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The American Political Science Review, Volume 57, Issue 1 (Mar., 1963), 24-44.

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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS AND NEGRO VOTER REGISTRATION IN THE SOUTH*

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The vote is widely considered the southern Negro's most important weapon in his struggle for full citizenship and social and economic equality. It is argued that "political rights pave the way to all others."[1] Once Negroes in the South vote in substantial numbers, white politicians will prove responsive to the desires of the Negro community. Also, federal action on voting will be met with less resistance from the white South—and southerners in Congress—than action involving schools, jobs, or housing.

Such, at least, seems to have been the reasoning behind the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960, both of which deal primarily with the right to vote.[2] Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and his predecessor, Herbert Brownell, are both reported to believe that the vote provides the southern Negro with his most effective means of advancing toward equality, and recent actions of the Justice Department seem to reflect this view.[3] Many Negro leaders share this belief in the over-riding importance of the vote. Hundreds of Negro registration drives have been held in southern cities and counties since 1957.[4] Martin Luther King, usually considered an advocate of non-violent direct action, recently remarked that the most significant step Negroes can take is in the "direction of the voting booths."[5] The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, historically identified with courtroom attacks on segregation, is now enthusiastically committed to a "battle of the ballots."[6] In March, 1962, the Southern Regional Council announced receipt of foundation grants of $325,000 to initiate a major program to increase Negro voter registration in the South.[7] The Congress of Racial Equality, the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee are among the organizations now participating in the actual registration drives.

While the great importance of the vote to Negroes in the South can hardly be denied, some careful observers are skeptical about the extent to which registration drives can add to the number of Negroes who are already registered. Southern Negroes overwhelmingly possess low social status, relatively small incomes, and limited education received in inferior schools. These attributes are associated with low voter turnout among all populations.[8] The low voting rates of Negroes in the South are, to perhaps a large extent, a result of these factors more than a consequence of *direct political* discrimination by the white community. More-

* This study has been supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to the Institute for Research in Social Science of the University of North Carolina. The first named author holds a Senior Award for Research on Governmental Affairs from the Social Science Research Council. We wish to express our gratitude to these organizations for providing the resources needed to engage in this analysis. Professors V. O. Key, Jr., Warren E. Miller, and Allan P. Sindler have commented generously upon an earlier version of this paper. Professor Daniel O. Price afforded us the benefit of his counsel on statistical problems throughout the preparation of the article. While we have learned much from these colleagues, neither they nor the organizations named above should be held responsible for the contents of this article.

[1] *New York Times*, January 7, 1962. See also H. L. Moon, *Balance of Power: the Negro Vote* (Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, 1949), p. 7 and *passim*.

[2] 71 Stat. 635; 74 Stat. 86. *Cf.* U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *1959 Report* (Washington, 1959); *1961 Report*, Vol. I, "Voting" (Washington, 1961).

[3] *New York Times*, January 7, 1962; Louis E. Lomax, "The Kennedys Move in on Dixie," *Harpers Magazine*, May 1962, pp. 27–33.

[4] *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 1961; *New York Times*, July 10, 1961.

[5] Baltimore *Afro-American*, October 7, 1961; *New York Times*, August 17, 1961.

[6] The 1962 Atlanta, Georgia, national convention of the NAACP had the "Battle of the Ballots" as its theme. Raleigh (N.C.) *News and Observer*, June 24, 1962.

[7] *New York Times*, March 29, 1962. Louis E. Lomax, *op. cit.*

[8] For useful summaries of the literature see Robert E. Lane, *Political Life* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), ch. 16; and Seymour M. Lipset *et al.*, "The Psychology of Voting," in G. Lindzey (ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954), Vol. II, pp. 1126–1134.

over, the low status, income, and education of southern whites foster racial prejudice.[9] Thus poverty and ignorance may have a double-barrelled effect on Negro political participation by decreasing the Negroes' desire and ability to participate effectively while increasing white resistance to their doing so. Negro voting in the South is not, according to this line of argument, easily increased by political or legal means. A large, active, and effective Negro electorate in the South may have to await substantial social and economic change.

Despite the current interest in the political participation of southern Negroes, the literature of political science tells us little about the factors which facilitate or impede it. A theoretical concern as old as political science—the relative importance of socio-economic and political factors in determining political behavior—is raised when one addresses this problem. Can registration drives, legal pressures on the region's voter registrars, abolition of poll taxes, revision of literacy tests, and similar legal and political reforms have a significant impact on Negro registration in the former confederate states? Or do these efforts deal merely with "super-structure," while the social and economic realities of the region will continue for generations to frustrate achievement of Negro parity at the ballot box? Social scientists owe such a heavy, if largely unacknowledged, debt to Karl Marx that most would probably assume the second alternative to be more valid. But the tradition of James Madison, recognizing the importance of social and economic factors but also emphasizing the significance of "auxiliary" governmental arrangements, offers theoretical support for the former possibility.

A single article cannot hope to answer such a broad question, but we can attack part of it. In this article we offer a detailed analysis of the relationships between variations in rates of Negro voter registration in southern counties and the social and economic characteristics of those counties. While we shall not be directly concerned with political variables, the analysis has an obvious relevance for their importance. The more successful the explanation of the problem with socio-economic variables, the less imperative the demand to examine political and legal factors. Alternatively, if we can account for only a small part of the variance with socio-economic factors, the stronger the case for abandoning socio-economic determinism and adding political and legal variables to the analysis.[10]

I. THE DATA AND THE APPROACH

While the literature offers no comprehensive effort to account for variations in Negro voter registration in the South, previous studies of southern politics suggest a number of specific influences. Drawing upon this literature, we collected data on 20 social and economic characteristics of southern counties (counting Virginia's independent cities as counties). Some of these items, such as per cent of population Negro or per cent of population urban, could be taken directly from the U.S. Census. Others, such as per cent of nonwhite labor force in white collar occupations or white and nonwhite median income, were derived from census figures but required calculations of varying degress of complexity for each county. Still other items, such as per cent of population belonging to a church or the number of Negro colleges in each county, came from noncensus sources.[11] Since our focus is on Negro registration, 108 counties with populations containing less than one per cent Negroes were excluded from the analysis. All other counties for which 1958 registration data were available by race were

[9] Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, "Attitudes Toward Desegregation," *Scientific American*, Vol. 195 (1956), pp. 35–39; B. Bettelheim and M. Janowitz, *The Dynamics of Prejudice* (New York; 1950); Melvin M. Tumin, *Desegregation: Resistance and Readiness* (Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 195 and *passim*. James W. Vander Zanden, "Voting on Segregationist Referenda," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 25 (1961), pp. 92–105, finds the evidence in support of the relationship in voting on segregationist referenda in the South "inconsistent and even contradictory . . . this study seems to suggest that the socio-economic factor may not play as simple or as critical a role as some of us doing research in this field have been prone to assign it" (p. 105).

[10] In addition to the problem of the relative importance of political variables, we are postponing consideration of still another possibility—that variations in state systems (social, economic, and political) account for a significant proportion of the variation in Negro registration among southern counties.

[11] A complete list of sources used to obtain county frequencies for the independent variables used in this analysis would be too lengthy to reproduce here. A mimeographed list will be supplied by the authors upon request.

We are indebted to the following research assistants for their help in collecting these data: Lawton Bennett, Lewis Bowman, Barbara Bright, Jack Fleer, Donald Freeman, Douglas Gatlin, and Richard Sutton. All told, the collection and coding of these data took one man-year of work.

included.[12] This selection procedure gave us a total of 997 counties for the analysis of Negro registration and 822 for the consideration of white registration.[13]

While this represents the most massive collection of data ever brought to bear upon the problem of political participation by southern Negroes, it is subject to several limitations.

To begin with, the measure of the dependent variable is two steps removed from a direct measure of the voting turnout of individuals. Registration rather than voting figures had to be employed because they are available by race whereas the number of Negroes actually voting is not known. This tends to exaggerate the size of the active Negro electorate since, for a number of reasons, some registered Negroes seldom if ever exercise their franchise. Moreover, voting lists in rural areas are often out of date, containing the names of many bonafide residents of New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles, to say nothing of local graveyards. In some states, the payment of a poll tax is the nearest equivalent of voter registration and numerous exemptions from the tax make lists of poll tax payers not strictly comparable to the enfranchised population. Finally, statewide statistics on voter registration (or poll tax payment) by race are collected only in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina and Virginia. In the remaining states, the number of registered Negro voters must be obtained from estimates made by county registrars, newsmen, politicians, and the like. Nonetheless, when analyzed with caution, the sometimes crude data on Negro voter registration can throw considerable light on Negro voting in the South.

The measure of the dependent variable is further removed from the actual behavior of individuals in that it consists of the percentage of all voting age Negroes who are registered to vote in each southern county. This employment of *areal* rather than *individual* analysis narrows the question we can examine. Rather than an unqualified examination of the relationship of social and economic characteristics to Negro registration, the effort must be understood to focus on the relationship of social and economic characteristics of given areas (counties) to variations in Negro registration among those areas. Accordingly, the data furnish no evidence of the sort afforded by opinion surveys directly linking political behavior to individual attributes. But they do permit conclusions linking varying registration rates to county attributes. Compensation for the loss of the former type of evidence is found in the acquisition of the latter type, which cannot be secured from surveys because they are conducted in a small number of counties. Our approach maximizes what we can say about counties, then, at the same time that it minimizes what we can say about individuals.

Another limitation stems from the fact that our measures capture an essentially static picture of both the characteristics of southern counties and of the relationship of their characteristics to variations in Negro registration. If data were available on Negro registration, at the county level, for earlier points in time, the analysis could be geared principally to rates of change. Only since the creation of the Civil Rights Commission, however, have adequate county registration data become available. We are necessarily limited, therefore, to an analysis based on *areal* rather than *temporal* variation.

A final limitation lies in the statistical approach employed here, which is that of correlation and regression analysis.[14] The coefficient of correlation (r) is a measure of the association between different variables when each variable is expressed as a series of measures of a quantitative characteristic. The value of the measure varies from 0 (no association between independent and dependent variables) to 1.0 (one variable perfectly predicts the other). A positive correlation indicates that as one variable increases the other also increases; a negative correlation indicates an inverse relationship—as one variable increases, the other decreases. We shall first consider simple correlations, describing the association between per cent of Negroes registered and each of the social and economic characteristics of southern counties. In order to make a better estimate of the independence of these relationships, we shall also present partial correlations, which measure the remaining association between two variables when the contribution of a third variable has been taken into account. Finally, we shall employ multiple correlation (R) in order to determine the strength of association between all our inde-

[12] Voter registration rates, by race, are presented in U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *1959 Report* and *1961 Report*, Vol. I, "Voting." The 1958 registration data, contained in the *1959 Report*, are more complete and were used for all states except Tennessee. The 1960 figures, printed in the *1961 Report*, are the only ones available for Tennessee.

[13] There are 1136 counties in the 11 southern states, 1028 of which have populations containing at least 1 per cent Negroes.

[14] For a good discussion of correlation analysis see M. J. Hagood and D. O. Price, *Statistics for Sociologists* (New York, 1952), chs. 23 and 25.

pendent variables and Negro registration.

While these measures are efficient devices for determining the strength and direction of association between the variables with which we are concerned, a caveat is in order. Correlations do not reflect the *absolute level* of the variables. Thus, a given amount and regularity of change in Negro registration will produce the same correlation whether the actual level of Negro registration is high or low. Only for the more important variables will we look beneath the correlations to examine the level of Negro registration.

In the analysis which follows, we shall first consider the development of Negro registration and compare the distribution of white and Negro registration rates. Then we shall examine the correlations between a battery of social and economic variables and Negro voter registration in order to determine the extent to which the former are predictive of the latter for the South as a whole. The same social and economic factors will be correlated with the registration rate of whites to ascertain the extent to which the factors are related to voter registration in general, rather than to Negro registration alone. Finally, the multiple correlation between all the social and economic variables and Negro voter registration will be presented, and conclusions and implications will be drawn from the analysis.

II. NEGRO VOTER REGISTRATION: AN OVERVIEW

Immediately after *Smith* v. *Allwright* declared the white primary unconstitutional in 1944, the number and proportion of Negro adults registered to vote in the southern states increased with startling speed (Table I). Before this historic decision, about 250,000 Negroes (5 per cent of the adult nonwhite population) were thought to be registered voters. Three years after the white primary case, both the number and proportion of Negro registered voters had doubled. By 1952, about 20 per cent of the Negro adults were registered to vote. Since then, however, the rate of increase has been less impressive. In 1956, the authoritative Southern Regional Council estimated that about 25 per cent of the Negro adults were registered. Four years, two Civil Rights Acts, and innumerable local registration drives later, the proportion of Negro adults who were registered had risen to only 28 per cent. Of course, the fact that Negroes held their own during this period is a significant accomplishment when one considers such factors as heavy outmigration, increased racial tensions stemming from the school desegregation crisis, the adoption of new voter restrictions in some states, and the stricter application of old requirements in other areas.

TABLE I. ESTIMATED NUMBER AND PER CENT OF VOTING AGE NEGROES REGISTERED TO VOTE IN 11 SOUTHERN STATES, 1940–60

Year	Estimated Number of Negro Registered Voters	% of Voting Age Negroes Registered as Voters
1940	250,000	5%
1947	595,000	12
1952	1,008,614	20
1956	1,238,038	25
1958	1,266,488	25
1960	1,414,052	28

Sources: Derived from U. S. Census data on nonwhite population and Negro registration estimates in G. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York, 1944), p. 488; M. Price, *The Negro Voter in the South* (Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Regional Council, 1957), p. 5; Southern Regional Council, "The Negro Voter in the South—1958," *Special Report* (mimeo.), p. 3; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, *1959 Report* and *1961 Report*, Vol. I, "Voting."

Figure 1 shows the 1958 distribution of southern counties according to level of voter registration for Negroes and whites. The point most dramatically demonstrated by the figure is that Negro registration is still much lower than white registration. In 38 per cent of the counties, less than 20 per cent of the adult Negroes are registered, whereas less than 1 per cent of the counties have so few whites registered. Indeed, the most common (modal) situation for Negroes is a registration below 10 per cent of the potential; the most common situation for whites is a registration in excess of 90 per cent. Nevertheless, the range of Negro registration in the South is sizeable; in a significant minority of cases, the level of Negro registration compares favorably with that of white southerners.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CORRELATES OF NEGRO REGISTRATION

What accounts for the wide variation in Negro voter registration rates? The simple correlations between the per cent of the voting age Negroes registered to vote and 20 social and economic characteristics of southern counties are presented in the first column of Table II.[15]

[15] All computations were made on the University of North Carolina's UNIVAC 1105 high-

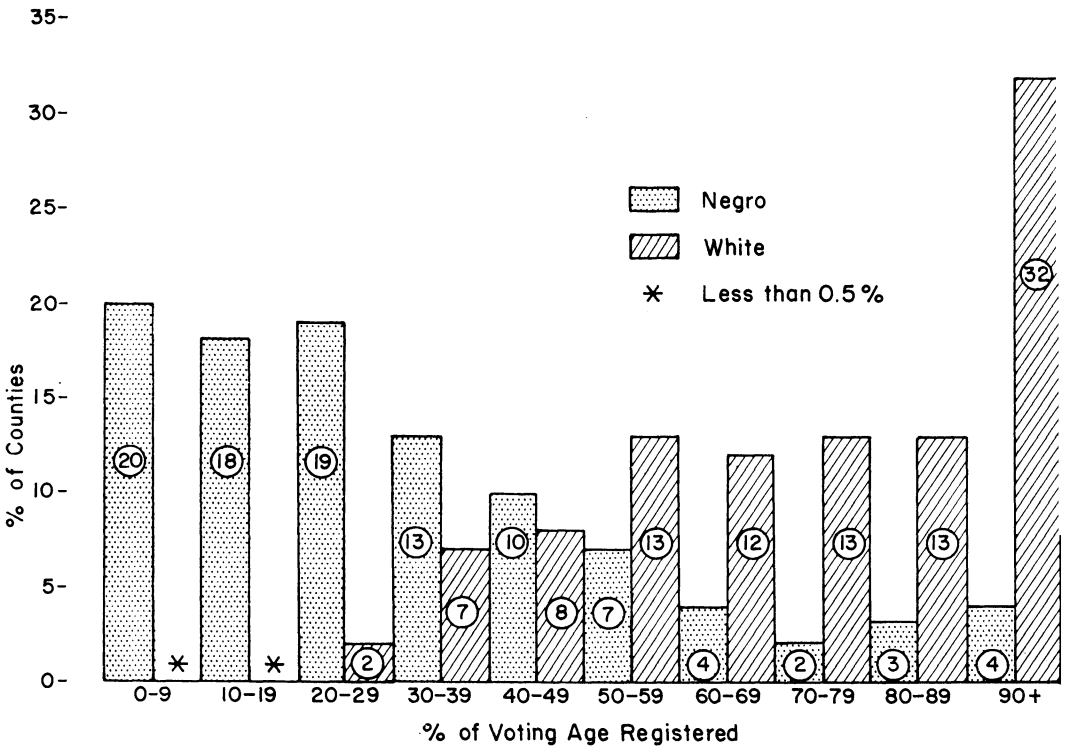


FIGURE 1. White and Negro Registration Rates in Southern Counties.

Negro Concentration. In most political settings, the concentration of an ethnic or occupational group in a geographical area provides reinforcement of common values sufficient to produce more active political participation. But southern Negroes are in a peculiarly subordinate position. And the larger the proportion of Negroes in an area, the more intense the vague fears of Negro domination that seem to beset southern whites. Thus in virtually every study of southern politics, the proportion of Negroes in the population has emerged as a primary explanatory variable.[16]

It is not surprising, therefore, that the per cent of Negroes in the county population in 1950 is more strongly associated with the county's rate of Negro registration than any other social and economic attribute on which we have data. The negative value of the simple correlation (−.46) verifies the expectation that smaller proportions of Negroes register in those counties where a large percentage of the population is Negro. This does not mean, however, that the decline in Negro registration associ-

speed digital computer. The inaccuracy of some of the registration figures tends to reduce the magnitude of all correlations obtained by this analysis. The assumption of linearity underlying the computation of r also reduces the size of the correlations where the relationship between dependent and independent variables is, in fact, a curvilinear one. It is therefore safe to assume that the r's reported in this article err in the conservative direction.

[16] V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics* (New York, 1949) gives little attention to Negro voting since it was of little importance at the time he wrote (see, however, p. 518). His stress upon the overriding importance of Negro concentration for all aspects of southern politics makes his study highly relevant, nonetheless. Other works specifically on Negro voting which stress the importance of Negro concentration include: James F. Barnes, *Negro Voting in Mississippi*, M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1955; Margaret Price, *The Negro and the Ballot in the South* (Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Regional Council, 1959); H. D. Price, *The Negro and Southern Politics: A Chapter of Florida History* (New York: New York University Press, 1957); Donald Strong, "The Future of the Negro Voter in the South," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 26 (Summer, 1957), pp. 400–407; United States Commission on Civil Rights, *1961 Report*, Vol. I, "Voting."

TABLE II. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN COUNTY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PER CENT OF VOTING AGE NEGROES REGISTERED TO VOTE, BY COUNTY, IN 11 SOUTHERN STATES

County Characteristics	Simple Correlations (r)	Partial Correlations, Controlling for Per Cent Negro, 1950
Per cent of nonwhite labor force in white collar occupations	+.23	+.15
Nonwhite median school years completed	+.22	+.01
Nonwhite median income	+.19	+.02
Per cent of total church membership Roman Catholic	+.15	+.10
Per cent increase in population, 1940–50	+.08	.00
Per cent of labor force in manufacturing	+.08	+.09
White median income	+.08	−.03
Per cent of population urban	+.07	−.02
Percentage point difference in per cent population Negro, 1900–50	+.04	−.02
Per cent of total church membership Jewish	+.004	+.01
Difference in white-nonwhite median school years completed	−.02	−.02
Difference in white-nonwhite median income	−.02	−.05
Number of Negro colleges in county	−.05	+.01
Per cent of total church membership Baptist	−.10	−.07
Per cent of population belonging to a church	−.17	+.01
Per cent of labor force in agriculture	−.20	−.07
White median school years completed	−.26	−.15
Per cent of farms operated by tenants	−.32	−.13
Per cent of population Negro in 1900	−.41	−.01
Per cent of population Negro in 1950	−.46	—

Note: No tests of significance are reported in this paper since the correlations are based upon a complete enumeration rather than a sample.

ated with increasing Negro concentration occurs at a constant rate. If the relationship between these two variables is examined over the entire range of southern counties, we see that increases in the proportion Negro from 1 per cent to about 30 per cent are not accompanied by general and substantial declines in Negro registration rates (Figure 2). As the proportion Negro increases beyond 30 per cent, however, Negro registration rates begin to decline very sharply until they approach zero at about 60 per cent Negro and above. There would seem to be a critical point, at about 30 per cent Negro, where white hostility to Negro political participation becomes severe.

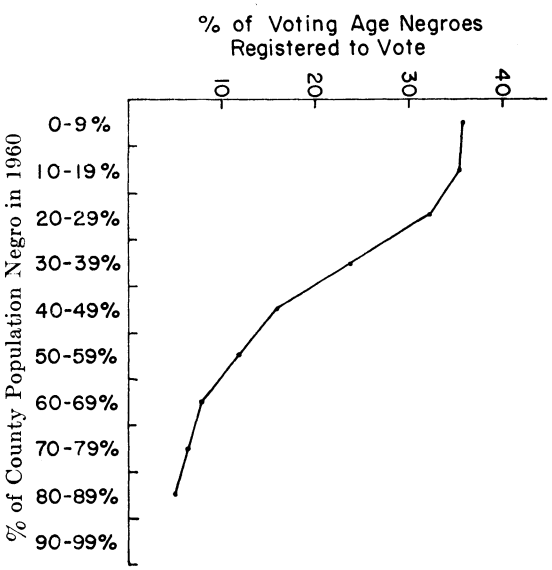


FIGURE 2. Median % of Voting Age Negroes Registered to Vote by % of County Population Negro in 1950: 11 Southern States.

One reason Negro concentration is such a powerful explanatory factor in analyzing southern politics may be that it is related to so many other social and economic characteristics of the region's counties. The simple correlation between per cent Negro in 1950 and per cent of farms operated by tenants is +.49; the correlation with non-white median income is −.40; with non-white school years completed, −.47; with per cent of the labor force in agriculture, +.30; with per cent of the total population belonging to a church, +.38. Such characteristics as these are in turn related to variation in rates of Negro voter registration. It is possible that these related factors rather than Negro concentration, viewed largely as an index of white atti-

tudes, account for the −.46 correlation between per cent Negro and per cent registered to vote.

The partial correlations between Negro registration and Negro concentration, controlling separately for the contribution of all other county characteristics, reveals that this is not the case: Negro registration in southern counties goes down as the proportion of Negroes goes up regardless of the other characteristics of the counties. Only one county characteristic is so closely related to both Negro registration in 1958 and Negro concentration in 1950 that the strength of their association drops when its contribution is taken into account—and this characteristic is an earlier measurement of the same independent variable. Controlling for per cent of Negroes in the population in 1900 reduces the correlation between 1950 Negro concentration and registration to −.21. Even with this control, the independent tendency of Negro registration to decrease in counties currently containing more Negroes is not eliminated, though it is reduced substantially.

Let us be clear on what a partial correlation does. It is designed to give us, as indicated above, the strength of association between two variables that remains after the contribution of a relevant third variable is taken into account. But when the third variable is introduced into the equation, so are all of the additional hidden variables that are associated with it. The magnitude of the partial correlation will accordingly be reduced not only by any contribution of the third variable to the association between the two original variables, but also by any contribution of factors that are associated with the third variable. This means that, when we attempt to examine the contribution of a third variable by computing partial correlations, we can be certain about its contribution only when the results are negative. That is, if the partial correlation is not much smaller than the simple correlation, we can be sure that the third variable is not responsible for the magnitude of the simple correlation. When the partial correlation is substantially smaller, however, we cannot conclude that the third variable *alone* is responsible for the magnitude of the simple correlation. It happens in the present instance that almost all of the county characteristics are similarly associated with Negro concentration in both 1900 and 1950. As a result, virtually all of the factors that contribute slightly to the correlation of Negro registration with 1950 Negro concentration are added to the contribution that 1900 Negro concentration makes to the correlation. The result is that Negro concentration in 1900 *and the hidden factors related to it* account for about half of the magnitude of the association between 1950 Negro concentration and Negro registration.

Before we conclude that Negro concentration at the turn of the century is as important as mid-century Negro concentration for current variations in Negro registration, we need to consider both the nature of the two measures and the detailed relationships of the variables. The two measures are of the same county characteristic, differing only in the point in time from which they were taken. And the characteristic they reflect cannot reasonably be thought to act directly on Negro registration. Today's lower rates of Negro registration in counties where Negroes constitute a larger portion of the population certainly do not stem from any tendency of Negroes to crowd one another out of registration queues! Even more evident is the fact that the percentage of Negroes in a county's population over half a century ago cannot have a direct effect on current rates of Negro registration. Both measures appear to be indexes of county characteristics (most importantly, white practices and attitudes on racial questions) that are of direct consequence for Negro registration.

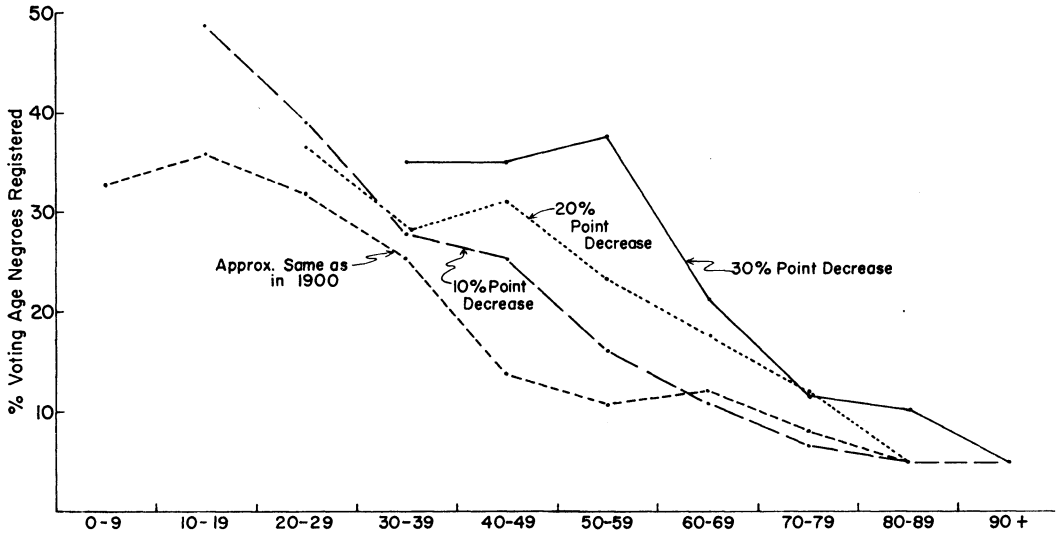
The 1900 measure was included in the analysis on the assumption that practices and attitudes produced by heavy Negro population may persist long after the Negroes have died or left for more attractive environs. Earlier research has suggested that Negro concentration around the turn of the century—when southern political practice was crystallizing in its strongly anti-Negro pattern—may be as important as current Negro concentration for rates of Negro political participation.[17] Since the proportions of Negroes in different southern counties have not decreased at uniform rates (and have even increased in some counties), the measures at the two points in time afford an opportunity to test this hypothesis. And it seems to be supported by the fact that Negro concentration in 1900 is almost as highly (and negatively) correlated with Negro registration (−.41) as is Negro concentration a half century later. This large simple correlation, added to the decrease in the correlation between 1950 Negro concentration and registration when 1900 Negro concentration is controlled, is impressive evidence of the stability of southern racial practices. The virtual absence of correlation (+.04) between Negro registration and the percentage point difference in the proportion of population Negro between 1900 and 1950 seems to point to the same conclusion.[18]

[17] On this point see H. D. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 41ff.

[18] See H. D. Price, *op. cit.*

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude either that 1900 Negro concentration is as important as 1950 Negro concentration for Negro registration, or that decreases in Negro concentration are not associated with increasing Negro voter registration. When we reverse the partialling process, and control for Negro concentration in 1950, the correlation between current Negro registration and 1900 Negro concentration disappears (it becomes −.01). The 1900 simple correlation accordingly seems to come from stable racial practices that in turn reflect a large measure of stability in Negro concentration and related county characteristics. The 1900 Negro concentration in itself has no autonomous relationship to present rates of Negro registration.

Moreover, decreases in Negro concentration are not as inconsequential as they would appear from the small simple correlation obtained from percentage point decreases. The lack of correlation seems to be an artifact of our crude measure. The largest percentage *point* decreases in Negro population have occurred in counties with very high Negro proportions in 1900, and most of these counties still have heavy concentrations of Negro population. When one looks at the relationship between registration and decreases in Negro concentration, holding constant the proportion of the population Negro in 1900, several heretofore hidden relationships emerge (Figure 3). (1) In counties with heavy (over 70 per cent) Negro concentrations in 1900, decreases in the proportion Negro seem to make little difference—their Negro concentration was still relatively high in 1950 and the proportion of Negroes registered is negligible. (2) In counties with relatively few (less than 30 per cent) Negroes in 1900, rates of Negro registration tend to be high whether a decline in the proportion Negro was experienced or not. A decline in Negro concentration in these counties, however, is associated with a somewhat higher rate of Negro registration than in those counties where the division of the two races remained approximately the same between 1900 and 1950. (3) In counties with moderate (30 to 70 per cent) Negro concentrations in 1900, a decline in Negro concentration is clearly related to higher Negro voter registration. Moreover, the larger the decrease in the Negro population percentage, the higher the registration. The average county in this moderate group with a 30 percentage point decrease in Negro proportions has a voter registration rate double or triple that of the average county which did not experience significant change in the numerical balance between colored and white inhabitants.



No. of Counties										
-30	—	—	—	1	7	13	15	9	2	4
-20	—	—	10	27	44	34	14	14	6	0
-10	—	68	65	45	48	52	31	16	11	1
Same	172	43	39	43	30	27	20	8	3	0

FIGURE 3. Median % of Voting Age Negroes Registered to Vote, by County Negro Concentration in 1900 and % Point Change since 1900.

The proportion of the county population which is Negro is the single most important social and economic factor for explaining its rate of Negro voter registration. The −.46 correlation accounts for about 20 per cent (r^2) of the variation in Negro registration rates, an unusually high explanatory power for any variable in the complex world of political and social relationships. But it leaves room for considerable fluctuation in registration rates unrelated to the per cent of Negroes in the population. This "unexplained" fluctuation may be the result of random and idiosyncratic factors, of political variables[19] which have been excluded from this analysis, or the result of the operation of other social and economic factors. In the remainder of this paper we shall examine this last possibility.

Negro Attributes. The higher the educational level, occupation, or income of a person, the more likely he is to participate actively in politics: these are among the more strongly supported generalizations in contemporary research on political participation.[20] Moreover, these three factors are probably a pretty good index of the size of the county's Negro middle class. It is widely believed by students of Negro politics that the low rate of voter registration by southern Negroes is partly the result of a lack of leadership.[21] Only when there is a pool of educated and skillful leaders whose means of livelihood is not controlled by whites can sufficient leadership and political organization develop to ensure a relatively high rate of Negro registration in the South.

Our data support both lines of argument. The three largest positive correlations with Negro voter registration are per cent of the nonwhite labor force in white collar occupations (+.23), the median number of school years completed by nonwhites (+.22), and the median income of nonwhites (+.19). These are simple correlations, however, and fairly small ones at that. It is quite possible that they are largely, if not entirely, the result of some third factor associated both with Negro registration rates and with Negro education, occupation, and income. The large negative correlation of Negro concentration with Negro registration suggests that the percentage of the population Negro in 1950 is the most likely prospect as a key third variable. This expectation is heightened by the fact that it is also substantially correlated with Negro school years completed (−.47), income (−.40), and white collar workers (−.23). When controls are introduced for per cent of Negroes in the population (see the second column of Table II), the positive association of Negro registration with both income and education is reduced almost to the vanishing point. Thus Negro income and education levels are intervening variables, which help to explain why more Negroes are registered in counties with fewer Negroes in their population. But in themselves, they have no independent association with Negro registration; in the few counties with large Negro concentrations but high Negro income and education, no more Negroes are registered than in similar counties with lower Negro income and education.

The explanatory power of our occupational measure—the per cent of the nonwhite labor force in white collar occupations—is also reduced when per cent of Negroes is taken into account, but to a much lesser degree. It becomes +.15. While this is a small partial correlation, it is one of the higher partials obtained in this study while controlling for the important factor of Negro concentration. The proportion of the employed Negroes in white collar jobs does, therefore, have a small but discerni-

[19] In view of the relatively high associations between Negro concentration and a wide variety of political phenomena (including Negro registration rates), it might be argued that Negro concentration is, in fact, a "political" rather than a "demographic" variable. But Negro concentration is as strongly associated with many social and economic characteristics of southern counties as it is with their political peculiarities. And while the correlations of Negro concentration with political characteristics are relatively large, they fall far short of a 1.0 correlation. As we shall demonstrate in a subsequent article, a number of political variables have an association with Negro registration that is independent of Negro concentration. Under these circumstances, to call Negro concentration a "political" variable would be distinctly misleading.

[20] See Lane, *op. cit.;* Lipset *et al., op. cit.;* Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York, 1960), ch. 13; V. O. Key, Jr., *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York, 1961), ch. 6. For a study of these variables and political participation among southern Negroes, see Bradbury Seasholes, "Negro Political Participation in Two North Carolina Cities," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1962.

[21] For an extreme statement of this position, see E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class in the United States* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957). Less exaggerated statements to the same effect may be found in the literature cited in *n.* 16, above.

ble independent association with Negro voter registration.

Moreover, small increases in the proportion of Negro white collar workers are associated with large increases in Negro voter registration (Figure 4), and these higher rates cannot be simply attributed to the registration of the white collar workers themselves. A very small increase in the size of the Negro middle class seems to result in a substantial increase in the pool of qualified potential leaders. Middle class Negroes are far more likely to register, and they in turn appear to stimulate working class Negroes to follow their example. The average southern county with 1 per cent of its nonwhite labor force in white collar jobs has only 4 per cent of its voting age Negroes registered to vote; at 5 per cent white collar, 15 per cent of

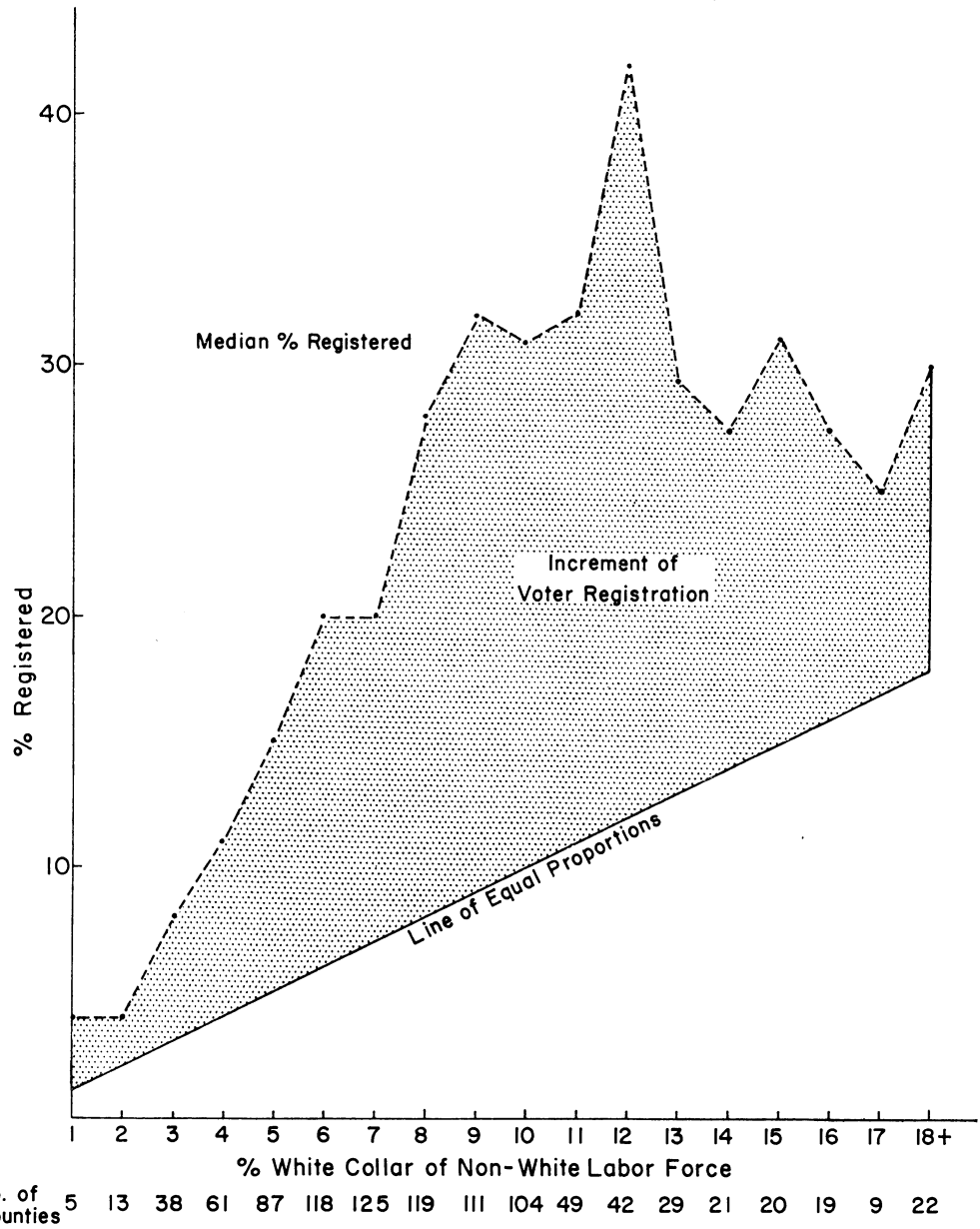


FIGURE 4. Median % of Voting Age Negroes Registered to Vote, by % of Nonwhite Labor Force in White Collar Occupations.

the Negroes are registered, and so on, each percentage point increase in white collar occupation being associated with a 3 to 4 percentage point increase in voter registration. This trend continues until 12 per cent of the nonwhites are in white collar jobs and 42 per cent of the potential Negro electorate is registered. After this point, additional increases in the proportion of Negroes in white collar jobs are no longer associated with increases in voter registration; indeed, voter registration actually declines as per cent white collar increases. Perhaps when the Negro middle class becomes fairly large, it tends to become more isolated from other Negroes, more preoccupied with the middle class round of life, less identified with the black masses.[22] A sharpening of class cleavages within the Negro community may lead to some loss of political effectiveness. Even so, this decline in effectiveness is not enough to wipe out the added increment from jobs to registered votes; it merely declines from 3 or 4 votes for every white collar job to about 2.

Despite the independent association of Negro white collar employment with voter registration, the correlations between Negro registration and Negro education, income, and occupation are far smaller than many of the correlations between Negro registration and the characteristics of the white-dominated community. The level of Negro voter registration in southern counties is far less a matter of the attributes of the Negro population than of the characteristics of the white population and of the total community. The rest of our correlations, therefore, are with community and white characteristics rather than with Negro attributes.

The Agrarian Economy. It is widely believed that the South's relatively poor agricultural economy contributes to the low levels of Negro political participation in the region.[23] People living in poverty are unlikely candidates for active citizenship anywhere. The Negroes' economic dependence upon local whites in the rural South serves as a potent inhibition to those few who are not otherwise discouraged from voting. Rural whites are both more hostile to Negro voting and in a better position to do something about it than their urban kin.

Our correlations tend to support this line of reasoning. Two measures included in the analysis reflect the degree to which a county has an agrarian economy—the per cent of labor force in agricultural employment and the per cent of farms operated by tenants.[24] The negative relationship of both these attributes to Negro voter registration (−.20 and −.32, respectively) indicates that Negro registration is lower in the old-style agrarian counties. But the region's Negro population is still primarily rural: the simple correlation between per cent in agriculture and per cent Negro is +.30; between farm tenancy and Negro concentration, +.49. Are these two characteristics of the counties still associated with low Negro voter registration when Negro concentration is controlled? The partial correlation between farm tenancy and Negro registration is −.13 when Negro concentration is controlled; between per cent in agriculture and registration it is reduced even further to −.07. There is, therefore, some tendency for Negro voter registration to decline as agricultural employment and farm tenancy increase which holds true even when differences in Negro concentration from one county to the next are taken into account. Nonetheless, it is a far less important factor than Negro concentration and is no more important than the size of the Negro middle class as a factor explaining Negro participation and non-participation.

Urbanization and Industrialization. If the South's agrarian economy tends to discourage Negro registration and voting, then industrialization and urbanization should facilitate them. The urban-industrial life is more rational, impersonal, and less tradition-bound; both Negroes and whites enjoy more wealth and education; the Negroes benefit from a concentration of potential leaders and politically relevant organizations in the cities. The urban ghetto may provide social reinforcement to individual motivations for political action. Many other equally plausible reasons might be suggested why urbanization and industrialization should foster Negro registration.[25] Our

[22] This is the basic argument of Frazier, *op. cit.* A more mundane explanation would be called for if counties from particular states were clustered at particular points on the curve in Figure 4, but examination of the same relationships for each state reveals no such state-by-state clustering.

[23] See especially, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *1961 Report,* Vol. I, "Voting," pp. 143–199.

[24] This and other measures of county-wide characteristics might better be considered separately for Negroes and whites, but they are not separately reported in the census.

[25] On Negro voting in urban settings see Charles D. Farris, "Effects of Negro Voting Upon the Politics of a Southern City: An Intensive Study, 1946–48," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1953; George A. Hillery, "The Presence of Community Among Urban Negroes: A Case Study of a Selected Area in New Orleans," M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1951; Leonard Reissman *et al.*, "The New Orleans Voter: A

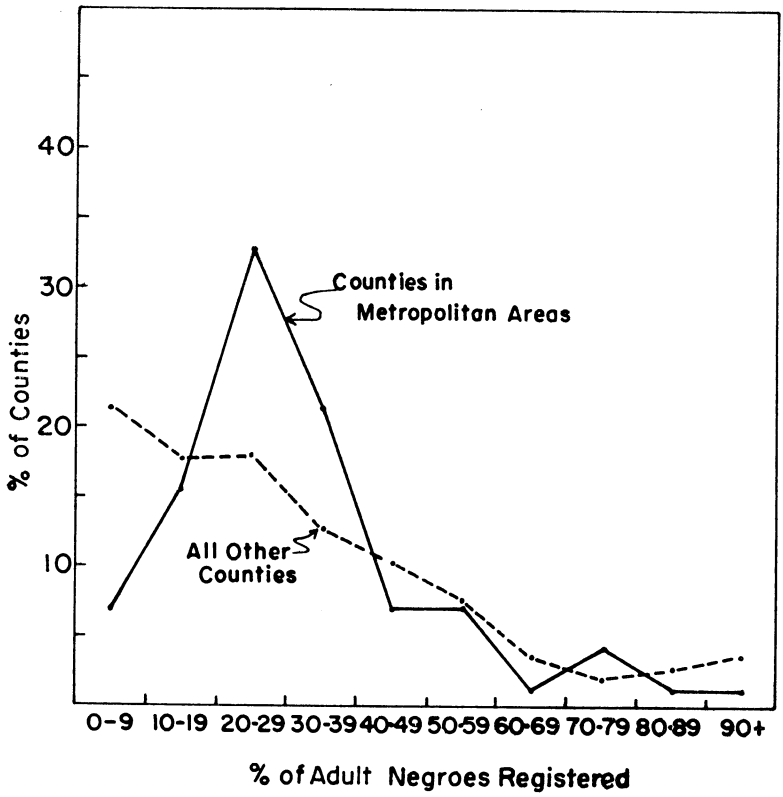


FIGURE 5. Median % of Voting Age Negroes Registered to Vote in Metropolitan and Other Areas.

southwide correlations, however, cast serious doubt upon the entire line of reasoning.

The simple correlations between the per cent of the county population living in urban areas and Negro registration is a mere +.07; between per cent of the labor force in manufacturing and Negro registration the correlation is +.08. When partial correlations are figured, controlling for Negro concentration, the association between urbanization and Negro registration completely disappears, a fact which suggests that the initial +.07 simple correlation may be largely the result of the low proportion of the urban population which is Negro and associated factors. The partial correlation between per cent in manufacturing and Negro registration goes up slightly to +.09 when controls for Negro concentration are added. Partial correlations figured after controlling for many other social and economic variables do not significantly increase either correlation.

What accounts for these surprising findings? One possible explanation is the imperfections of the statistical measures we have employed. The 1950 census definition of "urban," for example, includes all places of 2,500 plus the densely settled fringe around cities of 50,000 or more. Many "urban" places in the South are therefore exceedingly small. From the potential Negro voter's point of view, it may make little difference whether he lives in a town of 5,000 or in the open country, but one place is classified as "urban" and the other as "rural." Moreover, a county with a relatively small population concentrated in two or three small towns may possess a higher "urban" percentage than a very large county with a medium-sized city in it. A more meaningful classification of counties along an urban-rural dimension might possibly lead to different results.

It seems plausible to assume, however, that if urbanization does facilitate Negro voter registration, the effect should be particularly clear in the region's largest urban complexes. If the

Handbook of Political Description," *Tulane Studies in Political Science*, Vol. II (1955), pp. 1–88; Cleo Roberts, "Some Correlates of Registration and Voting Among Negroes in the 1953 Municipal Election of Atlanta," M.A. thesis, Atlanta University, 1954; Harry J. Walker, "Changes in Race Accommodation in a Southern Community," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1945.

TABLE III. MEDIAN PER CENT OF VOTING AGE NEGROES REGISTERED TO VOTE IN COUNTIES WITHIN STANDARD METROPOLITAN AREAS AND ALL OTHER COUNTIES, BY LEVEL OF NEGRO CONCENTRATION

% Negro in pop. 1950	Counties in SMAs of over 200,000 pop.	Counties in SMAs of less than 200,000 pop.	Counties not in SMAs
%	%	%	%
0–9	25.0 (6)	28.8 (11)	37.8 (236)
10–19	45.0 (11)	30.0 (12)	35.7 (133)
20–29	30.0 (6)	35.0 (6)	32.2 (153)
30–39	24.0 (6)	23.8 (7)	23.8 (142)
40–49	—	15.0 (5)	15.9 (110)
50–59	—	—	12.0 (78)
60–69	—	—	8.1 (50)
70–79	—	—	5.8 (22)
80–89	—	—	5.0 (4)
Total Counties	(29)	(41)	(928)

Negro registration rates of the 70 counties contained in the South's Standard Metropolitan Areas[26] are compared with registration rates for non-metropolitan counties (Figure 5), we note that the "metropolitan" counties are far more likely to have from 20 to 40 per cent of their voting age Negroes registered than the other counties. Moreover, there is a tendency for counties in larger metropolitan areas to have slightly higher registration rates than counties in less populous SMAs. However, the metropolitan counties have smaller concentrations of Negroes than the rural and small town counties. Do these relationships hold true when comparisons are made between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties with approximately the same proportion of Negroes within their boundaries? Table III indicates that the answer is no: there is no meaningful difference in the rate of Negro registration between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties when Negro concentration is controlled. Thus, neither "urbanism" nor "metropolitanism," as crudely defined by the census categories, appears to be independently related to high Negro voter registration.

The very low correlation between per cent of the labor force in manufacturing employment and Negro voter registration appears to be the result of other considerations. The word "manufacturing" conjures up images of the "New South"—with belching smokestacks, booming cities, and bulging payrolls. For the South as a whole, this is a quite misleading picture. While manufacturing in 1950 was associated with somewhat higher income for both Negroes and whites (the correlation between per cent in manufacturing and median income was +.19 for both races), it was not primarily an urban phenomenon (the correlation between per cent in manufacturing and per cent urban was +.08), nor was it associated with rapid population growth (the correlation with population increase between 1940 and 1950 is +.05). Manufacturing was negatively correlated with school years completed by both whites and Negroes (−.14 and −.05, respectively). This kind of low-wage manufacturing centered in relatively stable, small towns is not very strongly associated with growing Negro voter registration. It is possible that the recent industrialization of the region—electronics as opposed to home production of chenille bedspreads, for example—may be quite differently related to Negro participation. So few counties have this new type of industry that they tend to be hidden by the bedspreads in a county-by-county correlation.

While our analysis should not be taken as the last word on the subject, it does strongly suggest that urbanization and industrialization are vastly overrated as facilitators of Negro voter registration. Urbanization and industrialization may provide necessary conditions for high levels of Negro political participation but, by themselves, they are not sufficient to insure them.

White Educational Levels. If, as we have argued, Negro registration rates in the South respond far more to the characteristics of the white community than to the attributes of the Negroes themselves, then it seems reasonable to expect Negro voter registration to be positively correlated with white educational levels. Numerous studies have shown that racial prejudice and discrimination tend to be related to low levels of formal education.[27] Where the whites are relatively well educated, there should be less resistance to Negro political participation and, therefore, more Negro voter registration.

Just the opposite is the case for the South as a whole. The correlation between median school years completed by whites and Negro voter registration is −.26, one of the largest negative correlations obtained in this study. When the

[26] The Bureau of the Census defines Standard Metropolitan Areas as a county or group of contiguous counties which contains at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more. The contiguous counties must be socially and economically integrated with the central city to be included in the SMA.

[27] See the literature cited in *n.* 9, above.

education of whites in a county increases, Negro voter registration in the county tends to decrease.

How can we account for this unexpected finding? In view of the surprising nature of the relationship, the first expectation would be that it is merely a reflection of some third variable which happens to be related both to Negro registration and to white education. If so, it should disappear when other factors are held constant. But the correlation holds up surprisingly well when other variables are controlled: only one of the other social and economic characteristics of southern counties reduces the correlation at all. The third variable is, once again, Negro concentration in the population. With Negro concentration in 1950 controlled, the partial correlation between white educational level and Negro registration is −.15; controlling for Negro concentration in 1900 produces a partial correlation of −.16. While these are substantial reductions, the partial correlations are among the largest obtained after controlling for the extraordinarily important factor of Negro concentration. The strong correlation (+.30) between Negro concentration and median school years completed by whites is almost as unexpected as the correlation between Negro registration and white education. The whites in the black belt counties tend to be better educated—at least quantitatively—than other white southerners. And, regardless of the percentage of Negroes in the population, fewer Negroes are registered in counties where whites have more education.

A second explanation for the negative relationship between white education and Negro registration might be that their relationship is curvilinear: at the lower educational levels, increases in white median school years might be associated with declining rates of Negro registration but, at higher educational levels, the relationship might be reversed. If this were the case, then the overall negative relationship would be a result of the generally low educational levels of the South, concealing the fact that the few counties with high white educational levels had the highest rates of Negro registration. Figure 6 suggests only a moderate tendency in this direction. As the number of school years completed by whites goes up through the primary and secondary grades, the proportion of voting age Negroes registered declines.[28] In the very few counties in which the

[28] Eleven of the 28 counties in which the average white adult has completed less than seven years of schooling are French-Catholic parishes in

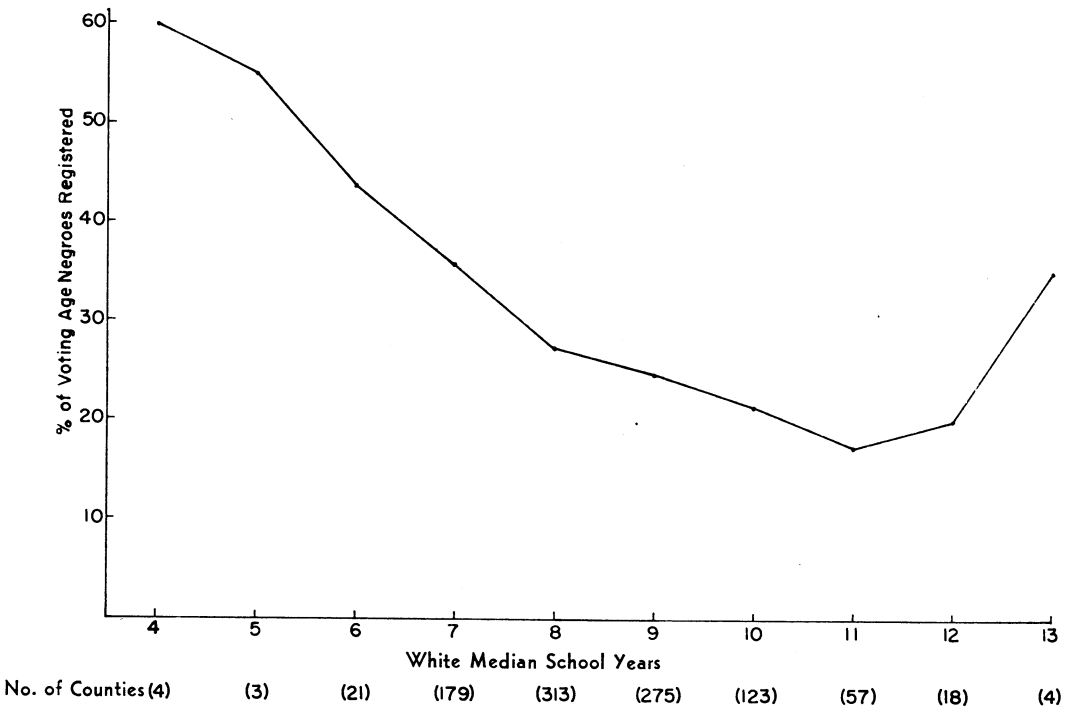


FIGURE 6. Median % of Voting Age Negroes Registered to Vote, by Median School Years Completed by Whites in County.

average white adult has completed high school or received some higher education, the trend reverses and Negro registration rates begin to increase. But the reversal is not sharp enough for the counties with the highest white education to reach as great a Negro registration as the counties with the lowest white education. Southern counties with extremely high white educational levels have only about average rates of Negro registration. The impressive fact revealed by Figure 6 is the near uniformity with which an increase in white school years is associated with a decrease in Negro registration.

Being unable to "explain away" our finding entirely, either by examining the correlation for hidden third variables or by examining the regularity of the association, we must conclude that white education in southern counties is independently and negatively associated with Negro registration. Short of the highest levels, the more educated the whites the more actively and effectively they seem to enforce the traditional mores of the region against Negro participation in elections. The usual effect of an increase in average schooling for whites in the South as a whole appears to be to give the white people more of the skills that are needed to express effectively their anti-Negro sentiment. For example, the correlation between median school years completed by whites and the presence or absence of a White Citizens Council or similar organization is +.32. It seems to take considerably more formal education than the average southern white receives to *alter* his attitude toward the Negro's place in southern politics.

White Religious Affiliation. A variety of studies suggest that religion plays some role—either as independent or intervening variable—in the racial politics of the South. Church-goers have been found to be less tolerant than non-attenders,[29] and the South is a church-going region. Studies of Louisiana politics have found substantial political differences between the Catholic and Protestant sections of the state.[30] It seemed worthwhile, therefore, to examine the correlation between white religious affiliation and Negro registration rates for the South as a whole.

We find that Negro registration rates are depressed as church membership among whites[31] increases (−.17), despite the fact that white membership in different churches has different functions—Baptist membership is negatively related to Negro registration (−.10) while Catholic membership is positively related (+.15). On a southwide basis, the percentage of Jews in the county's total church membership is not significantly associated with Negro registration.

Granted that Catholicism is positively related to Negro registration, we can partial out the influence of Catholicism in order to determine the correlation between non-Catholic white church membership and Negro registration. This partial correlation is, as expected, slightly greater (−.23) than the simple correlation. But the negative correlation between white church membership and Negro registration disappears when Negro concentration is held constant. (The partial correlation is +.01). Greater church membership among whites accordingly appears to be a reflection of other county attributes rather than an independent factor in relation to Negro registration. When we examine the correlations between church membership and all of our other measures of county attributes, we find very low correlations with all other variables except Negro concentration (+.38) and Catholicism (+.31). Apparently, then, white church membership *per se* is unimportant for Negro registration. White people in the kinds of counties with more Negroes and in predominantly Catholic counties are more often members of churches. In the former kinds of counties, fewer Negroes will vote regardless of non-Catholic church membership. Most non-Catholic churches presumably take on the racial attitudes of their localities; or, if they do not, they have little effect on those attitudes in so far as the attitudes are reflected in rates of Negro registration.

Per cent of Roman Catholics in the white church population appears to be by far the most important of our religious attributes of southern counties. And the relationship between Catholicism and Negro voter registra-

Louisiana. Even if those parishes are eliminated, the trend shown in Figure 6 remains the same. The partial correlation between white school years and Negro registration, controlling for per cent Roman Catholic, is −.25.

[29] Samuel A. Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* (New York, Doubleday, 1955).

[30] Allan P. Sindler, *Huey Long's Louisiana* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956); V. O. Key, Jr., *op. cit.*, ch. 8; John H. Fenton and Kenneth N. Vines, "Negro Registration in Louisiana," this REVIEW, Vol. 51 (1957), pp. 704–13.

[31] The most recent attempt to compile county-by-county figures on church membership is reported in a census by the National Council of Churches of Christ, *Churches and Church Membership in the U.S.*, Series C, 1956. Negro churches are not included in this census, and the figures reported for many white churches appear to be incomplete.

tion does not disappear when Negro concentration is controlled. (The partial correlation is +.10.) The presence of Roman Catholics, then, does seem to facilitate Negro voter registration on a southwide basis. Roman Catholic churches and priests presumably react less directly to other county attributes than most Protestant churches and their ministers; in any case, Catholicism is independently and positively related to Negro voter registration.

However, the concentration of Catholic population in Louisiana and the small number of Catholics in most other parts of the South dictate caution in accepting this explanation. For one thing, the distribution of Catholic percentages deviates so far from the assumption of normal distribution underlying correlation analysis that our southwide correlations may have been curiously and unpredictably affected. In the second place, the atypical political patterns of Louisiana—rather than Catholicism *per se*—may account for a large part of the correlation obtained. Only state-by-state analysis of the correlations can indicate if Catholicism is a genuinely independent and significant factor facilitating Negro registration throughout the entire South.

IV. NEGRO VERSUS WHITE REGISTRATION RATES

We have assumed that our analysis is of *Negro* voter registration rather than of voter registration *in general*. But this assumption might be incorrect: while Negroes register to vote in the South at a much lower rate than whites (Figure 1), the registration rates of the two races could be highly correlated with one another, both responding to the same social and economic characteristics of southern counties. The data permit two tests of this possibility: (1) an examination of the relationship between Negro and white registration; (2) a comparison of the relationships between county attributes and white registration with the relationships found between the same attributes and Negro registration.

The Relationship Between Negro and White Registration. To a limited extent, Negro registration does increase as white registration increases; their simple correlation is +.24. Figure 7 presents the relationship of Negro to white registration for every level of white registration. The detailed relationships depicted by the graph reveal that the lowest and the highest levels of white registration contribute most of the small correlation between the registration rates of the two races; if both of the extreme points were eliminated, the curve would be virtually horizontal, indicating that Negro registration had no relationship at all to white registration. Only when white registration is extremely high or extremely low, then, is it associated with the rate of Negro registration. For the broad middle range of counties

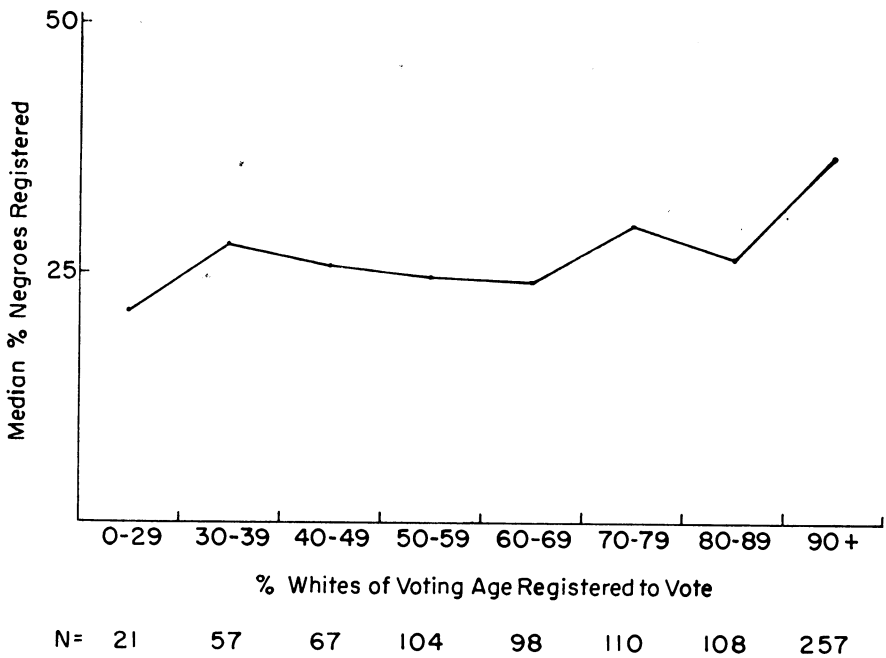


FIGURE 7. Median % of Voting Age Negroes Registered to Vote, by % of Whites Registered in Same County.

TABLE IV. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN COUNTY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PER CENT OF VOTING AGE WHITES REGISTERED TO VOTE, BY COUNTY, IN 11 SOUTHERN STATES

County Characteristics	Simple Correlations (r)	Partial Correlations, Controlling for:	
		% Negro, 1950	% Urban, 1950
Per cent of nonwhite labor force in white collar occupations	−.26	−.24	−.15
Nonwhite median school years completed	−.34	−.34	−.28
Nonwhite median income	−.19	−.17	−.08
Per cent of total church membership Roman Catholic	−.09	−.08	−.03
Per cent increase in population, 1940–50	−.06	−.04	+.08
Per cent of labor force in manufacturing	+.05	+.05	+.07
White median income	−.19	−.19	−.05
Per cent of population urban	−.25	−.24	
Percentage point difference in per cent population Negro, 1900–50	+.10	+.11	+.05
Per cent of total church membership Jewish	−.03	−.03	+.04
Difference in white-nonwhite median school years completed	+.11	+.07	+.14
Difference in white-nonwhite median income	−.12	−.13	−.03
Number of Negro colleges in county	−.10	−.11	−.04
Per cent of total church membership Baptist	+.20	+.19	+.15
Per cent of population belonging to a church	+.06	+.02	+.07
Per cent of labor force in agriculture	+.21	+.19	+.06
White median school years completed	−.08	−.11	+.03
Per cent of farms operated by tenants	+.09	+.05	+.05
Per cent of population Negro, 1900	+.03	−.12	+.02
Per cent of population Negro, 1950	+.10		+.06

Note: County characteristics are listed above in the same order as in Table II in order to facilitate comparison of Negro and white correlations.

with from 30 to 89 per cent of the whites registered—a group which contains over 70 per cent of all southern counties—Negro registration appears to be independent of white registration.

The Relationships Between Socio-Economic Factors and Negro and White Registration. Table IV presents the correlations between the per cent of eligible whites registered to vote and the same 20 social and economic factors utilized in our effort to explain Negro registration. While these factors were chosen for their presumed relevance for Negro registration, the magnitude of the simple correlations in the first column of the table suggests that they are as strongly related to white as to Negro registration. When these simple correlations for whites are compared with those for Negroes in Table II, however, we see that the direction of the correlation is reversed for 15 of the 20 social and economic factors. Not one of the 20 variables is substantially and consistently related to both Negro and white rates of voter registration.

The reversal of relationships is so regular that social and economic attributes might appear to have opposite meanings for Negro and white registration.[32] Closer inspection reveals, however, that the relationships are disparate rather than opposite.

The crucial variable for Negro registration is Negro concentration in the population, which not only furnishes the strongest simple correlation but is also the variable that most consistently accounts for other apparent "influences" on Negro registration. Indeed, Negro concentration has generally been cited as the critical factor in all dimensions of southern political behavior. Hence, one immediately suspects that all of the variables which facilitate white registration must be positively correlated with concentration of Negro population, which would thereby stand as the dominant third factor for both Negro and white registration.

[32] A simple Kendall tau rank order correlation of the two distributions of correlations in Tables II and IV is −.54.

While this familiar interpretation would conveniently account for the striking discrepancy between correlates of white and Negro registration, it is not supported by our findings. On the contrary, *Negro concentration has a negligible relationship to white voter registration.* Moreover, the small simple correlation of Negro concentration and white registration (+.10) drops to the vanishing point (+.06) when urbanism is controlled.

No single variable is as important for white registration as Negro concentration is for Negro registration, but urbanism emerges as particularly significant. Per cent of population urban—which proved inconsequential in the analysis of Negro registration—furnishes one of the strongest negative correlations with white voter registration, a correlation that is not affected when Negro concentration is controlled. And the same relationship is found if, instead of per cent of population urban, we use Standard Metropolitan Areas as our index of urban-rural difference; white registration is consistently higher in rural than in urban counties. Other county characteristics associated with urbanization—such as high income and education levels for whites and Negroes—are similarly related to low white registration. Perhaps the rural white resident finds politics more meaningful in a one-party region, where personality plays such an important role in elections.[33] In any event, urban-rural differences are a key factor in variations in white voter registration.

Similar variations are found in the relationships of white and Negro registration rates to the other social and economic characteristics of southern counties. Average white education, for example, manifested a strong negative association with Negro registration—an association that held up under various controls so well that it led to novel conclusions. White education is also negatively related to white registration, but the correlation is extremely small and it is reversed when per cent of population urban is controlled.

Without an extended consideration of white registration, then, we can conclude that our analysis does apply to Negro voter registration in particular rather than to voter registration in general. The social and economic characteristics of southern counties have widely different meanings for Negro and white registration.

[33] Urban counties in the South undoubtedly purge their registration lists with greater regularity than the more rural ones. How much effect this may have on these correlations cannot be ascertained.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The proportion of voting age Negroes registered to vote in the former confederate states has increased more than 500 per cent since *Smith* v. *Allwright* was decided in 1944. Today, 28 per cent of the voting age Negroes are registered voters, a rate which is about half that of white adults in the South. In this article we have examined the statistical associations between selected social and economic characteristics of southern counties and Negro registration in an effort to ascertain the extent to which variations in Negro registration can be explained by the social and economic realities of the region.

The personal attributes of Negroes—their occupations, income, and education as reflected in county figures—were found to have relatively little to do with Negro registration rates. The size of the Negro middle class does appear to have an independent and positive correlation with Negro registration, but this correlation is small compared to those between Negro registration and the characteristics of the whites and of the total community.

The largest single correlation (−.46) was between the per cent of the population Negro in 1950 and Negro registration. Differences in the proportion of the population Negro up to about 30 per cent are not associated with drastic reductions in the per cent of Negroes registered, but increasing Negro concentration above this figure seems to lead to very rapid decreases. Negro concentration in the past seems almost as important as Negro concentration today until one discovers that the close association of past with present Negro concentration accounts for the finding. Indeed, declines in Negro proportions in counties with populations from 30 to 70 per cent Negro in 1900 are associated with substantial registration increases over similar counties which have not experienced such change.

The presence of an agricultural economy and farm tenancy were found to have a small, independent, and depressing effect on Negro registration rates. Neither urbanization nor industrialization, on the other hand, seems to be associated with Negro registration increases when other factors are controlled.

White educational levels were of about equal importance to the size of the Negro middle class and the existence of an agrarian economy. The more highly educated the whites in a county, the lower the rate of Negro registration—until the average white adult was a high school graduate or possessed some higher education. In these few counties, the rate of Negro registration was moderate. Up to the highest levels,

increases in white educational levels apparently lead to more effective enforcement of the region's traditional mores against Negro participation in elections.

Another factor of about equal importance to all the others save Negro concentration is Roman Catholicism. The larger the proportion of Roman Catholics in a county, the higher the rate of Negro registration regardless of what other factors are controlled.

When the same social and economic characteristics of southern counties are analyzed for their relationships to white voter registration, a radically different pattern is discovered. The direction of the relationship is reversed for most of the attributes with the shift from Negro to white registration, but more than a simple reversal is involved. The magnitudes of the correlations with white registration (disregarding direction of correlation) are quite different, and a different variable emerges as the most consistent independent correlate. Whereas Negro registration tends to increase in the counties—rural or urban—that have smaller portions of Negroes in their populations, white registration tends to increase in the more rural counties—regardless of the portions of Negroes in their populations. We can accordingly have some confidence that we are dealing with an autonomous set of relationships in our analysis of Negro registration in the South.

In all of the preceding analysis, we have examined the association between selected social and economic factors and Negro registration one at a time. While controls for the impact of one social and economic factor on another have been introduced, we have not yet attempted to estimate the extent of the association between all the social and economic factors taken together and Negro registration. In order to do this, we have computed the multiple correlation coefficient between all 20 social and economic factors (plus the size of the Standard Metropolitan Area, if any, within which the county is contained—a qualitative variable for which simple correlations could not be obtained) and Negro voter registration. The correlation between all of the social and economic variables and county registration rates of Negroes is .53, which explains about 28 per cent (R^2) of the variation in Negro registration.

A multiple correlation of this magnitude demonstrates the great importance of social and economic characteristics for Negro registration.[34] To explain over one-fourth of the variance in Negro registration—or any other significant political phenomenon—is no mean achievement in the current state of political science. But almost three-fourths of the variance remains to be accounted for. This leaves room for significant variation independent of social and economic forces that have been considered here. If political variables were added to the analysis, could still more of the variance in Negro registration be explained? If political variables do emerge as having an autonomous set of relationships to Negro registration, what is the comparative importance of political and demographic variables? Finally, if variations in state systems (social, economic, and political) were taken into account, could still more explanatory power be gained? A social and economic analysis has taken us a long way in our effort to understand Negro registration rates, but we still have a lot further to go. The massive bulk and complexity of our data require that an analysis of political and legal factors, of the relative importance of demographic versus political variables, and of variations in state systems be reported separately. Our expectation is that, by an analysis of these additional factors, we can reduce the range of unexplained variation still further.

The application of our findings to the contemporary policy problem of how best to increase Negro voting in the South must be approached with the utmost caution. Our analysis deals with registration, not voting, and these are not identical forms of political participation. Our data deal with the characteristics of counties, not individuals, and the leap from the areal to the individual level is hazardous. Third, the analysis has been of variations in rates of registration and not of factors which determine its absolute level. To find that an independent variable accounts for some of the variation in the dependent variable gives us no direct information on the size of the dependent variable. Fourth, correlations are not "causes" but merely associations; attributing causal relationships to variables which are correlated with one another is to engage in the drawing of inferences, which sometimes are spectacularly wrong. Finally, the bulk of our analysis has been restricted to one point in time

[34] Indeed, it was on the basis of a roughly equal multiple correlation, based on survey data rather than aggregate county data, that an early voting behavior study concluded that "social characteristics determine political preference." Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 27. This work reports a multiple correlation between voting preference and social factors of "approximately .5" (p. 25).

so that it does not directly produce predictions in which time is a key factor.

If these caveats are not forgotten but merely set aside, our correlations suggest that reformers should not expect miracles[35] in their efforts, through political and legal means, to increase the size and effectiveness of the Negro vote in the South. The Negro registration rate is low, in rather large part, because of the social and economic characteristics of southerners—both Negro and white. These facts are not easily and quickly changed by law or political action. One cannot help but be impressed by the massive indications of stability in the situation—the extremely high negative correlation between per cent Negro in 1900 and Negro registration in 1958, the apparent failure of urbanization and industrialization to provide sufficiently favorable conditions for Negro political participation, the negative correlation between white educational levels and Negro registration, and so on.

At the same time, Negro registration has increased rapidly since 1944 and the social and economic factors we have considered account for only about 28 per cent of its 1958 variation. Changes in the southern society and economy strongly argue that Negro registration will continue to increase. In Figure 8, the trend since 1940 is presented for the variables we found to be most strongly related to Negro voter regis-

[35] For example, Martin Luther King's statement in a speech to the 1962 NAACP annual convention about southern Negroes being "able to elect at least five Negroes to Congress in the next few years" seems to underestimate wildly the social and economic barriers to Negro political participation. *New York Times*, July 6, 1962. See also the sanguine expectations of Lomax, *op. cit.*

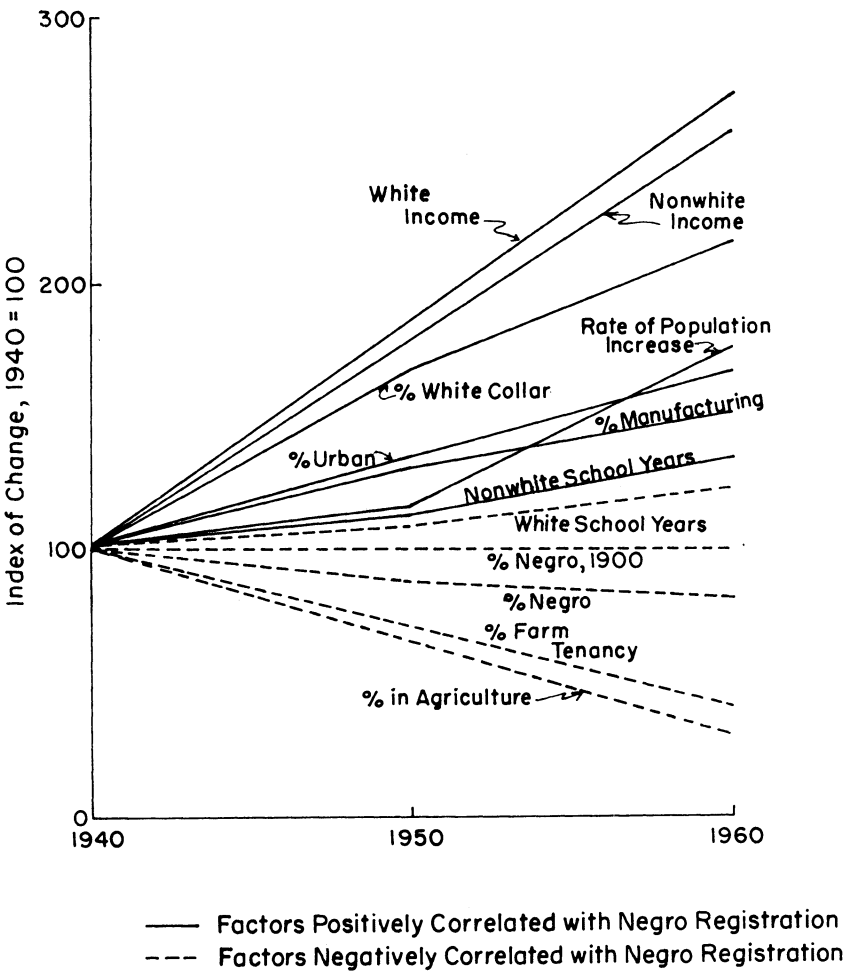


FIGURE 8. Rates of Social and Economic Change in the South 1940–1960.

tration.[36] *Every one of the variables positively associated with Negro registration is on the increase*—some have doubled in 20 years and all but one have increased by at least 50 per cent. Only one of the factors associated with low Negro registration—white school years completed—is also increasing, and there is reason to believe that a good many southern counties will soon reach the stage where this factor may tend to facilitate rather than hinder Negro political participation.[37] All the other factors negatively correlated with Negro registration (except, of course, per cent Negro in 1900) are declining rapidly.

The South's social and economic structure may be the reformer's major barrier—but it may also be a long-run cause for hope.

[36] No trend data were available on religious affiliation. Median income figures, by race, were not available for 1940. In Figure 8, it is assumed that median income for both races increased at the same rate between 1940 and 1950 as between 1950 and 1960.

[37] If white school years completed continues to increase at the 1950–60 rate, the average southern white will have completed 11.4 years of schooling by 1970 and many southern counties will have average white school years completed of 12 years or more. Assuming that the relationship presented in Figure 6 continues to hold true, the effect of white education on Negro registration may gradually reverse.