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ABSTRACT

The focus of this report is on the utility of desegregation as a method for achieving racial equality. Background information is provided through a discussion of the Brown Decision, a review of related literature and the meaning of racial equality. Comparisons of black and white achievement scores are used to address the question of equality. Additional data and a pattern of data analysis based on a three year investigation of a midwestern city's court-ordered desegregation program are used to illustrate a perspective for research on desegregation. Reference is made to variables which affect "first order change" (apparent change) and "second order change" (real change). It is argued that the question of whether desegregation works or not is somewhat less important than the more specific questions which identify the kinds of change and the important variables which determine the desired outcomes. (Author/EB)

Court-ordered desegregation: Shuffling the deck or playing a different game

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This paper was presented as part of a symposium entitled "Desegregation Research: The present and future directions" at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, August 1978.

Desegregation has become one of the most widely discussed and emotion-laden social policies of the past two decades. The Supreme Court's decision in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 reversed a half century of legal precedent based on the notion of "separate but equal" education. In the twenty years since Brown there have been numerous investigations of the effects of desegregation for the children involved, their schools, and their communities (c.f., Cohen, 1975; Epps, 1975; St. John, 1975; Weinberg, 19). Today, despite the large number of studies, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the success or failure of desegregation as a method to remedy the ills of the segregated educational system. Perhaps more discouraging than the lack of consistency, is the literature's failure to offer explanation or insight into the dynamics of desegregation. For example, what factors in a school and community are affected by desegregation; what variables seem to contribute to observed changed or the absence of change. Like so many evaluative studies the concern has been with pre to post changes, or simply does the intervention work?

Today I'd like to take a slightly unconventional path and introduce an alternative perspective for research on desegregation and a pattern of data analysis suggested by that framework. Several illustrations will be presented from a three year investigation of a midwestern city's court-ordered desegregation that we have recently completed. Essential to understanding this perspective is an examination of the underlying goals of desegregation and the nature of the change I think is intended by this intervention: a change in the existing racial inequality.

Reviewing the Supreme Court's opinion in the Brown decision, the letter of the law and the spirit of the law seem to be pointing to somewhat different outcomes or goals for desegregation. Legally, the Brown decision simply required that black children not be prohibited (under the law) from attending school with

white children. In the strictest sense, the decision required that the apartheid be broken in public education. Litigation in the twenty years since Brown has resulted in social policy where racial balance is synonymous with desegregation.

Although the letter of the law requires only that black and white children attend school together, the Brown decision rests on the notion of equality guaranteed by the Constitution. The Court's decision prohibiting segregation was one step toward eliminating the inequalities that existed in public education. The Brown decision and the various methods of desegregation were intended by some to bring about racial equality in the schools, and in effect over time, racial equality in the country.

In this study we have accepted racial equality as the ultimate goal of desegregation. So our data collection and analysis were defined in the context of this goal, and we were specifically interested in investigating the utility of desegregation as a method for achieving racial equality.

What do we mean by racial equality? Some further specification seems necessary, yet unfortunately, the definitions available are not totally satisfactory. They tend to specify what is not equality, more so than what is. The working definition of racial equality for many researchers is "equal educational opportunity". Since the Coleman Report (1966) researchers have defined "equal educational opportunity" in terms of similarity of educational outputs, or achievement. Comparisons of black and white students achievement scores are the analyses employed to address the question of equality. Given the culture-boundness of the measures commonly used in these comparisons, this approach defines equality from a single perspective--that of the white student. With this evaluation strategy, equality is evidenced when black students perform as white students do. The standard of comparison and definition of what is valued remains that of the white primarily middle class students. So in essence this

brand of equality implies that black and white children are equal, but the skills and behaviors valued are those of the white group. If black children can be like white children then they will be treated as equals. In one very critical way they will never be like white children, in terms of skin color. This definition of equality is both inadequate and flawed, for so long as the criteria are defined by one group, that group is more equal than the other. Any definition of racial equality must encompass multiple perspectives in defining standards of competence.

If inequality exists, then equality necessarily implies a change in the basic relationship existing between black and white individuals. The current unequal relationship is characterized by a one-up/one-down relationship of the white group over the black group. Equality seems to require a change in this one-up/one-down status, and a change in the relationship in terms of variables like power and status. Triandis (1976) has discussed minority-majority relations in terms of the social exchange of goods or rewards like status, respect and admiration. He suggests that these rewards or benefits are rarely awarded to minority group members. This imbalance in social exchange seems critical in defining inequality. So long as status continues to be defined and awarded by the group with status, the basic one-up relationship between the groups may never change, and hence equality may never be achieved.

Desegregation here is being defined as a mechanism to bring about social change, specifically a change from inequality to equality in public education. Viewing desegregation in the context of social change, Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch's (1974) theoretical work on change provides a useful schema for discussing the change from inequality to equality through desegregation. These authors distinguish two types or levels of change, first order change and second order change.

In their 1974 book they employ mathematical notions from the Theory of Groups and the Theory of Logical Types to explain the adage, "the more things change, the more they remain the same", a phenomenon I guess most of us have noted. This kind of change is hypothesized to be first order change, where the appearance of change is evident, but the basic problem or issue is unchanged. True change, or second order change in Watzlawick, et. al.'s terms occurs only when there has been a change in the basic relationships of the groups involved in the problem. They suggest further that an accompanying change in the premises of the operating system is required. In essence the change in operating premises would redefine the relationships of the groups or individuals involved. The notion of equality adopted for this study has been defined in terms of a change in relationships and fits in Watzlawick, et. al.'s category of second order change. When desegregation plans are implemented there are clearly observable changes, specifically in the racial composition of classrooms and schools. However, from our perspective the more important question is the second order change question: do these changes bring about lasting change in the relationship between black and white children, is the inequality dealt with or perhaps only camaflouged for a short time?

Watzlawick, et. al.'s theoretical framework regarding change has been a guiding theme in our investigation of the impact of desegregation. Specifically, we chose racial equality as the overarching goal of desegregation, defined equality in terms of a relationship change, and completed a set of analyses intended to investigate the extent to which desegregation precipitated a second order change.

Three illustrations of types of data analysis suited for these questions follow. Results from our investigation have been chosen to illustrate methodological issues. Although only selected analyses will be highlighted

here, there are not at present of the general findings.

The metric or unit of analysis for the dependent variables is the first and perhaps most basic issue of concern. Typically in the literature, change in academic performance, for example, is examined in terms of change in raw scores or grade equivalents. Often the question is whether the performance gap for black and white students is decreased, or whether black students who are desegregated improve significantly more than those who remain segregated. It is possible, however, and perhaps likely that transferred black children would show significant positive change in academic and behavioral measures, while their relative position in the classroom decreased. For example, J. a black child in the upper third of his class in a segregated school was performing at the 2.5 grade level in arithmetic (slide 1). A year after his transfer to a desegregated school, he is performing at the 3.0 grade level, a significant increase. Compared to his former classmates remaining in the segregated school J. is outperforming them by a half grade level. Compared to his current classmates, he is now in the lower half of his class. In terms of absolute change this desegregation looks beneficial for J., however his relative standing in his classroom has decreased. If these grade equivalents represented group means then although there is absolute gain, the relative position of the two groups, or their relationship, has remained the same. Only the unit of comparison was changed. Now, instead of black schools performing less well than white schools, we have black students in desegregated classrooms performing less well than their white classmates.

As part of the current study change in academic performance was examined in terms of both raw score change and relative position change. The next slide shows an overview of the design of this study, and the measures employed. Because of the limited time I won't go into the details of the design. For the achievement measures each child's score was standardized within their classroom unit, and

the Z score was used as a measure of relative standing. The table presented in the next slide shows reading raw score means for the four groups of this study, and in the lower portion, Z scores for the groups over time. The transferring black students have gained slightly more than their former classmates by Time 5 (groups II and III), while their relative standing in their class is lower. In this case neither of these changes reach conventional levels of statistical significance, however the direction of the mean changes and the correspondence of raw scores and relative standings is important to note. The Z score is simply one measure of relative standing and other measures should be included for convergent evidence. Grades are one such measure. A doctoral dissertation reported by Rosenberg (1975) examined change in grades and standardized achievement finding that although standardized achievement scores increased, grades decreased for black children transferred from all black to all white schools. A distinction between absolute change and relative change seems important in our understanding not only of desegregation as change, but other types of intervention also.

Following Watzlawick, et. al.'s notions, first order change is an "apparent change", a change that does not affect a true change in the basic relationships among the groups. Implicit in this definition is the transitory nature of first order changes, that is the appearance of change fools us into accepting a solution, only to realize shortly after that the situation has not truly been resolved. The design of the current study allowed us to examine the degree to which any change in relative standing, or relationship was temporary, or only the appearance of change. The non-transferred groups were assessed at five time points and comparison of all five time points for these groups gives a short, but nevertheless longitudinal picture. Analysis of variance was employed to examine differential change between these two groups. The next slide shows the means for both groups immediately pre and post desegregation for peer rated aggressive behavior. There

appears to have been a drastic change. Given that these are Z scores, the means at time 3 are indicative of random nominations and suggest perhaps a change in the relationship between the groups. Examining the means for the same groups at time 2 and time 5, immediately prior to desegregation and two years past, a very different picture emerges, suggesting that very little change has been affected. Including all five time points, a still different pattern emerges (slide 5). Here it seems that desegregation precipitated some changes that were relatively unstable and dissipated within a two year time span. This pattern of change is consistent with Watzlawick, et. al.'s notions of "apparent change" or first order change.

Given that desegregation is intended as a social policy change to promote equal educational opportunity for all children, then to ensure this change for subsequent groups of children, whatever changes occur in the educational process should be reflected at the larger system level, i.e., in variables or characteristics of the school system not specific to individuals. Variables like special education placement policies, or mean achievement levels. The question of importance then, is does this "shuffling of numbers" produce a real change in the educational process, i.e., a second order change.

As part of the current study several measures associated with the schools of the district were gathered, specifically, average daily attendance, the percentage of minority students attending the school, the percentage of children receiving free lunch, and mean achievement levels on standardized achievement tests. A variety of statistical techniques including time series analyses and nonparametric tests did not show any district changes stemming from the desegregation. Spearman rank order correlations between pre and post time points showed that the patterns of minority student enrollment throughout the schools of the district did not change. The "whitest" schools before the

desegregation remain the "whitest" schools after the transfers. This finding is particularly interesting given the correspondence between school facilities and resources, and the percentage of white students. The relative access to these resources and educational facilities appears to be maintained with this pattern of bussing, and once again the relative positions or relationship between black and white groups is maintained.

An additional indicant of second order change at the system level is a change in the distribution of black students throughout the classes of the district. For example, the same or an increasing number of black students in special or remedial classes is an obvious indicator of first order change (given the status of special education, c.f., Milofsky, 1974). Although the racial composition of special classes was not availabile for the years before the desegregation, a Chi square analysis of this data for the first two years following desegregation suggests that after the desegregation black children were being placed in EMH classes at a rate different from that prior to the desegregation (slide 7). Further, more individualized analyses of these referrals ought to be done, however it may be that placement in special education provides a way of "handling" the black students in the formerly white schools. If so, this procedure further serves to maintain the lower status of black students in the school system.

These three types of analyses represent a part of our larger investigation of desegregation. Together the data of this study are consistent with the notion of first order change. Throughout, the data do not indicate changes in the relationship between the black and white students. In fact, relative standing is most enhanced in achievement. For the personality-behavioral measures the status of the black children tends to decrease following the change in racial composition. When change in the behavioral measures is apparent, it is shortlived like that presented for peer rated aggression. Multivariate analyses designed

to identify patterns of differential change consistently indicate that the system variables are most discriminative among the groups identified by race and movement patterns, and are related to the direction of changes evidenced on individual achievement and behavior measures.

The data collected within our study points to the presence of only first order change. If we further examine Watzlawick, et. al.'s theory of change and apply it to desegregation, it becomes apparent that change in racial composition is not sufficient to bring about the second order changes implied by the goals of equal educational opportunity and racial equality. The principles of their Theory of Groups state that any combination of the members of a group is itself a member of the group. Consequently changes that involve manipulations within or among the members of a group do not change the essential identity of the group. As with numbers, you may add, multiply or whatever, but the end result is a number, a member of the group. The transferring process of most desegregation plans is essentially a manipulation of the individual members of each group without changing the "rule" defining group membership or the relationship between the groups. It is similar to shuffling a deck of cards and playing the same game over again. Despite the change in the cards ordering, eventually the cards and their respective suits (or group membership) return to the positions defined by the rules of the game. For the cards to end in a different order the rules of the game need to be changed. The data of our study suggest that despite the bussing program, we are playing the same game and all we have really done was to shuffle the deck.

I have only skimmed over these ideas, however I hope that I have raised some issues that are important for our conceptualizations of desegregation and other interventions intended to change the status of one group in reference to another. Equally important is that evaluations of these interventions need to be designed

in the context of a theory or meta-perspective like that provided by Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch. Given that desegregation is the law of the land, the simple question of whether it works or not is somewhat less important than the more specific questions identifying the kinds of change occurring and the variables important in determining the desired outcomes.

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Hypothetical Achievement Score Grade Equivalents

Before and After a Desegregation

	Pre Desegregation	Post Desegregation
J.	2.0	3.0
Segregated black classmates	1.8	2.5
White classmates	2.5	3.8

Overview of the General Design

Group	Grade	Sex	Assessment Times 1 Fall '73	2 Spring '74	3 Fall '74	4 Spring '75	5 Spring '76
I. Black transfers	1	male	*	*			*
Black transfers	1	female	*	*			*
Black transfers	2	male	*	*			*
Black transfers	2	female	*	*			*
II Black non-transfers	1	male	*	*	*	*	*
Black non-transfers	1	female	*	*	*	*	*
Black non-transfers	2	male	*	*	*	*	*
Black non-transfers	2	female	*	*	*	*	*
III. White non-transfers	1	male	*	*	*	*	*
White non-transfers	1	female	*	*	*	*	*
White non-transfers	2	male	*	*	*	*	*
White non-transfers	2	female	*	*	*	*	*
IV. White receivers	1	male					*
White receivers	1	female					*
White receivers	2	male					*
White receivers	2	female					*

DESEGREGATION OCCURRED

INDIVIDUAL MEASURES:
- WRAT Arithmetic
- WRAT Reading
- TBDF-aggressive-acting out
- TBDF-pro-social
- TBDF-anxious-withdrawn
- PBDF-aggressive
- PBDF-pro-social
- PBDF-anxious
- PBDF-loner
- SBDF-positive
- SBDF-negative

SYSTEM MEASURES:
- Average daily attendance
- Mean achievement levels
- Percent minority by school
- Percent receiving free lunch by school
- Percent minority by classroom

Note: * indicates time point at which data was collected for the group

Mean Reading Scores for Grade 1 Subjects

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 5	
Black transfers	6.60	18.13	49.01	(N=25)
Black non-transfers	5.17	19.75	47.45	(N=11)
White non-transfers	10.25	24.05	47.67	(N=23)
White receivers	-	-	52.43	(N=152)

Mean Standardized Reading Scores for Grade 1 Subjects

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 5
Black transfers	-.08	.08	-.23
Black non-transfers	-.59	-.36	-.08
White non-transfers	.04	-.03	.04
White receivers	-	-	-.04

Figure 1

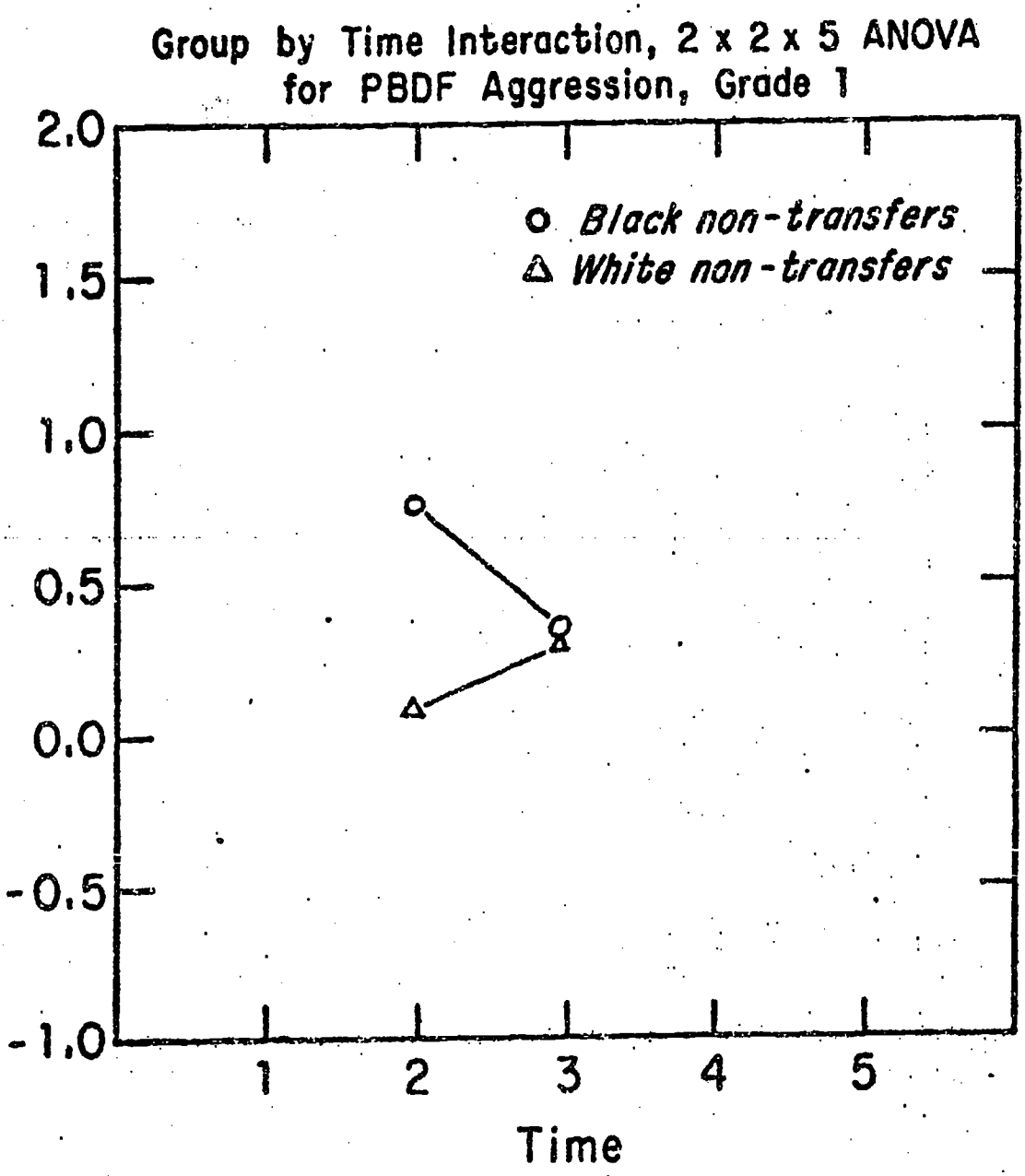

Group by Time Interaction, 2 x 2 x 5 ANOVA
for PBDF Aggression, Grade 1
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
-0.5
-1.0
Black non-transfers
White non-transfers
1
2
3
4
5
Time

Figure 2

Group by Time Interaction, 2 x 2 x 5 ANOVA for PBDF Aggression, Grade 1

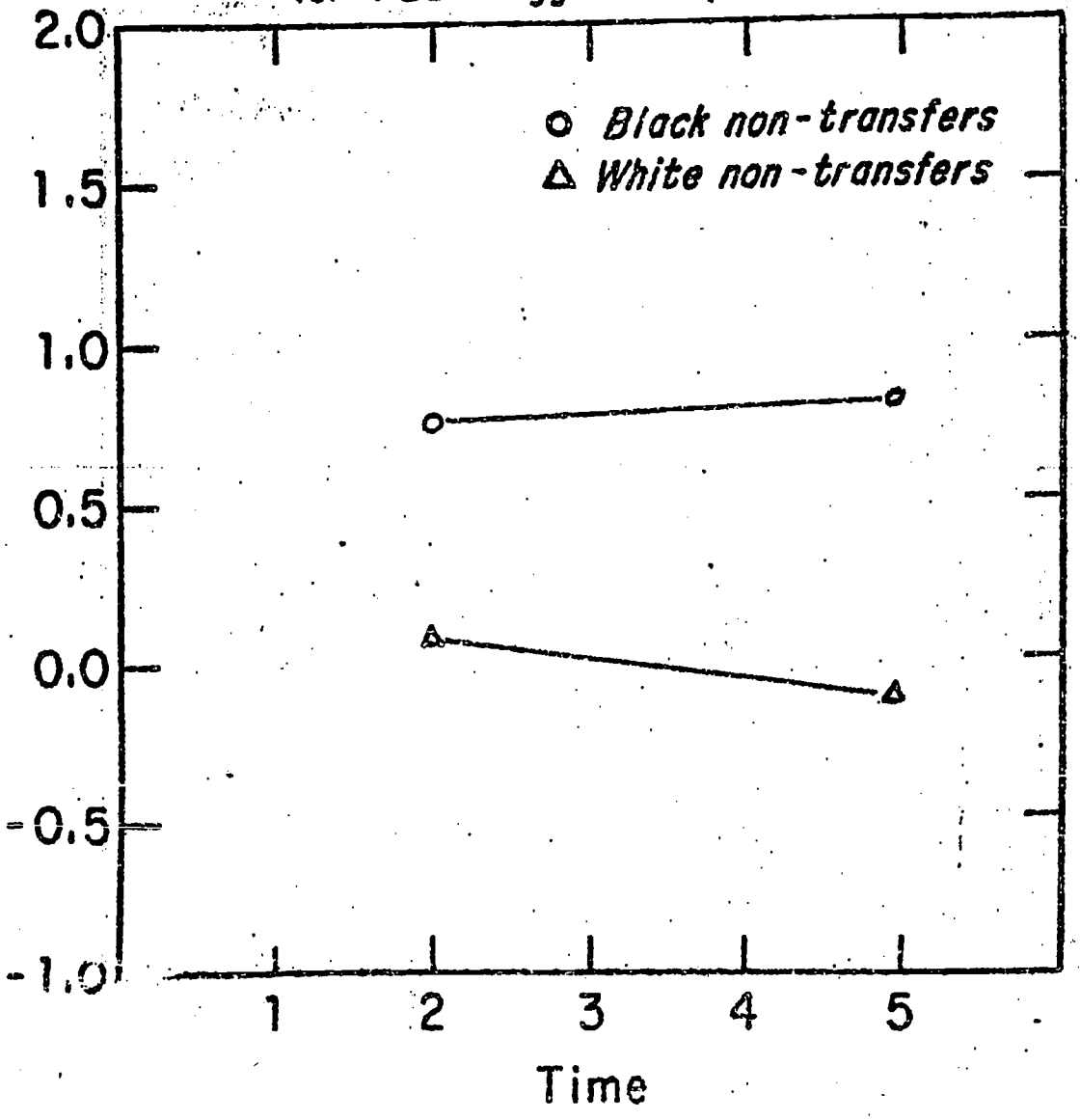
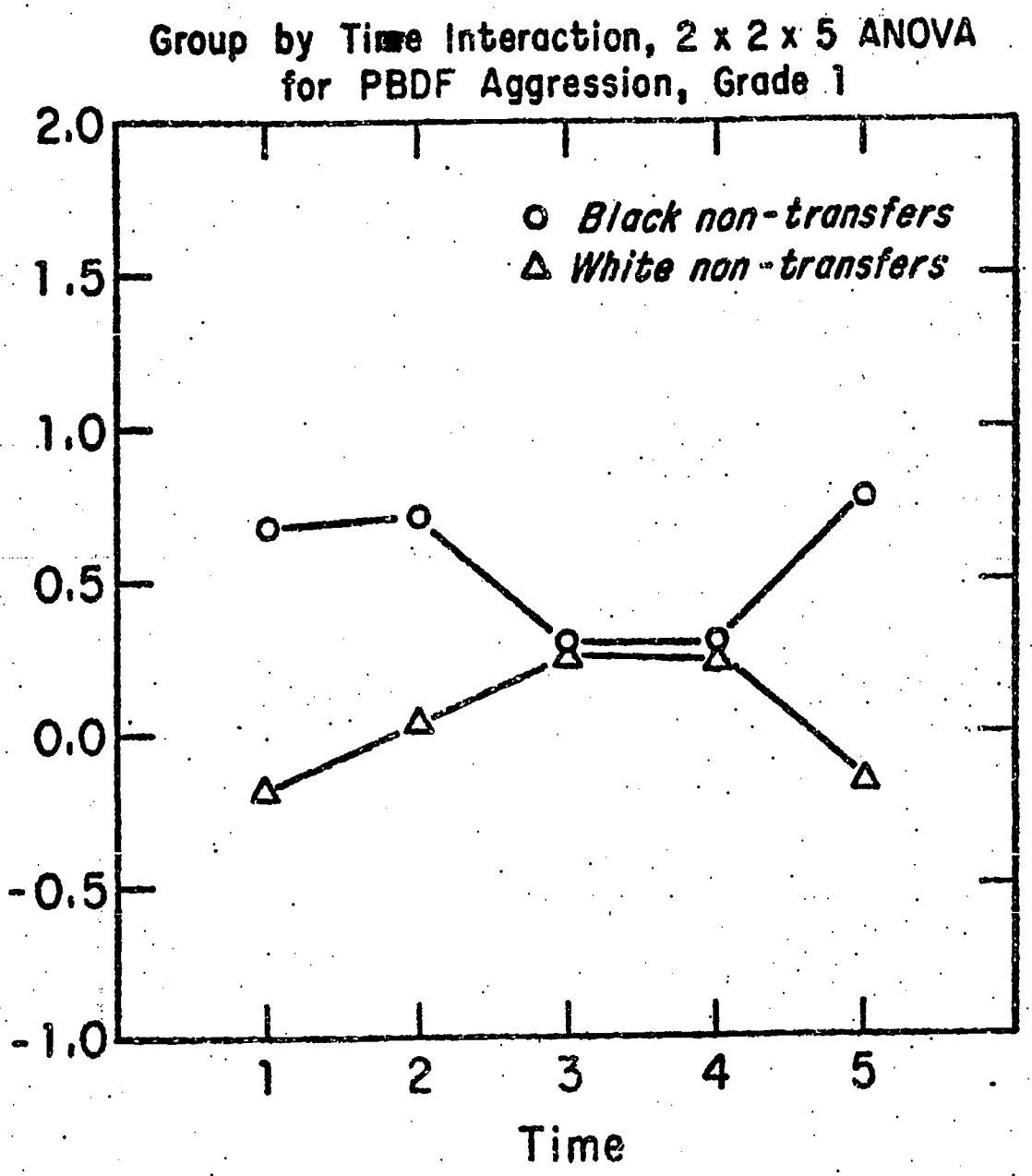


Figure 3


Group by Time Interaction, 2 x 2 x 5 ANOVA
for PBDF Aggression, Grade 1
Black non-transfers
White non-transfers
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
-0.5
-1.0
1
2
3
4
5
Time

Chi Square Analyses for Special Education Placements

Educable Mentally Handicapped Classes:

	1974	1975 School year	
# of white students	145	114	(259)
# of black students	101	117	(218)
	(246)	(231)	

$\chi^2 = 4.417$ $(p \leq .05)$