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Black Students, Ideology, and Class

by

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About the Author

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Black Students, Ideology, and Class: Post-Graduation Changes
in Ideology of Black Low-Income Students who Attended an Elite,
Predominately White University.

Social scientists and intellectuals have long debated
the question of whether Black college graduates tend to be-
come less committed to the struggle against racial discrim-
ination and socio-economic inequalities. Franklin E. Frazier[1]
concluded that college-oriented Blacks tend to abandon their
ideological commitments to the struggle of the Black masses
as they are socialized into the Black middle class through
their college education and subsequent professional occupa-
tions.

During the 1960s, a large proportion of Black college
students throughout America demonstrated or expressed some
commitment to the struggle against racism. Social justice
and racial equality were the causes that drew many into the
Black movement in that decade.

Today, many of those students who articulated the
issues and showed concern about the plight of Black people
in the 1960s are now professionals who comprise a sizable
sector of the Black middle class. Thus, the question in the
controversy over whether members of the Black middle class
are committed to the struggle for social justice has become
more significant since the time when Frazier conducted and
later published his controversial study. This study brings
the controversy over the commitments of the Black middle class,
which was partly generated by Frazier's study, up-to-date.

Furthermore, it attempts to determine what the impact activism during college has had on the ideological shifts among a sample of former students after they had graduated.

This research investigates, in a longitudinal study, the post-college ideological shifts among Black students who were enrolled at the University of Michigan at the end of the 1960s. The research studies the relationship between the student's civil rights activism during college as the independent variable, and the changes in his/her ideology after graduation as the dependent variable. The ideological variables were measured in terms of collectivist or individualist responses to a set of ideological items in the questionnaires used in the study.

The research design was based on a two-wave panel survey. Sixty-six respondents were interviewed from a sample of 119 Black former students enrolled in the University of Michigan during the Spring of 1969, who were subjects in a large survey that was conducted at that time. With only two or three exceptions, the students were all from low-income families receiving support under a special "Opportunity" program at the university.

The second survey was conducted over the period from September 1977 to March 1978. Two data collection instruments were utilized: a telephone interview schedule and a mail questionnaire. The respondents were first interviewed over the telephone; then they were mailed a self-administered

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questionnaire. Out of 75 students contacted, 66 were inter-
viewed, a response rate of 88 percent. Of the 66, 59 responded
to the mail questionnaire.

Given the small sample size, the findings from the
study are only suggestive, even though statistically signi-
ficant. Despite the small number, it was felt that these data
were worth examining because they are the only data in the
literature that has followed up the post-graduate careers and
ideological shifts of Black students on whom ideological data
were obtained at the time they were still students in the
1960s.

The respondents in the panel were classified as former
student activists or nonactivists according to their reported
civil rights involvement or noninvolvement before the first
survey. The major analyses involved comparing former student
activists and nonactivists on their post-graduation jobs, pre-
sent involvement in community activities, and changes in their
political ideology in the nine years since they were first
surveyed. Chi-square was the principal statistic used to test
the significance of the relationships.

Social Context: 1960s - 1970s

The respondents in this study were first surveyed during
the time when the Black movement in the 1960s was having its
greatest impact on American society. The limited but con-
crete victories of the Civil Rights struggles in the South,

in the first half of the decade of the 1960s, and the wide-
spread explosive rebellions in the Black ghettoes of the ur-
ban centers of the nation in the latter half, had the effect
of raising the consciousness and heightening the militancy
of Black students on college campuses across America.

During this period, at the University of Michigan,
Black students pressed for changes in the University's po-
licies and practices regarding enrollment, financial aid,
academic services, and employment of Black professors. In
the wake of the rebellion in Detroit in the summer of 1967,
the biggest and most violent rebellion in the 1960s, the
Black students at Michigan intensified their struggle. Later,
in April 1968, the assassination of Martin Luther King, one
of the most prominent leaders of the Black movement, sparked
dramatic demonstrations and provoked assertive actions aimed
at the University's policies which severely limited Black
access.

Over this same period, a large segment of the White
student body and a significant number of the faculty were
actively engaged in protest activity centered around the U.S.
government's role in the Viet Nam war and the University's
connection with the government in executing that war. Many
of the White students and faculty who were involved in that
struggle were also sympathetic to and supportive of the demands
of Black students for increased accessibility to the University

of Michigan. These two major struggles of the 1960s were perhaps more sharply focused, sophisticated, and intense at The University of Michigan than they were at most other universities and colleges in the nation.

The first survey, in 1969, was conducted on campus in a climate generated by the movements described above. Thus, one would expect a high rate of participation in Civil Rights activity and a high degree of collectivism among the respondents.

The second survey was conducted in 1978, almost ten years later. During the intervening years between 1969 and 1978 much had happened in the personal lives of the respondents and in American society.

At the personal level, the respondents had become university graduates, many with advanced degrees. Many had also started families, entered prestigious professions, and embarked upon promising careers. In terms of social status, they had become new members of the numerically expanding Black middle class.

At the national level, the social changes were complex. The intervening years were a period marked by countervailing socioeconomic and political trends. The massive anti-war movement of the 1960s dissipated after the signing of the Peace Accords between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. And with the election of Richard Nixon as President of the United

States in 1968 coupled with the installation of a Republican administration, a conservative mood settled over the nation.

General White reaction against the gains made by Blacks and other minorities was given political expression through government policies at all levels, federal, state and local. Many programs aimed at alleviating poverty, which were implemented under the previous Democratic administration were dismantled or phased out. Other programs which were designed to aid the low-income sectors of society in the areas of health, education, and employment were also cut back. These and other changes under the Nixon-Ford administration dimmed the hopes and angered the Black population.

But the Black movement had lost most of its vitality. Many felt there was a crisis in leadership. Some of the charismatic leaders (Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, etc.) were no longer on the scene. Some believed that Black people had become disillusioned and cynical, while others believed that there had been merely a change in emphasis on alternative political strategies and targets.

It seemed to many that protest politics had given way to electoral politics. The 1960s had been marked by massive demonstration, rebellions in the streets, and militant rhetoric. Direct action was the catch word and the main tactical mode. In the 1970s, however, the emphasis shifted to less militant tactics and more traditional

strategies that were geared to bring about social change
through working more within the established social,
political and economic institutions.

The shift was apparent in the increased involvement
of Black leaders and former civil rights activists in
electoral politics and government administration and in
the struggle for affirmative action programs.

In their efforts to stem the national conservative
tide led by the Nixon-Ford administration, Blacks almost
unanimously backed the presidential candidacy of Carter in
1976 with the hope of getting some relief. But many soon
became disaffected after Carter reneged on his campaign
promises of full employment and better educational, social
and health programs.

To some extent, social conditions deteriorated in
the Black community in the 1970s. This was evidenced by
the increasing rates of crime, drug abuse, unemployment,
and single parent families. However, demonstrative gains
were made by the Black middle class, partly as a result
of affirmative action programs which opened up new job
opportunities of Black professionals, including our
respondents.

Thus, since the first survey was conducted in 1969
when the respondents were students at Michigan, there
have been dramatic changes both in the individual lives

and in the social and political climate in the nation. The climate shifts might push the respondents toward more cynicism and collectivism. But their own social advancement and the movement of greater numbers of Blacks into the Black middle class, coupled with the increased political influence of Blacks -- as reflected in the greater number of Black caucuses, mayors, and governmental officials -- would point the other way. These changes over the past decade provide the background against which the ideological shifts that have occurred among the respondents can be viewed and interpreted.

Beliefs About Black Political Control: 1969 - 1978

The respondents became more confident in Blacks' ability to determine their own future through politics. In 1969 and again in 1978, they were asked about their beliefs concerning Black political control. The data in Table 7 revealed that in 1969 they were about evenly divided over the issue of Blacks' ability to determine their destiny by political means. However, by 1978 they had shifted significantly toward a feeling of confidence in Blacks' ability to influence political decisions which bear directly on their lives.

This dramatic shift among the respondents probably reflected, to some extent, the apparent shift in the Black community from a sense of politcial

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TABLE 7

Percentage of Respondents Who Chose the Black Political
Control Alternative Instead of the Black Powerlessness
Alternative in 1969 and 1978.

Individual Items	1969 N = 44	1978 N = 44
1. Believed "The average Black person can have an influence in political decisions," rather than "This world is run by White people and there is not much Black people can do about it."	52% $x^2(1) = 11.02$, p < .001	77%
2. Believed "Today when Black people make plans, they are almost certain they can make them work," rather than "It is not wise for Black people to plan far ahead because they're bound to meet some discrimination or racial barriers over which they have little control."	39% $x^2(1) = 34.60$, p < .001	82%

Note: Percentages are presented only for the Black control alternative, chi-square was computed using both Black control and Black powerlessness responses.

We should note that in this and the following tables that compare 1969 and 1978 responses, we are using a conservative test of statistical significance. We are not taking into account the correlation of the 1969 and 1978 responses that derives from the fact that the same respondents answered each survey. Given the fact that our N is small and we should therefore be cautious about generalizing our findings, we felt a conservative test was appropriate.

powerlessness toward a feeling of potency in politics. This shift can be viewed from a historical perspective.

Historically, Black people have tended to be pessimistic about their political role in America. Since the end of the Reconstruction era following the American Civil War, they have been virtually politically impotent. In the South, where slightly more than half the Black population lived in the 1960s, Black political partici- pation was almost nil until the mid 1960s, mainly because of White intimidation. And in other parts of America, Blacks wielded very little political power largely be- cause they had limited access to the electoral apparatus of the two major political parties (Democratic and Repub- lican). This lack of political control over decades seems to have fostered a pervasive sense of powerlessness in the Black community until recently.

A change occured when the impact of the Black movement of the 1960s engendered a sense of power among Blacks and thrust them into the political arena. Conse- quently, in the 1970s, they were much more assertive and involved in traditional political institutions and the electoral process. This was reflected by the increasing number of Black public office holders who were either elected or appointed to governmental positions over the

1970s.[2] This phenomenon suggests that the political

mood of the Black community had shifted from a sense of

Black powerlessness toward a feeling of Black control.

And it may explain the shift among the respondents.

The respondents' shift toward confidence in

Blacks' ability to gain political control over their

lives may also be partly related to their perception

of advances made by Blacks in various areas, especially

higher education and the professions, in the 1970s.

The data suggested that they tended to attribute the

gains made in those areas to Black political efforts,

particularly the struggle for Affirmative Action programs.

Thus, the concrete advances which they tended to view

as resulting from Black political efforts probably

heightened their level of confidence in Blacks' ability

to effect socioeconomic change through politics.

In brief, the demonstration of Black political

clout in electoral politics coupled with the perceived

gains made through the implementation of Affirmative

Action programs in the 1970s may partly account for

the respondents increased confidence in Blacks'

ability to gain more control over their own lives

through political participation.

Work Ethic vs. Openness of System

It is commonly believed in the Black community
these days that opportunities for upward social
mobility for Blacks is largely determined by the joint
operation of the traditional work ethic and the extent
to which the political and socioeconomic system in open
to Blacks. What one believes about the relative
significance of these two factors has ideological
implications.

According to the traditional work ethic,
personality traits such as industriousness, ability,
and creatively are belived to be the primary factors
which determine how high one will probably rise in
the socioeconomic structure. Opportunities for
upward social mobility, especially through job advance-
ment, are assumed to be available, and racial discrim-
ination is not considered to be a significant limit-
ing factor. This belief reflects an individualist
perspective inasmuch as Blacks are viewed as an aggre-
gation of individuals whose socioeconomic positions
in society reflect their virtues and talents.

On the other hand, the belief that upward social
mobility for Blacks is determined primarily by the extent
to which the political and socioeconomic system is open

to Blacks implies that racial discrimination is paramount and it reflects a collectivist perspective in that Blacks are viewed as a group, rather than as an aggregation of individuals.

Where did the respondents stand on this issue of the relative significance of the traditional work ethic and the openness of the system of Blacks in 1969 and 1978? The response pattern on items 1, 2, and 3 in Table 8 indicates that they tended to believe that the opening of the system had more weight than personality traits or virtues in determining job opportunities for Blacks in 1969. Furthermore, it indicates that there was no significant shift in their beliefs between 1969 and 1978.

The data in Table 8 show that when they were first surveyed in 1969, almost all of the respondents (95 percent) indicated that they believed job opportunities for Blacks were better than they were 10 years earlier in 1959 and that this was due to social change. The second survey in 1978 revealed that 86 percent believed job opportunities for Blacks had improved over the previous 10 years from 1968 to 1978. Each survey also revealed that a majority, although not as large, believed that opportunities for Black business professionals had

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TABLE 8

Percentage of Respondents Choosing the Work Ethic Alternative Instead of the Opening of the System Alternative in 1969 and 1978.

		1969 N = 44	1978 N = 44
Individual Items			

Percentage Who

1. Believed "A Black person today has the same opportunity he/she always had: his/her opportunity has always depended on ability and hard work," rather than "A Black person has a much better chance of getting ahead today than 10 years ago because of social change."

   5 %*   14%

   z = 1.224,
   p > .05

2. Believed "Getting to be an executive in a major corporation depends on ability and training: race has little or nothing to do with it," rather than "Major corporations and big financial institutions are out looking for Black executives these days."

   14%   23%

   $x^2(1) = 3.08$
   p > .05

3. Believed "Getting promoted on the job depends only on ability, creativity, and hard work," rather than "It is easier for Blacks to get promoted on jobs where there have been no Blacks up to now in managerial positions."

   23%   34%

   $x^2(1) = 3.24$
   p > .05

4. Believed "I feel my chances for getting ahead are best in a predominantly White setting," rather than "I feel my chances for getting ahead are best in a predominantly Black setting."

   48%   68%

   $x^2(1) = 7.38$,
   p < .01

Percentages are presented only for the work ethic alternative; chi-square was computed using both work ethic and openness of system responses.

*For item 1, the Binomial Test was used instead of the chi-square (x^2) test because one expected frequency was smaller than 5.

become better. Their belief that opportunities for
Blacks were improving was further indicated by a shift in
their view of their own chances of getting ahead in a
predominantly White job setting. In 1969 about half of
the respondents indicated that they felt that their
chances for getting ahead were better in a predominantly
White setting rather than a predominantly Black setting.
By 1978, however, almost 70 percent felt that a predom-
inantly White setting offered better opportunities.

This seems to suggest that the majority of the
respondents perceived a trend toward an opening-up of the
socioeconomic system to Blacks which appeared to them to
be manifested by what they believed to be Blacks increasing
accessibility to higher status jobs, especially at the
lower management levels. And it further suggests that
they attributed this perceived trend to continuing Black
pressure for social change.

Perhaps this can be explained partly in terms of:
(1) their observations of social change which appeared to
result from the impact of the Black movement in the 1960s;
(2) their perceptions of the effects of affirmative action
programs; (3) their experiences in the work place and in
the job market; and (4) the effects of the mass media in
shaping their opinions.

In the 1960s, the respondents witnessed a dramatic

increase in the number of Blacks hired or promoted in higher status jobs which were considered White preserves prior to the thrust of the Black Movement. This probably created the impression that job opportunities for Blacks had improved mainly as a result of Black pressure.

Later during the 1970s, they observed that Blacks extracted further concessions from the socioeconomic system as a result of their efforts to compel employers to implement affirmative action programs which were designed to increase job opportunities for Blacks and other underprivileged groups. Many respondents commented in their interviews that when they were looking for jobs, they got the impression that some employers were looking for Black college graduates in order to comply with guidelines and attain the goals of affirmative action programs. A few even thought they got a promotion partly because they were Black. These observations and personal experiences probably led some respondents to believe that job opportunities for Blacks were getting better.

The mass media also probably played a large part in projecting and fostering the view that the socioeconomic system was becoming more open to Blacks, especially to the Black middle class. The electronic and printed media regularly carries articles and stories about Blacks who were the first ones to be hired,

appointed, or promoted in some prestigious jobs. Also
played up are the increasing number of professional jobs
held by the numerically growing Black middle class. The
Black media, especially national magazines with wide cir-
culations such as Ebony, Essense, Black Enterprises, and
Jet, tend to focus on Black middle-class success stories.
This probably had an effect on the respondents. The images
projected by the mass media more than likely magnified
their perception of a trend toward better job opportuni-
ties for Blacks, especially those with college degrees.

These factors may help explain the respondents'
tendency to perceive a trend toward an opening-up of the
socioeconomic system to Blacks which they believed
accounted for Blacks' increasing upward social mobility.

Individual vs. System Blame

In American society there is a wide gap between
Blacks and Whites in terms of their standards of living.
Socioeconomic indicators of material well-being and
success show that Blacks, as compared with Whites,
have less education, lower status jobs, smaller incomes,
and higher poverty and unemployment rates.[3]

Blacks generally view this disparity as being due
to racial discrimination in the political socioeconomic
system. This view is so prevalent and strongly held in
the Black community that there is hardly any debate about

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whether the system operates in an anti-Black manner with
regard to providing opportunities which lead to higher
social status and relatively more economic security.
However, it is also recognized that in American society
in general, and the Black community in particular, raising
one's socioeconomic status depends largely upon one's own
efforts and initiative to improve his/her situation.
Thus, for many, the issue is, to what extent is the
racial bias of the system as opposed to the perceived
faults of Black individuals responsible for the depressed
situation of many Blacks.

Some believe that despite racial discrimination,
many Blacks are mainly responsible for their own plight
because they failed to make use of the opportunities
that were available. This point of view which emphasizes
individual responsibility represents a victim-blame
individualist perspective.

In contrast, others believe that although the
individual may improve his/her situation by taking ad-
vantage of existing opportunities, nevertheless, the
system is primarily responsible for the plight of Blacks
as individuals. This view represents a collectivist
perspective in which the system is blamed for the de-
pressed conditions of many Blacks. Let us now consider
the beliefs of the respondents with regard to this issue
in the context of Black consciousness.

The Individual - System Blame component of Black

consciousness is operationalized by the items in Table 9.

Each item is comprised of a <u>System Blame</u> alternative and

an <u>Individual Blame</u> alternative. Accepting the System

Blame alternative implies an awareness of racial dis-

crimination as the collective experience of American

Blacks, and at the same time, it expresses a positive

group identity that comes from refusing to blame one's

own group for the inequities it faces.

On the other hand, accepting the Individual Blame

alternative shows adherence to the "victim perspective"

in which the Black individual is blamed for his/her own

misfortunes.

Items 1 and 2 in Table 9 were constructed to

elicit responses which would indicate whether a respon-

dent more strongly believed that the system of racial

discrimination or the lack of qualification was the

greater determinant of the failure of many Black indivi-

duals.

The responses to these two items indicated that

the respondents shifted dramatically from a tendency to

blame the system in 1969 toward a tendency to blame the

individual in 1978. Perhaps this shift may be explained

in terms of the impact of the Black Movement in the 1960s,

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TABLE 9

Percentage of Respondents Who Chose the Individual Blame
Alternative Instead of the System Blame Alternative in
1969 and 1978.

	1969 N = 49	1978 N = 49
Individual Items		
1. Believed "Blacks may not have the same opportunities as Whites, but many Blacks haven't prepared themselves enough to make use of the opportunities that come their way," rather than "Many Blacks who don't do well in life do have good training, but the opportunities just always go to Whites."	39%	74% $x^2(1) = 24.8$, $p < .001$
2. Believed "Many Blacks have only themselves to blame for not doing better in life. If they tried harder, they'd do better," rather than, "When two qualified people, one Black and one White, are considered for the same job, the Black person won't get the job no matter how hard he/she tries."	22%	57% $x^2(1) = 33.88$, $p < .001$
3. Believed "If I am not successful in achieving my goals in life, it will be because I didn't work hard enough or use enough initiative," rather than "I expect the fact that I am Black will interfere in achieving my life goals."	55%	57% $x^2(1) = .09$ $p > .05$
4. Believed "The problem for many Blacks is that they aren't really acceptable by American Standards. Any Black person who is educated and does what is considered proper will be accepted and get ahead," rather than "The attempts to 'fit in' and do what's proper hasn't paid off for Blacks. It doesn't matter how 'proper' you are, you'll still meet serious discrimination if you're Black."	14%	20% $x^2(1) = 1.57$ $p > .05$

Percentages are presented for the Individual Blame alternative; chi-square was computed using both the Individual and System Blame responses.

the effects of affirmative action programs in the 1970s, and the respondents' own success.

The Black Movement during the 1960s, as an ideological force, probably moved the respondents toward accepting a system blame view, as opposed to an individual blame view. But as the Black Movement ebbed over the 1970s its ideological impact diminished considerably. Thus it became less of a possible contributing factor in shaping the views of the respondents.

Perhaps while the ideological force of the Black Movement was waning, the respondents re-formed their opinions increasingly in accordance with their own experiences and observations. Therefore, by the latter 1970s, maybe they had come to view their academic achievement and professional jobs as concrete evidence that many other Blacks did not make use of the educational opportunities which were also available to them. Furthermore, many of the respondents probably have friends, or know others with similar backgrounds as their own, who impoved their life situation by taking advantage of existing opportunities through education.

Their perceptions of the effects of Affirmative Action programs may have also caused them to lean toward an individual blame perspective in 1978. We have noted in the previous section that the respondents believed that there were more professional job opportunities for Blacks

in 1978 than there were in 1969. Also, many reported that they believed that some employers were seeking Black college graduates to fulfill the requirements of Affirmative Action programs. Perhaps, because they perceived an increase in opportunities for job advancement for Blacks, they became more inclined to place blame on the Black individual who failed to prepare himself/herself to make use of the opportunities which they believed existed.

The responses to item 3 in Table 9 indicated that the respondents were about evenly divided in 1969 and 1978 over whom they would blame if they failed to achieve their own goals. This suggests that the changing social climate over that period did not alter their beliefs about their own chances of achieving goals they set for themselves.

For item 4 in Table 9, choosing the individual blame alternative instead of the system blame alternative indicated that a respondent believed more strongly that racial discrimination outweighs individual merit in determining the extent to which a Black person is accepted in America. The data shows that only 14 percent of the respondents chose the individual blame alternative of item 4 in 1969 and 20 percent chose it in 1978. This indicates that the overwhelming majority retained their belief that, above all else, belonging to the White race

is the main criterion for full social acceptance by
American standards. Furthermore, it implies that they
believed that White America rejects racial assimilation.
This belief is probably related to their perceptions of
social reality and their own experiences.

Racial assimilation proceeds mainly on the prin-
ciple of racial equality. But, virtually every social
index of racial equality shows that Blacks, in relation
to Whites, are in a subordinate position. This relation-
ship probably accounts for the dominant tendency among
the respondents to believe that no matter what qualifi-
cations or virtues a Black person may have, he/she is above
all else, a member of a group that is considered inferior.
In essence, they retained their belief that education,
professional status, and personal virtues do not trans-
cend race.

Individual Mobility vs. Collective Action

We have found that the respondents tended to
believe that the socioeconomic system had opened up to
a greater extent to Blacks since 1969. We also noted
that they had shifted toward blaming Black individuals
for much of their own plight rather than the system.
These shifts may have implications for their beliefs
about the effectiveness of different strategies in
dealing with racial discrimination.

Generally, two contrasting strategies or approaches to dealing with racial discrimination are advocated by leaders in the Black community. The individual mode is one approach. It suggests an accomodating posture with its emphasis on upward social mobility of Black individuals through education and advanced training as the best way of coping with the problem of discrimination; mass protest and pressure tactics are de-emphasized.

In contrast, another approach emphasizes the collective mode which suggest a militant or assertive posture. It stresses group action, constant protest, and political pressure.

The items in Table 10, each consisting of two alternatives which represent the two contrasting approaches to dealing with racial discrimination, were used in the surveys in 1969 and 1978 to determine whether the respondents' beliefs about the relative effectiveness of the two strategies described above had changed.

The response pattern on the set of items in Table 10 indicated that a large majority of the respondents (over 80 percent on most items) retained their beliefs that collective action strategies were more effective in dealing with racial discrimination than individual mobility strategies. However, the data also revealed that they shifted significantly toward two particular individualist oriented strategies, one of which urged

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TABLE 10

Percentage of Respondents Choosing the
Collective Action Alternative in 1969 and 1978

Individual Items	1969 N = 55	1978 N = 55
1. Believed "Only if Black people pull together in Civil Rights groups and activities can anything really be done about discrimination," rather than "The best way to handle problems of discrimination is for each individual Black person to make sure he/she gets the best training possible for what he/she wants to do."	80%	60%

$x^2(1) = 13.75,$
$p < .001$

| 2. Believed "The best way to overcome discrimination is through pressure and social action," rather than "The best way to overcome discrimination is for each Black person to be even better trained and more qualified than the most qualified White person." | 80% | 76% |

$x^2(1) = .45$
$p > .05$

| 3. Believed "The only way Blacks will gain their Civil Rights is by constant protest and pressure," rather than "Blacks would be better off, and the cause of Civil Rights advanced, if there were fewer demonstrations." | 98% | 96% |

$\overline{x} = .7143,$
$p > .05$

| 4. Believed "It's true that a Black individual can get ahead by hard work, but every Black person will sometimes face discrimination or opposition that can't be solved by individual effort alone," rather than "If a Black person only tries hard enough, he/she can get ahead despite opposition from Whites." | 100% | 100% |

$\overline{x} = 0,$
$p > .05$

TABLE 10 (continued)

Individual Items	1969 N = 55	1978 N = 55
5. Believed "Depending on bi- racial committees is just a dodge. Talking and under- standing without constant protest and pressure will never solve problems of dis- crimination," rather than "Talking and understanding as opposed to protest and pressure is the best way to solve racial discrimination."	86% $x^2(1) = 1.32$ $p > .05$	80%
6. Believed "Most discrimination- atory situations simply can't be handled without organized pressure and group action," rather than "Organized action is one approach to handling discrimination, but there are probably very few situations that couldn't be handled better by Black leaders talking with White leaders."	93% $z = 2.58$, $p < .01$	73%
7. Believed "Discrimination affects all Blacks. The only way to handle it is for Blacks to or- ganize together and demand rights for all Blacks," rather than "Discrimination may affect all Blacks but the best way to handle it is for each individual Black to act like any other American — to work hard, get a good education, and mind his/her own business."	96% $z = 1.27$, $p > .05$	89%

Percentages are presented only for the collective action
alternative, chi-square was computed using both individual
mobility and collective action responses.

For items 3, 4, 6 and 7, the Binomial Test was used in-
stead of the chi-square test because for each item one
expected frequency was less than 5.

each Black individual to get the best education possible and suggested that he/she should work, primarily at the individual level, toward ending discrimination (item 1). And the other emphasized negotiations between Black and White leaders (item 6).

In Table 10 on item 1, the proportion of the respondents who indicated that they believed that making sure each Black individual acquired the best training possible for what he/she wanted to do, was more effective in dealing with discrimination than Blacks working together as a group, increased from 20 percent in 1969 to 40 percent in 1978. In order to interpret this shift it is instructive to consider the shift on item 7. Both items 1 and 7 included alternative statements which were worded similarly: the individual mobility alternative emphasized the education of each Black individual while the collective action alternative stressed a Black group effort. But in contrast to the shift on item 1, the proportion who chose the individual mobility alternative of item 7 barely increased, from 4 percent in 1969 to 11 percent in 1978.

The reason for this discrepancy between the shifts on these two items may have been that the respondent inferred that the individual mobility alternative of item 7 implied that Black individuals should not become involved in the struggle against racial

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discrimination. If so, then the element of commitment accounted for the discrepancy. This, of course, suggests that the respondent interpreted the alternative of item 1 to mean that the efficacy of a large number of committed, well-educated Black individuals was being compared with that of organized groups of Blacks.

There are probably several plausible explanations for the shift toward individual mobility on item 1. We have noted that the respondents indicated that they believed that job opportunities for Blacks, especially those who have managerial skills and credentials, had improved between 1969 and 1978. This perceived change may be one reason for the shift. Perhaps an increased proportion of the respondents had come to believe that it was possible for many committed Black individuals to become executives in corporations and supervisors in governmental agencies which presumably meant that they could then influence policy decisions and practices directly, and thereby be more effective than groups of Blacks in handling problems of discrimination.

Another plausible explanation for the shift may be related to the growth of affirmative action programs in the 1970s and the increasing tension engendered by the controversy around them.

Affirmative Action programs have been controversial from their inception. Since 1969, however, the

controversy has gotten a great deal more media attention. Blacks, among other groups, have pushed for affirmative action programs while White employers have tended to resist them, arguing mainly that they represent government intrusion and that affirmative action guidelines were not realistic because, with reference to Blacks, there were too few of them qualified for professional and skilled jobs.

Given the amount of publicity on this issue and the general level of the respondents' awareness of the controversies around racial discrimination, it seems safe to assume that they were familiar with the general arguments concerning affirmative action programs that had been advanced by many White employers, namely that they could not find qualified Blacks to fill positions in their corporations and institutions.

Perhaps an increased proportion of the respondents reasoned that if Black individuals were to get the best training possible, then there would be large pools of qualified Blacks from which those employers who were sincerely looking for qualified Blacks could find prospects to fill jobs. And, on the other hand, those White employers who were not sincere would be exposed.

Thus, maybe an increased minority of the respondents had come to believe that an individualist oriented strategy which emphasized the social and economic roles

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of committed well-educated Black individuals was more effective than a collectivist strategy in dealing with racial discrimination partly because it seemed more suitable for taking advantage of opportunities resulting from the expansion of affirmative action programs in the 1970s and exposing those White employers who attempt to vindicate their corporations and institutions of practices of racial discrimination by arguing that they cannot find Blacks with the proper qualifications to hire or promote.

Although the majority of the respondents retained their belief that collective action strategies which included confrontation and pressure tactics were more effective in handling problems of discrimination than strategies which relied on negotiations between White and Black leaders, nevertheless, there was a significant shift among the respondents toward negotiations.

According to the data, in 1969 only 7 percent of the respondents indicated that they believed that negotiations between White and Black leaders, in most instances, were more effective than pressure tactics by organized Black groups. But, by 1978, the proportion who believed that negotiations were more effective increased to 27 percent (item 6, Table 10).

Before speculating why this shift occurred, we should note that on item 5, which also included alternatives similar to those of item 6, the percentage who

chose the alternative which involved negotiations also increased, but not significantly. (The percent who chose negotiations over collective action increased from 14 percent in 1969 to 20 percent in 1978.) When we compare the negotiations alternative of item 5 and item 6, we find that the negotiation alternative of item 5 implied that negotiation was believed to be always more effective than group pressure, whereas the negotiation alternative of item 6 stated that negotiation was more effective than group pressure in most instances. This difference with reference to their relative shifts on items 5 and 6 seems to suggest that they had come to believe in the effectiveness of negotiations to a greater extent, while recognizing its limitations.

The shift toward negotiations among the respondents may reflect a change in their values and orientation regarding professionalism. Between 1969 and 1978 their status changed from that of college student to working professional. Over this period, presumably, they were socialized into their professions and thus became more professionally oriented. Moreover, the extent to which they accepted and adopted the values and behavior norms of traditional professionalism was probably greater in 1978 than it was in 1969. According to the traditional professional standard, rational discussion and conciliation are considered the best and most appropriate way to

resolve conflicts or disputes. Perhaps the respondents'
shift toward negotiations reflected a greater acceptance
of this standard.

The response pattern on item 2-5, 7 in Table 10
indicated that a large majority retained their belief
that the system of racial discrimination was more re-
sponsive to organized group pressure than to the efforts
and merits of Black individuals. Perhaps this finding
can be explained partly in terms of the impact of the
collective struggles in the 1960s and 1970s on the re-
spondents and their own experiences and observations
regarding discrimination.

The respondents witnessed the militant struggles
of the Black Movement in the 1960s and the affirmative
action movement in the 1970s and observed the social
changes they produced. They were probably impressed by
the concrete demonstration of the effectiveness of
collective action strategies employed in these movements.

On the other hand, their own observations and
experiences as Black professionals probably revealed the
limitations of individual mobility strategies. This is
underscored by the data which showed that in 1969 and
1978 all the respondents chose the alternative which
stated that "It's true that a Black individual can get
ahead by hard work, but every Black person will sometimes
face discrimination or opposition that cannot be solved

by individual effort alone" rather than the alternative which stated that "If a Black person only tries hard enough, he/she can get ahead despite opposition from Whites" (item 4).

Overall, it seems that the respondents have maintained that collective action strategies are more effective than individual mobility strategies in handling racial discrimination but it also seems that they have become somewhat less militant and less collectivist in dealing with it.

Modifiability of Racial Discrimination

Over the past two decades blatant forms of racial discrimination have been the primary target of the Black movement. Although there has been a general consensus in the Black community that the eradication of racial discrimination in America ought to be one of the main goals of Black people, the community has tended to be divided over whether that goal is attainable. The optimists believe that racial discrimination can be abolished, which implies that they believed that it is modifiable. On the other hand, the pessimists hold the opposite view. They believe that racial discrimination is basically immodifiable. Therefore, they believe that it will always exist in America. We shall now consider the

respondents' beliefs about the modifiability of racial

discrimination in 1969 and 1978 and examine whatever

changes have occurred.

According to the data we have already analyzed,

the respondents perceived less racial discrimination in

1978 than they did in 1969. This was suggested by their

ideological shifts which indicated that they perceived a

long-term trend toward increasing job opportunities for

Blacks, especially in areas which had been almost ex-

clusively White. Did this imply, then, that they had

become more optimistic, or less pessimistic, about the

prospect of eliminating racial discrimination in American

society?

The items in Table 11 comprise a modifiability of

discrimination index which taps beliefs about the nature

of racial discrimination regarding its modifiability.

Each item consists of two alternatives. Choosing one

alternative indicates that one is optimistic about elim-

inating racial discrimination in America. Presumably,

this optimism reflects faith in the American Creed of

racial equality and the belief that it can be implemented

through modification of the social system. Moreover, it

suggests that one views racial discrimination as modifi-

able in the sense that a Black person can be regarded

primarily as an individual rather than as a member of a

low status group. Thus, choosing the modifiability

TABLE 11

Percentage of Respondents Who Chose the Optimistic
Alternative Concerning Ending Discrimination Instead
Of the Pessimistic Alternative in 1969 and 1978.

Individual Items	1969 N = 55	1978 N = 55
1. Believed "Whites are so opposed to Blacks getting their rights that its practically impossible to end discrimination in America," rather than "Certainly enough Whites support the goals of the Black cause for Americans to see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination."	71% $x^2(1) = 17.27$, $p < .001$	46%
2. Believed "Racial discrimination is here to stay," rather than "People may be prejudiced but it's possible for American society to completely rid itself of open discrimination."	51% $x^2(1) = 5.90$, $p < .02$	67%
3. Believed "We'll never completely get rid of discrimination. It's part of human nature," rather than "The racial situation in America may be very complex, but with enough money and effort, it is possible to get rid of racial discrimination."	67% $x^2(1) = 0.83$, $p > .05$	73%

Percentages are presented for the pessimistic alternative,
chi-square was computed using both the pessimistic and
optimistic responses.

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alternative will be considered as an indication of an individualist perspective.

The other alternative indicates pessimism about ever achieving racial equality in American society. Choosing this alternative suggests that one believes that a Black person will always be regarded primarily as a member of a low status group. Moreover, it indicates a belief that a Black person will be treated as a member of the Black "race" rather than as an individual. Therefore, choosing this alternative will be considered as an indication of a collectivist perspective.

The data in Table 11 show that the respondents have become less pessimistic about gaining significant White support in the effort to end racial discrimination and making considerable progress toward achieving that goal. But it also reveals that they have become more pessimistic about ever eradicating it.

On item 1, there was a dramatic decrease (from 71 percent to 46 percent) in the percentage who chose the pessimistic alternative which states, "Whites are so opposed to Blacks getting their rights that it's practically impossible to end discrimination in America," rather than the optimistic alternative which states, "Certainly enough Whites support the goals of the Black cause for Americans to see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination." This shift may reflect a

change in their perception of opportunities for Blacks.

In 1969 when the Black struggle against racial discrimination was very intense, general White resistance to Black efforts to abolish racial barriers was often dramatically displayed by wide-spread, anti-Black violence and racially-oriented political campaigns (e.g., George Wallace's and Richard Nixon's campaigns for president of the U.S. in 1968). Under those conditions the respondents probably tended to view Whites as a monolithic group that was hostile toward Blacks and opposed to racial equality.

By 1978, however, their perception of White's attitudes concerning racial discrimination may have changed, partly because they tended to believe that opportunities for Blacks to move up in the socioeconomic system had increased from 1969 to 1978. This belief may be an underlying factor which may have led an increased proportion to believe further that the attitudes of a significant segment of Whites had shifted toward accomodation with regard to reducing racial discrimination. This implies, of course, that their view of Whites had tended to shift from one that was probably simplistic and monolithic to one which was sophisticated, recognizing the diversity of philosophies and the variance in racial attitudes among Whites.

This interpretation seems to be consistent with

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the data and the explanation given for the respondents'
shift toward a strategy which emphasized negotiations
rather than Black group pressure as the most effective
method of handling most problems of racial discrimination.
That shift, it was explained, suggested that an increased
proportion of the respondents believed that Whites had
become less resistant to reducing racial discrimination
and more willing to compromise and make limited conces-
sions to Blacks.

In short, the respondents may have become less
pessimistic about gaining significant White support to
reduce discrimination partly because they believed that
the socioeconomic system had become more responsive to
Blacks. This suggests that they perceived a change in
the attitudes of a large segment of Whites toward racial
accomodation.

Although the data indicated that the respondents
had become less pessimistic about reducing racial dis-
crimination, it also indicated that they became some-
what more pessimistic about ever abolishing it. This
shift toward pessimism was indicated by their responses
to items 2 and 3 in Table 11.

On item 2, the percentage who chose the pessimis-
tic alternative which stated that "Racial discrimination
is here to stay," rather than the optimistic alternative
which stated that "People may be prejudice but it's

possible for American society to completely rid itself of open discrimination" increased from 51 percent in 1959 to 67 percent in 1978.

Likewise, the percentage who chose the pessimistic alternative on item 3 that stated that "We'll never completely get rid of discrimination. It's part of human nature," rather than the optimistic alternative which stated that "The social situation in America may be very complex, but with enough money and effort, it is possible to get rid of racial discrimination" also increased, but to a much lesser extent, from 67 percent to 73 percent.

These shifts from a somewhat balanced view toward a pessimistic view of the possibility of completely wiping out racial discrimination in America may be partly explained in terms of the respondents' greater maturity, broader experience, and their deeper understanding of the dynamics of racism since leaving college, and in terms of the pervasiveness and persistance of racial discrimination in American society.

During their college years, while they were still maturing, the respondents probably tended to be more idealistic than they were 9 years later when they were adults. Perhaps this presumed idealism was reflected in their greater optimism, in 1969, about transforming America into a society free of racial discrimination.

However, since graduating from college the

respondents have functioned in the adult world.

This means that they have sought employment and worked in various jobs, bought homes and rented apartments, started families and sent their children to school, and dealt with complex social relations. Through these and other experiences perhaps more respondents became aware of the pervasiveness and the extent to which racial discrimination was practiced, especially in subtle ways. Thus, it probably appeared to an increased proportion that racial discrimination is inherent in American society, or more generally, that it is social behavior that is in accord with human nature. Therefore, maybe they became more pessimistic or cynical about the possibility of eradicating it.

In sum, the respondents' shift from a pessimistic to a balanced pessimistic/optimistic outlook with regard to gaining significant White support and making considerable progress toward the goal of eliminating racial discrimination, and their opposite shift toward more pessimism about ever eradicating it suggests that there was a growing belief among them that America was moving toward ending discrimination; however, the abolition of discrimination is a goal which is unrealizable due to racial bias stemming from human nature.

Ideological Shifts:

Former Student Activists vs. Nonactivists

In the previous sections we examined the ideological shifts that have occurred among the respondents as a whole. In this section we shall analyze the data to determine whether there is a relationship between the respondents' civil rights activity over a specified period during their college career and their ideological shifts. Moreover, we shall compare the ideological shifts of two subgroups of the respondents. One subgroup is comprised of former student activists, the respondents who indicated in the first survey in 1969 that they had been actively involved in the civil rights movement. The other subgroup is comprised of their nonactivists cohorts, those respondents who reported in the first survey that they had not participated in civil rights activities. We should keep in mind, however, that it is highly likely that some of the nonactivists became active later during their college careers after the survey of 1969, because Black student activism on Michigan's campus increased until 1970.

An examination of the data revealed that on 16 of the 20 ideological items on the survey questionnaire, the differences between the shifts of the subgroups were small, ranging from 0 to less than 20 percent; nevertheless, the shifts for the former student activists tended

to be greater toward an individualist perspective.

Table 12 includes the 4 ideological items on which the differences between the shifts of the two subgroups were significant. The data show that on 2 of the 4 items the former student activists shifted to a significant extent but the nonactivists hardly shifted at all. Furthermore, it also shows that the former student activists shifted toward choosing the individualist rather than the collectivist alternative of each item.

On item 1, the proportion of the former student activists who indicated that they believed that their chances for getting ahead were better in a predominantly Black setting rather than a predominantly White setting decreased from 53 percent in 1969 to 28 percent in 1978. The nonactivists did not shift, their proportion remained at 36 percent.

With respect to item 2, the percentage of the former student activists who indicated that they believed that groups of Blacks organized to fight racial discrimination were more effective than a large aggregation of well-trained Black individuals decreased from 83 percent in 1969 to 56 percent in 1978. The percentage of the nonactivists remained at 69 percent.

The responses to item 3 indicated that the proportion of former student activists who believed more strongly that many Blacks do not do well in life because

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TABLE 12

Responses of Former Student Activists and Nonactivists to
the Ideological Items on Which the Shifts of the Former Student
Activists Were Statistically Significant

Individual Items	1969 Act.	Nonact.	1978 Act.	Nonact.	Change Act.	Nonact.
1. Believed "I feel my chances for getting ahead are best in a predominantly Black setting" rather than "I feel my chances for getting ahead are best in a predominantly White occupational setting."	N=32 53%	N=11 36%	N=32 28%	N=11 36%	-25%	0%
Activists' Change: $x^2(1) = 8.03$, $p < .01$						
2. Believed "Only if Black people pull together in civil rights groups and activities can anything really done about discrimination," rather than "The best way to handle problems of discrimination is for each individual Black person to make sure he/she gets the best possible training for what he/she wants to do."	N=41 83%	N=13 69%	N=41 56%	N=13 69%	-27%	0%
Activists' Change: $x^2(1) = 20.85$, $p < .001$						
3. Believed "Many Blacks who don't do well in life do have good training, but the opportunities just always go to Whites," rather than "Blacks may not have the same opportunities as Whites, but many Blacks haven't prepared themselves enought to make use of the opportunities that come their way."	N=37 62%	N=11 55%	N=37 24%	N=11 45%	+38%	+10%
Activists' Change: $x^2(1) = 22.52$, $p < .001$						

they have not prepared themselves enough to make use
of opportunities, rather than Whites get all the oppor-
tunities, decreased from 62 percent in 1969 to 24 percent
in 1978. The proportion of nonactivists also decreased,
but only slightly, from 55 percent to 43 percent.

    Finally, on item 4 the percentage of the former
student activists who chose the pessimistic alternative
which stated that, "Whites are so opposed to Blacks
getting their rights that it is practically impossible to
end discrimination in America," rather than the optimistic
alternative which stated that, "Certainly enough Whites
support the goals of the Black cause for Americans to
see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination,"
decreased from 77 percent in 1969 to 41 percent in 1978.
The percentage of ... activists increased very slightly
from 53 percent to ... percent.

    This ... indicates that in 1969, the propor-
tion of former student activists who chose the collec-
tivist alternative ... item was higher than the
proportion of ... But in 1978, it was just the
opposite. The ... of former student activists
who chose the ... alternative of each item was
lower than the ... of nonactivists. Perhaps the
former student activists tended to shift more than the
nonactivists because they were more in accord with the
prevailing ideological currents in their changing social

Individual Items	1969		1978		Change	
	Act.	Nonact.	Act.	Nonact.	Act.	Nonact.
4. Believed "Whites are so opposed to Blacks getting their rights that its practically impossible to end discrimination in America," rather than "Certainly enough Whites support the goals of the Black cause for Americans to see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination."	N=39	N=15	N=39	N=15		
	77%	53%	41%	60%	-36%	+7%

Activists' Change: $x^2(1) = 28.31$, $p < .001$

TABLE 12 (continued)

they have not prepared themselves enough to make use
of opportunities, rather than Whites get all the oppor-
tunities, decreased from 62 percent in 1969 to 24 percent
in 1978. The proportion of nonactivists also decreased,
but only slightly, from 55 percent to 45 percent.

Finally, on item 4 the percentage of the former
student activists who chose the pessimistic alternative
which stated that, "Whites are so opposed to Blacks
getting their rights that it is practically impossible to
end discrimination in America." rather than the optimistic
alternative which stated that, "Certainly enough Whites
support the goals of the Black cause for Americans to
see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination,"
decreased from 77 percent in 1969 to 41 percent in 1978.
The percentage of nonactivists increased very slightly
from 53 percent to 60 percent.

This pattern indicates that in 1969, the propor-
tion of former student activists who chose the collec-
tivist alternative of each item was higher than the
proportion of nonactivists. But in 1978, it was just the
opposite. The proportion of former student activists
who chose the collectivist alternative of each item was
lower than the proportion of nonactivists. Perhaps the
former student activists tended to shift more than the
nonactivists because they were more in accord with the
prevailing ideological currents in their changing social

environment and the prevalent mood of the changing times.

When the respondents were Black students on the pre-
dominantly White campus of The University of Michigan in 1969,
they indicated they felt a sense of alienation to some ex-
tent; yet, at the same time, they also reported that they
felt a strong sense of camaraderie among themselves. At
that time the prevailing mood among Blacks in general and
Black students in particular was militant and the impact
of the Black movement was significant. Its influence among
the respondents at the time of the first survey in 1969 was
indicated by the data which showed that the majority, 75
percent, had been active in civil rights activity. This
majority was classified as former student activists whereas
the other 25 percent were classified as nonactivists.
The data also indicated that in 1969, there was a tendency
among both groups to accept the views and ideas of the
Black Movement which zealously exposed a collectivist
ideology which, (1) urged Blacks to commit themselves to
working with and among Black people; (2) advocated col-
lective action strategies against racial discrimination;
(3) blamed the system for the plight of Blacks; and (4)
tended to perceive Whites as a monolithic, hostile, anti-
Black group which was intractable on the issue of inte-
gration.

However, the data show that this tendency was

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greater among the former student activists. This seems
to suggest that the former student activists were more in
accord with the prevailing mood of militancy and sense of
togetherness among Black students in 1969.

In 1978, when the respondents were surveyed again,
however, the ideological influence of the Black Movement
had waned; the respondents had become Black professionals
who had tested the job market and worked in various
settings; there was much less social turbulence and fewer
manifestations of Black militancy than there was in 1969;
and individualism as an ideology had largely recovered
from the collectivist assaults of the 1960s. These
changed conditions, which we alluded to in the previous
section, probably accounted for much of the shifts toward
an individualist perspective that occurred among all the
respondents.

Under these changed conditions, the data indicated
that the former student activists tended to be less
collectivist or more individualist in their beliefs than
the nonactivists in 1978. This seems to suggest that
they were, again, more conforming, and influenced more
by the prevailing attitudes and values in their profes-
sional environments.

Thus, the data seems to suggest that the former
student activists tended to shift more than the non-
activist because they tended to be affected more by the

prevailing ideological currents in their changing social environments and the prevalent moods of the changing times.

To put the difference in ideological shifts between the two subgroups in proper perspective, however, the data showed that there was no significant difference between the former student activists and nonactivists in terms of their ideological orientations in 1969 and 1978. Although their ideological shifts differed significantly on a subset of 4 or 20 items, their orientations as indicated by their responses to all 20 of the items were similar at both times when the surveys were conducted.

Summary and Conclusion

In this research we focused on the changing ideology of the respondents and compared the ideological shifts of the former student activists and nonactivists. In the context of the political and socioeconomic dynamics of American society, an attempt was made to explain their ideological shifts in terms of the changes in their social status, perceptions, values, and experiences, which had occurred since the time when they were Black working-class students at the University of Michigan in 1969 to the time when they had become Black professionals -- new members of the Black Middle Class -- pursuing their careers in 1978.

Their beliefs about Blacks' ability to influence
political decisions changed. According to the sample
data, both the former student activists and nonactivists
were about evenly divided over the question of whether
Blacks could influence political decisions in 1969. How-
ever, by 1978 a large majority of both subgroups believed
that Blacks could have a significant impact on the poli-
tical process in America. This shift was probably related
to their perceptions of political gains made by Blacks at
different governmental levels which were evidenced partly
by an increased number of elected and appointed Black
officials in government. It seems that they have come to
believe that Blacks could make the system respond, to
some extent, to their interests through political parti-
cipation.

Their beliefs about the significance of the work
ethic as it relates to Black upward social mobility did not
change. A large majority of both subgroups retained their
beliefs that the openness of the socioeconomic system was
a greater determinant of a Black person's chances of
moving up in the social structure than his/her abilities
or virtues, and that race, rather than personal attributes,
was the primary factor which determined social acceptance
in America. They perceived a long-term trend over the
past two decades, from 1959 to 1978, toward increasing
job opportunities for Blacks, especially in corporations

at the lower management and junior executive levels.

The data seemed to suggest that this perceived trend, which was attributed to social change, may have had greater significance for the former student activists than it had for the nonactivists in terms of their beliefs about their own career opportunities. The proportion of former student activists who indicated that they felt that their chances for getting ahead were better in a predominantly White setting rather than a predominantly Black setting increased from about 50 percent to almost 75 percent, while the proportion of nonactivists who believed likewise remained at 67 percent.

The respondents shifted dramatically from a tendency to blame the system for the plight of Blacks toward a tendency to blame Black individuals for their own misfortunes. Although the shift was significant for both the former student activists and nonactivists, the former student activists shifted to a greater extent. This shift toward blaming Black individuals was probably related to the diminished ideological influence of the Black Movement and their perception of increased opportunities for Blacks. But at the personal level, both the former student activists and nonactivists remained about evenly divided over whom they would blame for their own failure. Maybe this meant that they tended to view their

misfortunes, in comparison with the misfortune of other Blacks, as being less determined by changes in external conditions.

With regard to strategies to end racial discrimination, a very large majority of the former student activists and nonactivists retained their belief that collective action strategies were more effective in dealing with racial discrimination than individual oriented strategies. However, an increased minority of both subgroups had come to believe that strategies emphasizing negotiations between Black and White leaders were more effective than pressure tactics by Black groups in most cases involving discrimination. And an increased minority of the former student activists, but not the nonactivists, had also come to believe that strategies designed to greatly increase the number of well-educated Blacks would be more effective than collective action strategies which emphasized pressure tactics. These shifts seemed to suggest that the respondents, especially the former student activists, had shifted toward a less militant posture.

This shift toward moderation on the part of the former student activists was consistent with their dramatic shift from pessimism toward optimism about gaining significant White support in the effort to eliminate racial discrimination. The proportion who

indicated that they believed that enough Whites support the goals of the Black cause for Americans to see considerable progress in wiping out discrimination increased from 23 percent in 1969 to 59 percent in 1978, while the proportion for the nonactivist decreased very slightly from 47 percent to 40 percent. It seemed that the former student activists perceived greater changes toward racial accomodation than the nonactivists.

However, both subgroups' vision of a society free of racial discrimination seemed to have become dimmer. They tended to become somewhat more pessimistic about ever eradicating racial discrimination, mainly because an increased majority believed that it stemmed from human nature.

Overall, the data indicated that the respondents have become less collectivist and militant, and comparatively, it showed that the former student activists shifted more toward an individualist view than the non-activists, whose views to a large extent remained rather stable. Some major factors which may help explain their shifts are (1) the socializing effects of their college education and the process of professionalization which fosters individualism and political moderation, (2) the diminished ideological influence of the Black Movement, and (3) their perception of a political and socioeconomic trend toward racial accomodation.

Even though the former student activists shifted to a greater extent than the nonactivists, there was no significant difference between them in terms of their ideological orientations in 1969 and 1978. The greater shifts among the former student activists was accounted for by their tendency to be consistently more collectivist than the nonactivists in 1969 when they were students and the Black Movement was strong, but consistently less collectivist than the nonactivists in 1978 when they were professionals and the mood of the country was conservative. This seems to suggest that they were influenced more than the nonactivists by the prevailing ideological currents in their changing social environments and the prevailing mood of the changing times.

Footnotes to Chapter V

[1]Franklin E. Frazier Black Bourgeoisie. New York:
Collier Books, 1962.

[2]The number of Blacks elected to public office has
continued the growth which began in the mid-1960s. In
July, 1977, 4,311 Blacks were holding office, repre-
senting an 8 percent increase over the 1976 figure of
3,979.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population
Reports, Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 80, The Social
and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United
States: An Historical View, 1790-1978, (W. S. Government
Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1979), pp. 168-188.

[3]The U.S. Department of Commerce reported the
following statistics on the relative socioeconomic
status of Blacks and Whites in America.

Education: In 1978, about 1 out of 10 Black men and
women 25 to 34 years old had completed 4 or more years
of college as compared with 2 out of 4 White men and
women in this age group.

Changes in Income of Families, 1974 to 1977: Black
median income as a percent of White median income
declined from 60 percent in 1974 to 57 percent in 1977.

Poverty: In 1977, as in previous years, the poverty rate
was much higher for Blacks (31 percent) than for Whites
(9 percent).

Unemployment Rates: From 1975 to 1977, the jobless rate
for Blacks declined slightly from 14.7 percent to 13.9
percent. In contrast, the rate declined substantially
for Whites falling from 7.8 percent in 1975 to 6.2 per-
cent in 1977.

Occupation: Blacks continued to lag behind Whites in the
proportion holding high status jobs. In 1977, the pro-
portion of Black men and women employed in white-collar
jobs (professional, managerial, sales, and clerical
occupations) were 23 and 44 percent, respectively. In
contrast, the corresponding proportions for White men
and women were 42 and 66 percent, respectively.

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population
Reports, Special Studies, Series P-23, No. 80, The Social
and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United
States: An Historical View, 1790-1978 (U.S. Government
Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1979), pp. 168-188.
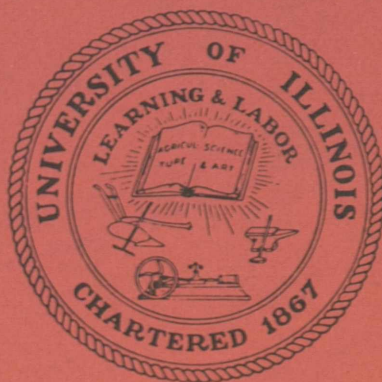
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