, it is safe to say that the reading habits of 9-year-olds in this group are much more like rational reading habits than are those of the 13-year-olds. Seventeen-year-olds are reading even less, relative to a national population than are 13-year-olds.

EXHIBIT 10. Age Comparisons for the Some High School Group



Parental Education: Some High School

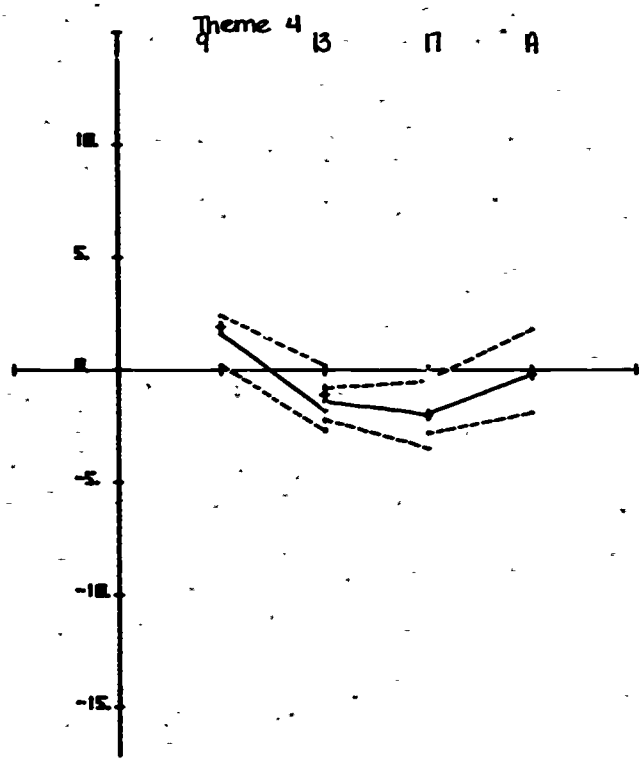
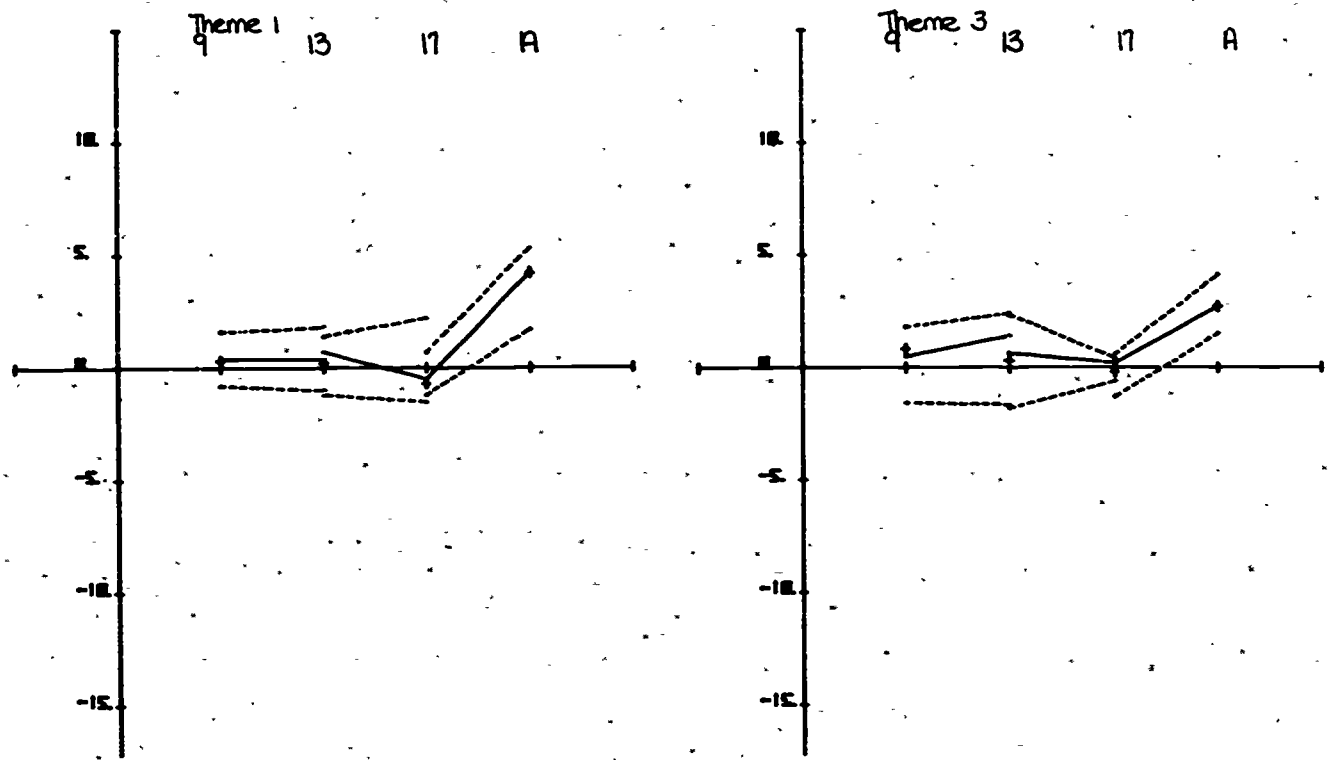
On Theme 1 (Objective II) overlap exercises, 13-year-olds did not perform better than 9-year-olds relative to the nation; they did, however, perform more consistently, as the quartile lines suggest. Seventeen-year-olds did worse, relative to the nation, than 13-year-olds. The most dramatic age trend appeared between 17-year-olds and adults. On the same exercises, adults in this group performed very much as all adults did, but 17-year-olds in the group performed considerably poorer than all 17-year-olds. Apparently the factors that define people in this group operate less effectively as people leave school and move into the 25-36 year-old range.

Though the overlap median differences for Theme 3 (Objective I) appear to describe trends from 9 to 13 and from 13 to 17, the quartile lines suggest that we should be skeptical. The changes are most likely very slight. It does appear, however, that in this theme as in Theme 1, adults improved considerably upon the relative standing of the group at age 17.

Slight age trends did appear in Theme 4 (Objective III) results. Thirteen-year-olds in this group did somewhat better relative to a national sample of 13-year-olds, than 9-year-olds did relative to their national population. Between the ages of 13 and 17, there was a slight drop in relative performance, but between the 17-year-olds and the adults, performance once again moved closer to the national level.

Exhibit 10 indicates that regardless of theme or objective, this group's age to age trends were very similar. Though the 9-13 trend appears dramatic in Theme 3, the quartile lines suggest that it is not.

EXHIBIT 11. Age Comparisons, Graduated from High School Group



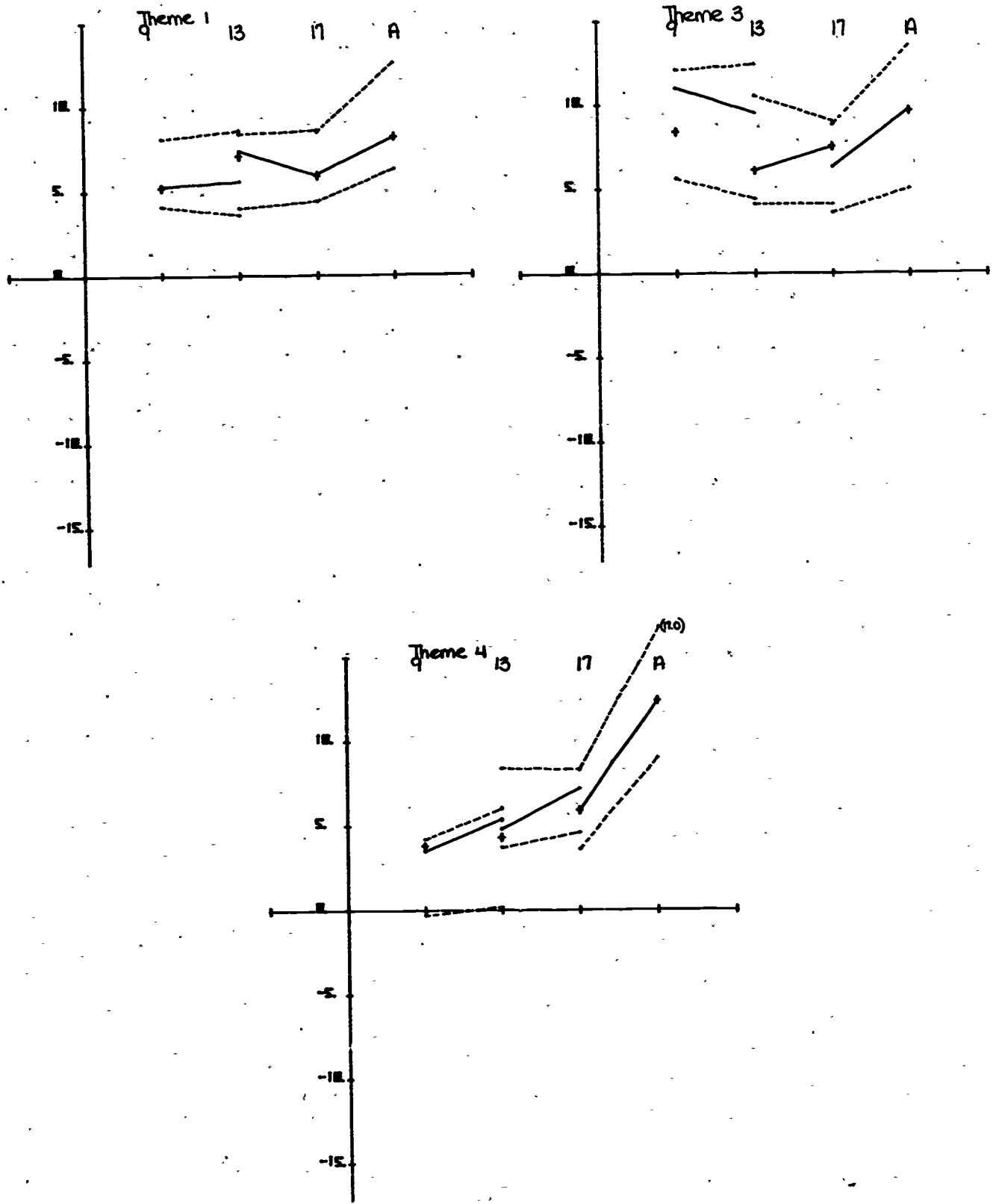
Parental Education: Graduated from High School

Theme 1 (Objective II) median differences reveal little 9-13 and 13-17 change in performance. However, adults in this group performed much better than all adults, whereas 17-year-olds in this group performed about as well as all 17-year-olds did. Again, this would indicate that the effects of being in this group are less detrimental at the adult level than at the 17-year-old level.

Theme 3 (Objective I) results present much the same picture. Theme 4 (Objective III) results--based on a survey of reading habits--suggest slight age to age changes. However, no age group overlap median was more than 2 points above or below the national level of performance.

Regardless of theme or objective, adult median differences for this group are higher, relative to a national performance level achieved by adults, than 17-year-old medians are, relative to 17-year-old performance nationally.

EXHIBIT 12. Age Comparisons for the Post High School Group



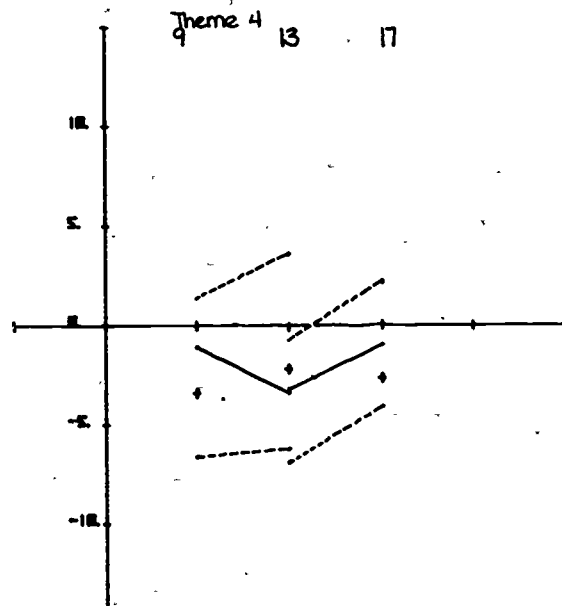
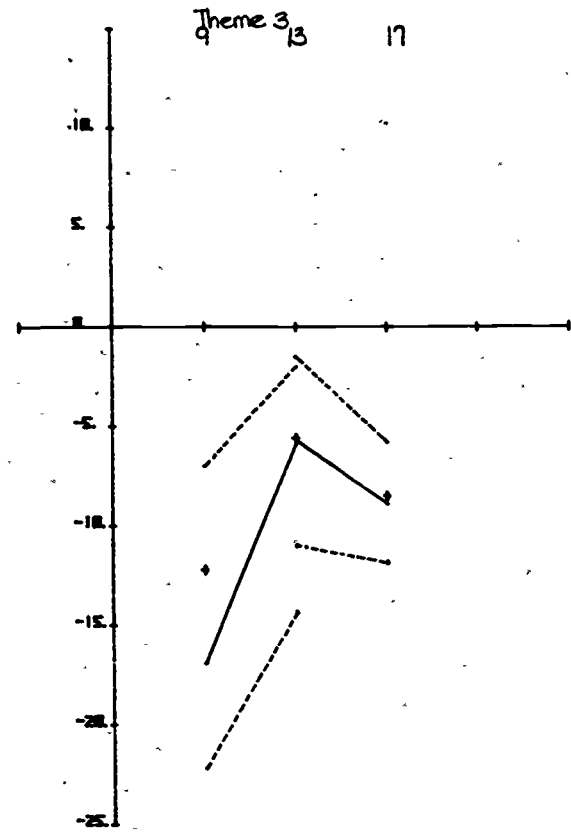
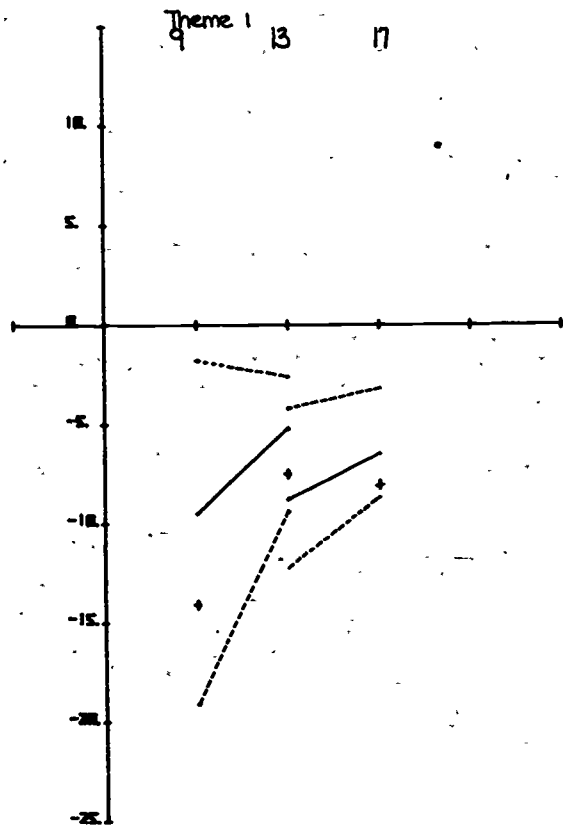
Parental Education: Post High School

In all themes, and at all ages, this group's performance is generally above the national performance. Theme 1 results indicate very slight changes from age to age. Post high school 9-year-olds perform about as much or better than all 9-year-olds, as post high school 13-year-olds perform above their peers nationally. There is a slight decline from age 13 to 17 and a slight increase from 17 to adult, but in general the group behaves consistently regardless of age.

Theme 3 results indicate a slight downward trend from age 9 to 13 and slight upward trends from 13 to 17 and from 17 to adult. Again, at all ages the group performs considerably above the national level of performance.

Theme 4 median differences imply a steady age to age increase in the gap between people in this group and people in the nation as a whole. Reading experience obviously becomes broader as age increases, indicating that the already positive reading habits these people evidence are reinforced and extended even beyond the termination of formal education.

EXHIBIT 13. Age Comparisons, Extreme Inner City



STOC: Extreme Inner City

Since we do not have STOC data for the adults, we are able to make only two age comparisons for STOC groups.

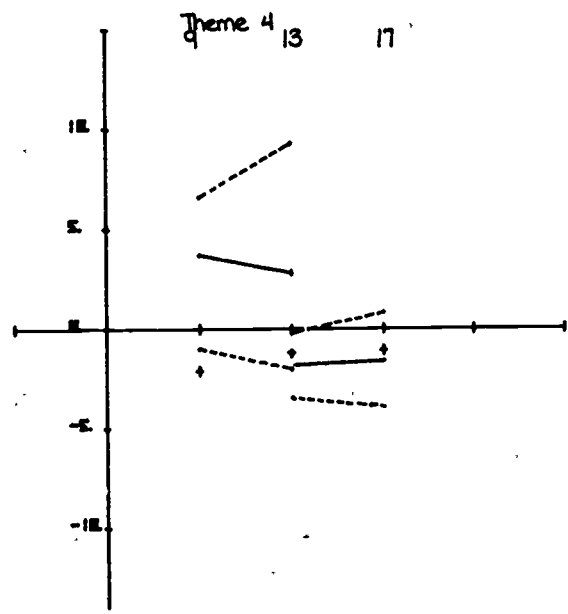
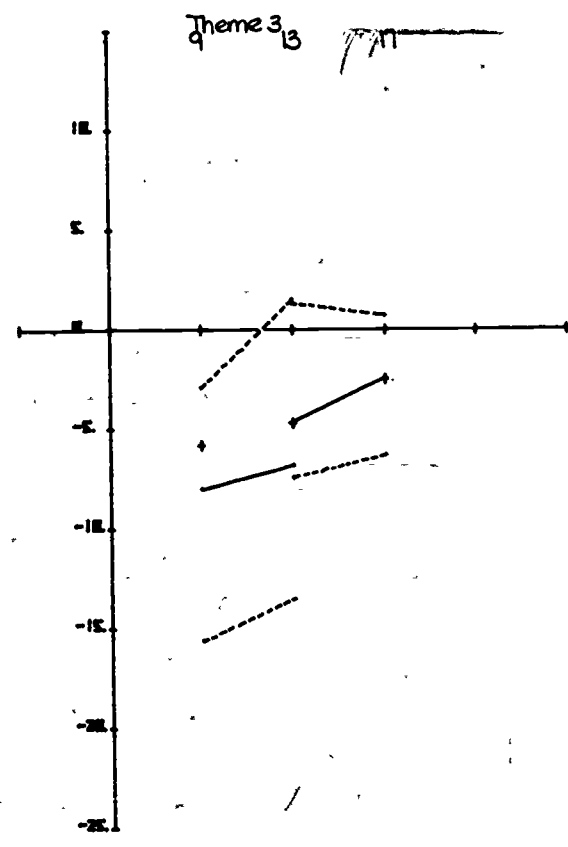
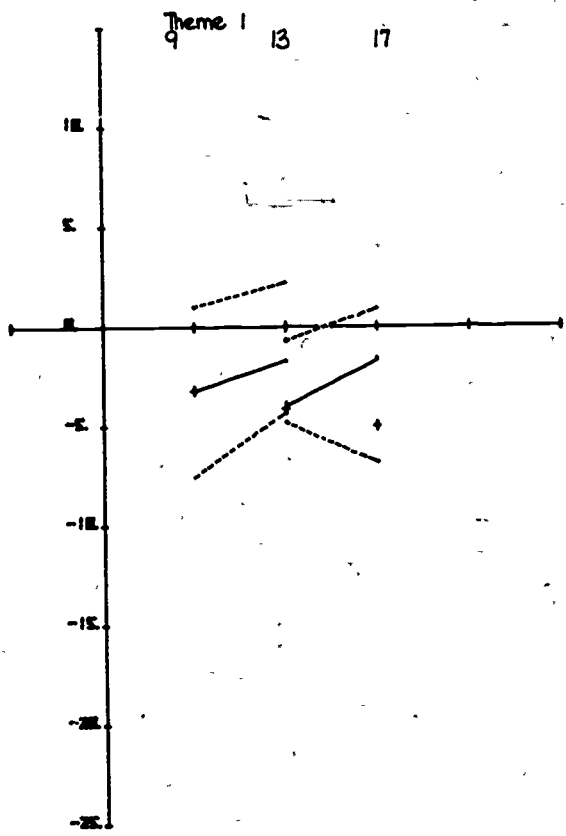
On Theme 1 9-13 overlap exercises, the teenagers performed more consistently than the 9-year-olds, improving the group's position relative to its respective national population. Between the ages of 13 and 17 there was yet another improvement upon the group's relative position. Note that the overlap medians are quite different than the medians based on all exercises.

On Theme 3 (Objective I) exercises, this group's 9-13 improvement in relative standing is even more dramatic. Though inner city 9-year-olds are more than 16 points below the national level established by all 9-year-olds, inner city 13-year-olds are only 6 points below the national level established by all 13-year-olds. Clearly, this group improves more between ages 9 and 13 than the national population does.

Between the ages of 13 and 17 there is a drop in performance relative to the national level. In other words, on the same exercises, 13-year-olds in the inner city group perform closer to a national population of 13-year-olds than 17-year-olds in this group perform relative to all 17-year-olds.

The quartile lines defining 50% of the effects on 9-13 overlap exercises in Theme 4 (Objective III) contradict the apparent trend defined by the median effect at each age. Between ages 13 and 17, however, a slight improvement in performance relative to the nation is more likely. Note that the median effects based on all exercises in the theme (+) present quite a different picture of age to age performance.

EXHIBIT 14. Age Comparisons, Extreme Rural



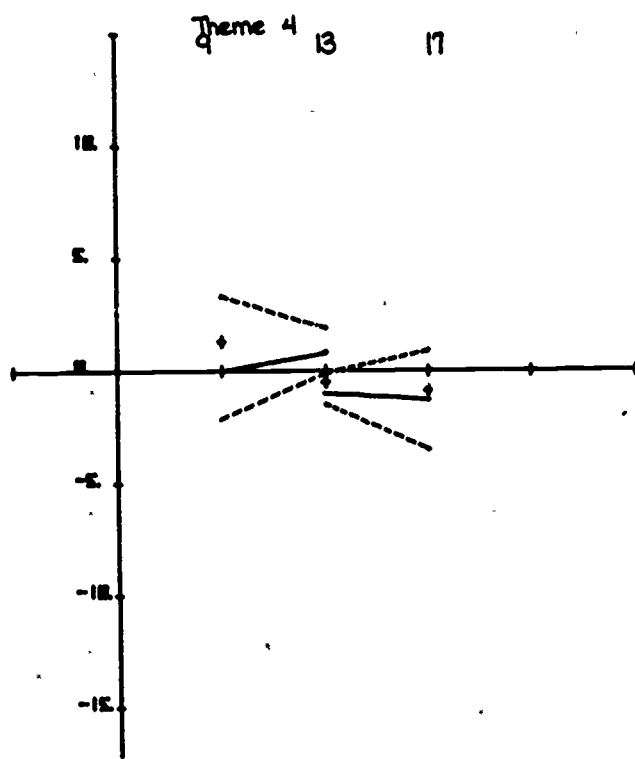
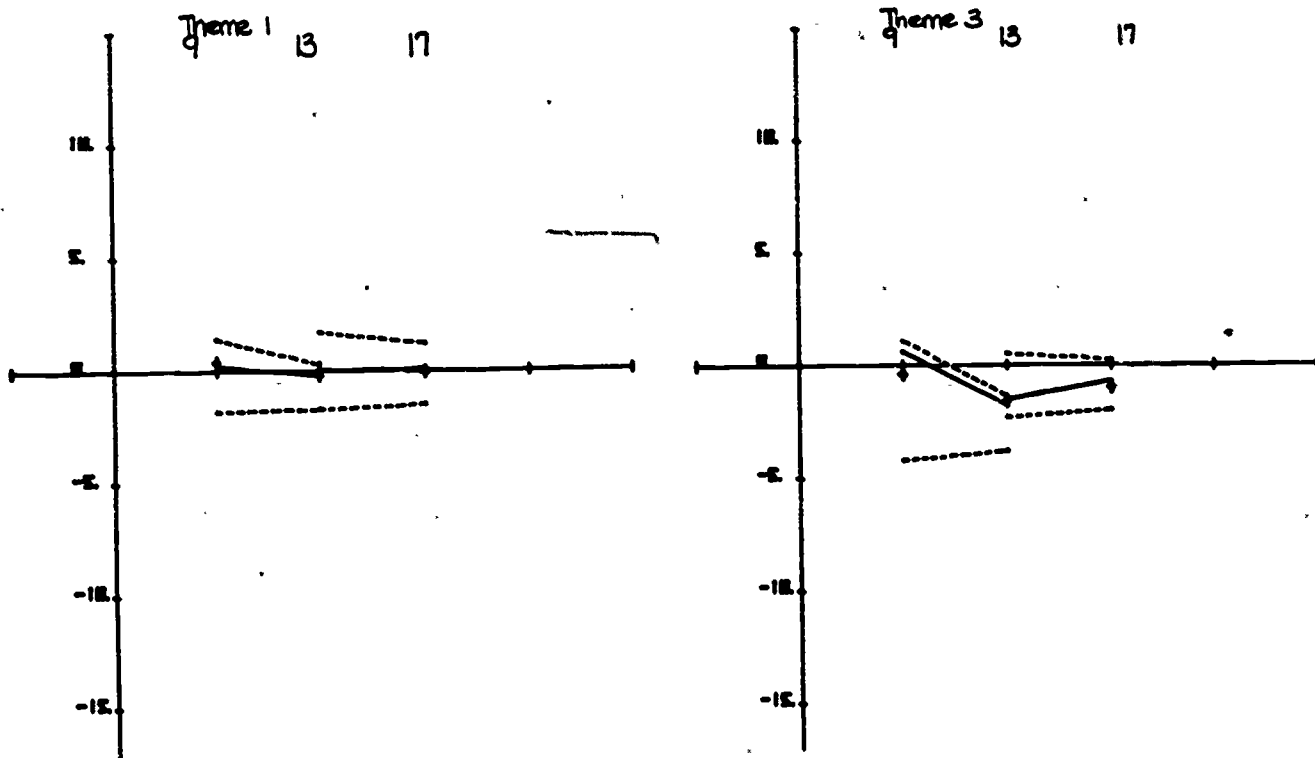
STOC: Extreme Rural

The median differences for overlap exercises in Theme 1 indicate that 13-year-olds performed better, relative to the nation, than did 9-year-olds. The picture is less clear for the 13-17-year-old results, but it would appear that the 17-year-olds performed somewhat better, relative to the nation, than did the 13-year-olds.

Theme 3 (Objective I) differences reveal very wide distributions of effects at ages 9 and 13, making trend analysis hazardous. Between ages 13 and 17, however, there does appear to be a slight improvement in relative standing.

Results for Theme 4 (Objective III) reveal that there was very little change from age 9 to age 13 and from age 13 to age 17. Performance did appear to be more consistent on the 13-17 overlap exercises.

EXHIBIT 15. Age Comparisons, Small Places



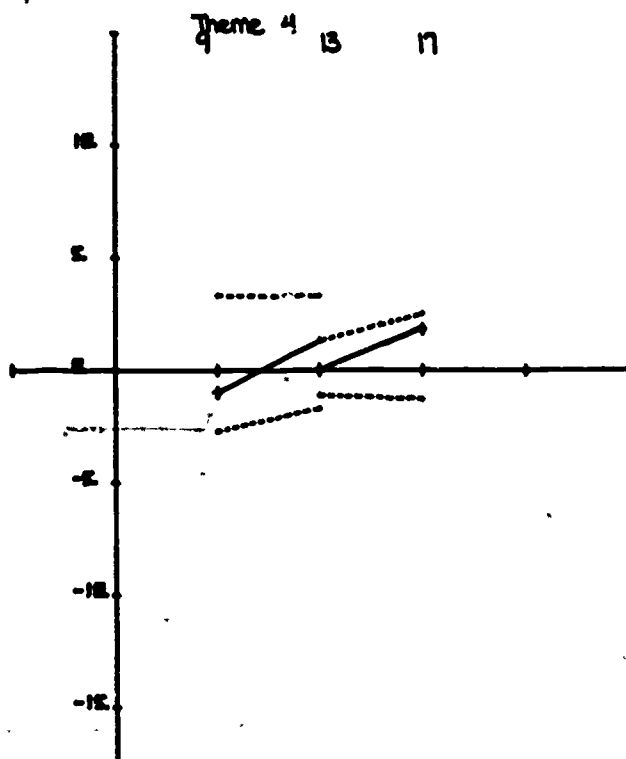
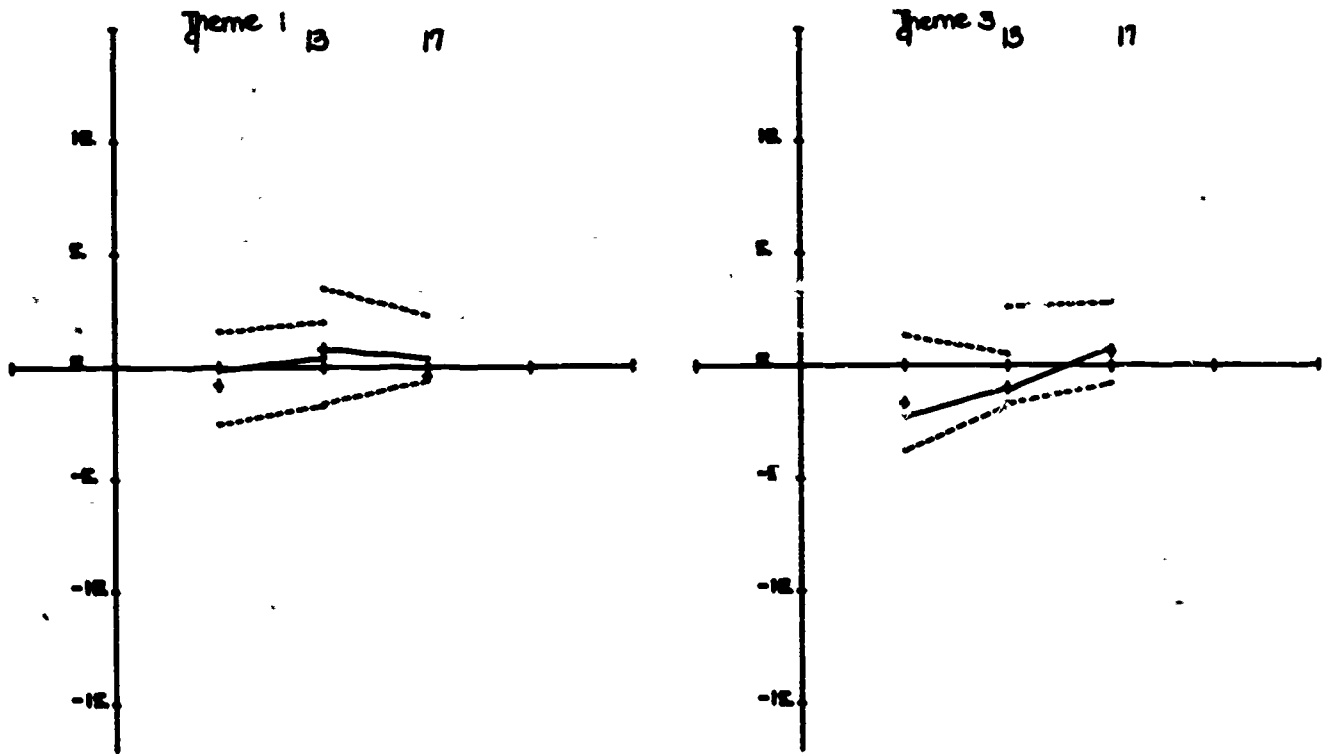
STOC: Small Places

Median differences on overlap exercises in Theme 1 reflect consistent and stable performance from age to age.

Theme 3 (Objective I) results, however, indicate that 9-year-olds in small towns performed better relative to all 9-year-olds than 13-year-olds did relative to their national population. Between the ages of 13 and 17 there was little change in this group's relative position.

Theme 4 (Objective III) median effects show no strong age trends.

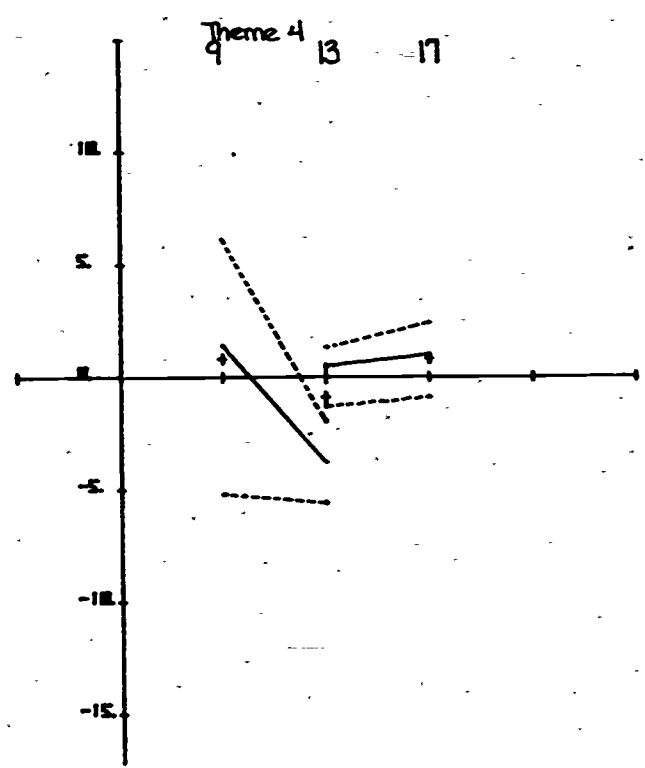
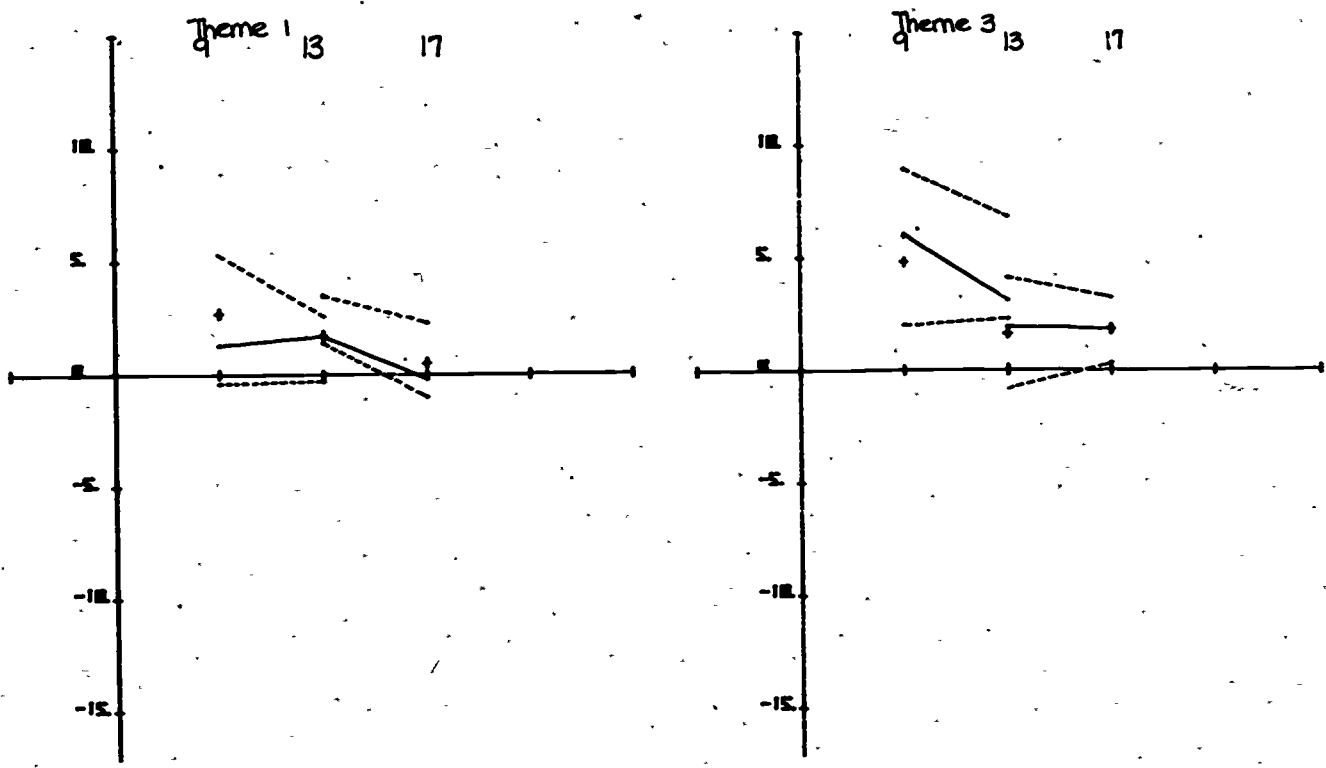
EXHIBIT 16. Age Comparisons, Medium Size City



STOC: Medium Size City.

Theme 1 (Objective II) results indicate no noteworthy age trends. Theme 3 (Objective I) median differences reflect a slight improvement in performance relative to national populations, between ages 9 and 13 and 13 and 17. Theme 4 (Objective III) results point to a similar, but less stable, pattern.

EXHIBIT 17. Age Comparisons, Suburban Fringe



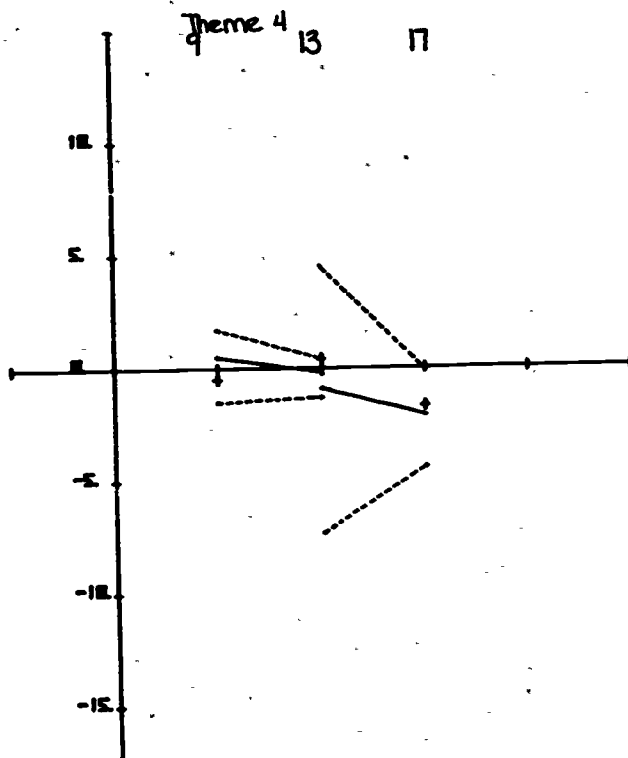
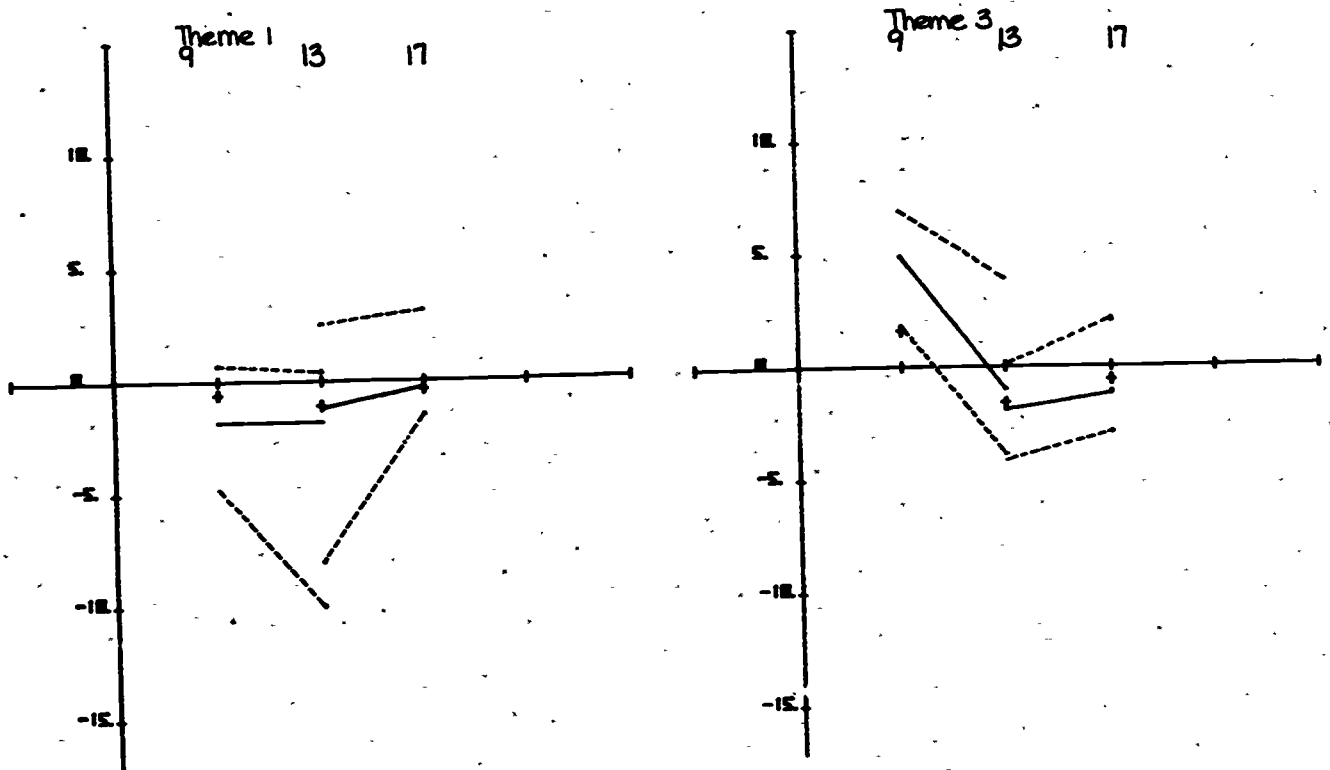
STOC: Suburban Fringe

On exercises assessing understanding of imaginative language (Theme 1, Objective II), this group performed quite consistently from age to age.

Exercises calling for more specific information about literary works and characters (Theme 3, Objective I) produced a decrease in performance relative to national levels, between ages 9 and 13. When 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds took the same exercises, each group's median difference was at about the same distance from its respective national population.

Theme 4 (Objective III) median differences reveal a strong decrease in performance relative to a national population between ages 9 and 13. Between age 13 and age 17 there is little change in the group's relative performance.

EXHIBIT 18. Age Comparisons, Rest of Big City



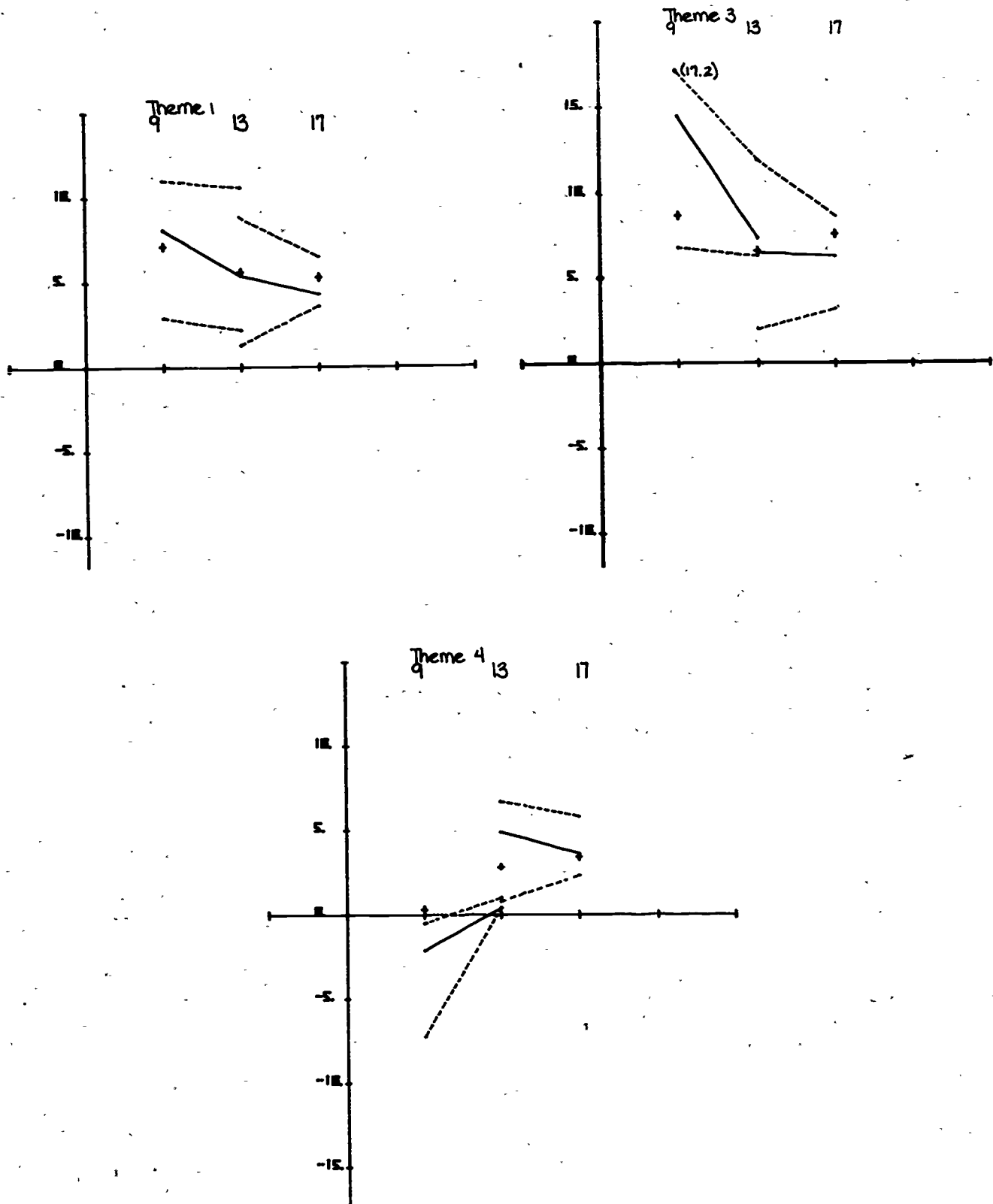
STOC: Rest of Big City

This group did not reveal strong age trends on Theme 1 exercises, either from age 9 to age 13 or from age 13 to age 17.

Theme 3 (Objective I) results, however, indicate a marked shift in performance. The overlap median difference for 9-year-olds in this group was 5 points above the national level; however, for 13-year-olds, the median was a point below the national level of performance. There was little change from age 13 to age 17 in the performance of this group relative to their national performance.

Theme 4 (Objective III) results reveal no strong age trends.

EXHIBIT 19. Age Comparisons, Extreme Affluent Suburb



STOC: Extreme Affluent Suburb

Median differences on age 9-13 overlap exercises in Theme 1 (Objective II) indicate that 9-year-olds in this group perform somewhat better, relative to all 9-year-olds, than 13-year-olds perform relative to their national population. There is little change between ages 13 and 17, though the 17-year-olds performed a good deal more consistently than the 13-year-olds.

Theme 3 (Objective I) results indicate a marked downward trend between age 9 and age 13, perhaps because 13-year-olds in other STOC groups have gained on the national population of 13-year-olds. Exercises taken by 13 and 17-year-olds did not produce a change in the group's position relative to the nation.

Theme 4 (Objective III) median differences reflect a change in overall performance between the ages of 9 and 13. Three quarters of the group's effects were below the national level at age 9, but at age 13, three fourths were slightly above the national level. Overlap exercise differences do not indicate a strong trend between age 13 and age 17.

The previous discussion has dealt entirely with median differences. The following table presents the median national percentages for each set of overlap results--9 and 13, 13 and 17, 17 and adult. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of exercises the medians are based upon.

TABLE 10. Raw National Percentages for Overlap Exercises

	No. Ex.	Medians		No. Ex.	Medians		No. Ex.	Medians	
		Ages 9	13		Ages 13	17		Ages 17	Adult
Obj. I	(13)	48%	58%	(39)	54%	60%	(38)	61%	61%
Obj. II	(18)	39	62	(20)	68	80	(29)	60	66
Obj. III	Only 4 exercises		(17)	37	38	(21)	<u>43</u>	36	
Theme 1	(15)	40	56	(15)	69	84	(21)	80	70
Theme 3	(11)	48	72	(26)	63	76	(24)	73	73
Theme 4	(4)	43	39	(17)	37	38	(21)	43	36

This completes the Summary of the National Assessment report on Literature. Readers are encouraged to consult the four theme volumes and the Released Exercises volume (Report 02-L-20) for further information about the Literature Assessment results.

APPENDIX A

Following are the exercise results used to compute Theme 4 median response percentages and median differences at each age. The particular result number used for a given exercise appears in parentheses. The reader can consult Appendix A, Theme 4, to find, using the exercise and result numbers, the exact percentages.

Age			
9	13	17	Adult
R404A(1)	R401(2)	R402(2)	R402(2)
R404B(1)	R405A(1)	R403(15)	R403(15)
R404C(1)	R405B(1)	R410A(1)	R410A(17)
R404D(1)	R405C(1)	R410B(1)	R410B(17)
R404E(1)	R405D(1)	R410C(1)	R410C(17)
R404F(1)	R405E(1)	R410D(1)	R410D(17)
R406(1)	R405F(1)	R410E(1)	R410E(17)
R407A(15)	R405G(1)	R410F(1)	R410F(17)
R407D(15)	R405H(1)	R410G(1)	R410G(17)
R408(2)	R406(1)	R410H(1)	R410H(17)
R409(16)	R410A(1)	R411A(4)	R411A(4)
	R410B(1)	R411B(4)	R411B(4)
	R410C(1)	R411C(4)	R411C(4)
	R410D(1)	R411D(4)	R411D(4)
	R410E(1)	R411E(4)	R411E(4)
	R410F(1)	R411F(3)	R411F(3)
	R410G(1)	R411G(3)	R411G(3)
	R410H(1)	R411H(3)	R411H(3)
	R411A(4)	R411I(3)	R411I(3)
	R411B(4)	R412(13)	R412(13)
	R411C(4)		
	R411D(4)		
	R411E(4)		
	R411F(3)		
	R411G(3)		
	R411H(3)		
	R411I(3)		