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Perceived Changes in Quality of Life of Open-Country Residents in Six Mississippi Counties

Wolfgang Frese

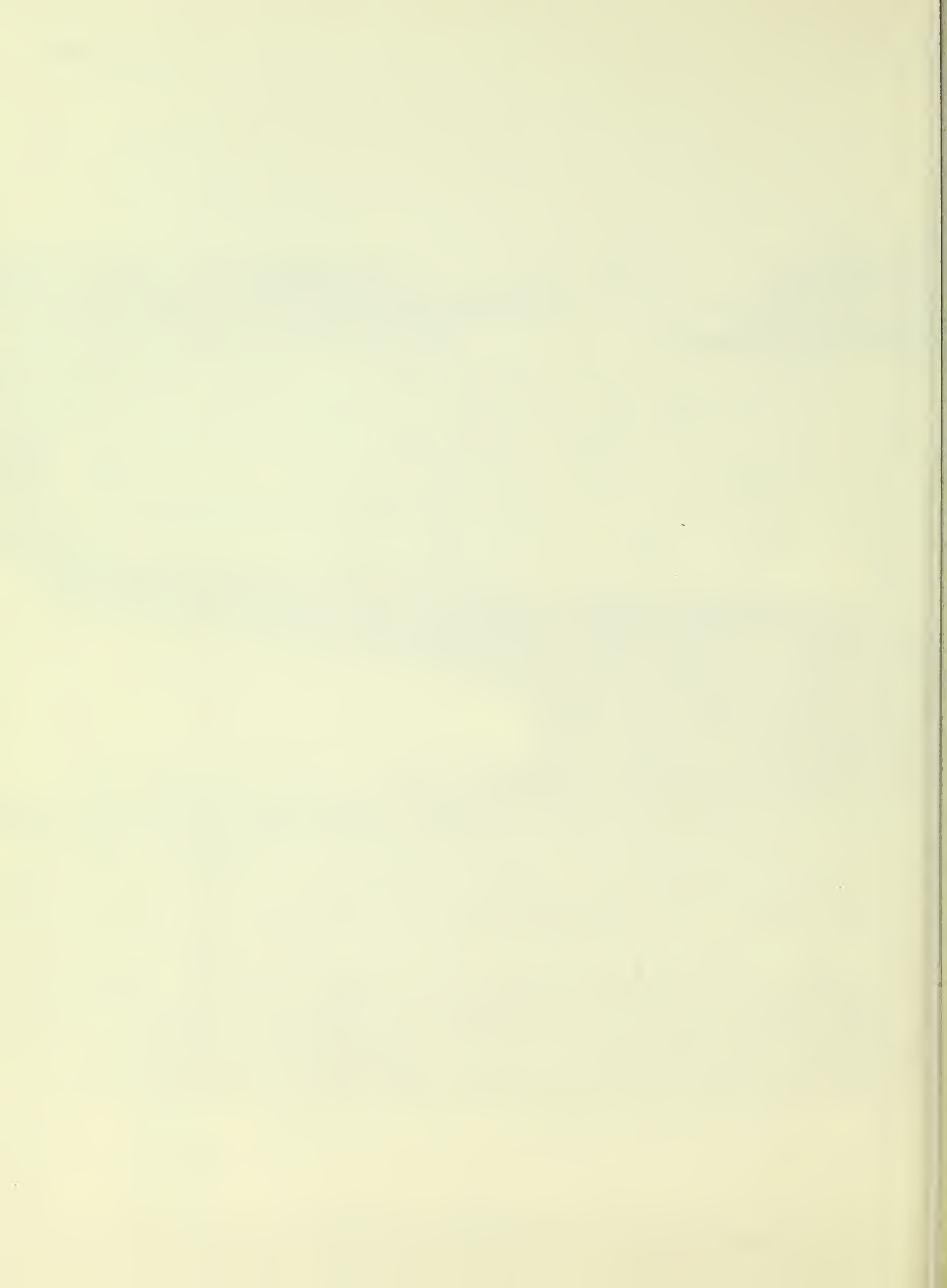
MAFES MISSISSIPPI AGRICULTURAL & FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A substantial majority of both black and white respondents in six Mississippi counties (Clay, Coahoma, Lawrence, Holmes, Neshoba and Tunica) perceived an improvement in the situations of young people, old people, blacks and the poor in their counties between 1960 and 1973. This also was true for the two overall quality of life items---quality of life for most people and of their county as a place to live.

Knowledgeables in the six counties generally agreed with household respondents that quality of life had improved. Crime and law enforcement, real income and agriculture and land use were areas where the percentage of respondents perceiving an improvement was substantially higher for knowledgeables than for household respondents. The situation was reversed for the quality of public schools and the situation and opportunities for young people, old people and blacks.

More than one half of the household respondents in seven other southern states (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee) felt that there had

been no improvements in eight quality of life categories ---all three county government items, real income, the two environment items, church and religion and recreational opportunities. The percentage of respondents expressing the belief that quality of life had improved was higher for Mississippi than for the other southern states for items that both groups felt had improved.

A majority of respondents in Mississippi rated quality of all but three items "good" in 1973. Exceptions were citizens' obedience to laws (black respondents), real income and recreational opportunities (white respondents). More than one half of the respondents in the six other southern states rated quality of six items "fair". For categories that both groups rated "good", the percentages were higher in Mississippi than in the other southern states, with the exception of the situation and opportunities for blacks.

Respondents' expressions of fears and hopes for the future provide insights into the improvements in quality of life that open-country Mississippi residents desire for their families. Concerns

about how to earn money, how to get on welfare and that their cars would break down were expressed more often by blacks than by whites. Concerns about being unable to pay bills, a possible depression and a business or farm failure were expressed more often by whites than by blacks. Whites also were more concerned about the future of their children.

Hopes for economic improvement were mentioned most often by blacks and whites. Both groups also ranked other hopes in the same order. Hopes for better housing, better health and better opportunities for children were expressed frequently.

Results of the study indicate that the respondents view their quality of life situation with some degree of accuracy. That is, their perception of quality of life corresponds closely to quality of life as determined by objective measures. Therefore given the limited time and resources for conducting surveys to develop subjective measures, use of objective measures of quality of life by elected officials and other public servants is realistic.

Perceived Changes in Quality of Life of Open-Country Residents in Six Mississippi Counties

Wolfgang Frese, associate professor and MAFES associate sociologist, Mississippi State University Department of Sociology and Rural Life

Objective measures of quality of life (e.g., income, education and employment levels) are relatively easily defined units that do not require evaluation by the individuals for whom quality of life is being assessed. Use of objective community measures assumes that quality of life of the individuals in a community improves or worsens as the objective measures improve or worsen; e.g., quality of life is considered to have improved if measures of education and health services go up and measures of

unemployment and crime go down. In short, objective measures are used as proxies for the subjective experiences of individuals.

As Campbell, Converse and Rogers point out “. . . we do not know how well objective measures like these represent underlying psychological states or how well social indicators can be taken to represent the quality of life experience.”¹ Using rooms per person as an objective measure, for example, may not accurately reflect perceived quality of life because the

size of a house may not coincide with the satisfaction a dweller derives from living in it.

Objective measures² are helpful in determining the quality of life of an individual, but a more meaningful determination requires that they be supplemented with subjective measures; i.e., what the individual perceives his (or her) quality of life to be. As W. I. Thomas pointed out: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.”³

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Elected officials and other public servants are faced with the problem of determining where available resources can be used to serve the public interest most effectively. Decisions on how to use public funds for attaining maximum social and economic benefits can be based on experience and on objective measures of success of past and current programs.

However, the ultimate political success of public programs is not what public servants perceive it to be and not what objective measures show it to be, but on what members of society perceive it to be. In short, citizens will support public programs and the public servants behind them if they believe programs are serving their needs but will mandate change if they

believe they are not.

The purpose of this study was to determine quality of life as perceived by rural Mississippians. The information gained is presented as a guide to decision-makers in better identifying, understanding and alleviating conditions that foster a low level of quality of life or impede improvement in quality of life.

PROCEDURE

The six Mississippi counties included in the study were divided systematically into small-area segments,⁴ and a random sample of

these segments was drawn for each county.⁵ Households were selected randomly from each sample segment and the household head

(and/or homemaker) was interviewed. For Regional Project S-79, similar procedures were followed in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky,

¹See page 10 for explanatory notes 1-11.

Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The positional and reputational approaches were used to select local "knowledgeables" from each of the six counties. Knowledge of

their county in general and of certain areas in particular (e.g., government, education, welfare) was the major criterion for their selection.⁶ Not all knowledgeable selected were leaders in their coun-

ty (i.e., part of the power structure), but the selection procedure assured that they were influential in their county.

SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

All six of the Mississippi counties included in the study experienced a decline in nonwhite population, but only three---Coahoma, Holmes and Tunica---showed a similar trend in the white population (Table 1). The other three counties---Clay, Lawrence and Neshoba---actually experienced slight increases in the number of white residents. Except for Tunica County, the rural non-farm population increased as a percentage of total population in each county, while the farm pop-

ulation decreased.

Median age and median family income of the population increased in the sample counties between 1960 and 1970 (Table 2). Median years of schooling of both males and females was higher in each county in 1970 than in 1960.

The 331 household respondents in the Mississippi survey were predominantly females. More than one half of all respondents were more than 50 years of age, had less than a high school education and

were in low-skill jobs (Table 3). Slightly more than 40% of all respondents were retired or disabled.

Eighty-five percent of the 221 knowledgeable were white, 14% were black and 1% were Indian.⁷ The majority of the knowledgeable were between 35 and 49 years of age and had occupations in the manager and proprietor categories.

Table 1. Population of the six Mississippi counties selected for Southern Regional Project, S-79, by race and place of residence, 1960 and 1970.

| County | Population | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | White | | Non-White | | Rural Non-Farm | | Rural Farm | |
| | 1960 ^a | 1970 ^b | 1960 ^a | 1970 ^b | 1960 ^c | 1970 ^d | 1960 ^c | 1970 ^d |
| Numbers | | | | Percent | | | | |
| Clay | 9,214 | 9,517 | 9,719 | 9,323 | 29.2 | 40.4 | 25.6 | 14.0 |
| Coahoma | 14,630 | 14,232 | 31,582 | 26,215 | 28.2 | 33.2 | 26.2 | 13.3 |
| Holmes | 7,595 | 7,345 | 19,501 | 15,775 | 42.7 | 59.0 | 37.2 | 17.3 |
| Lawrence | 6,354 | 7,553 | 3,861 | 3,584 | 67.9 | 81.9 | 32.1 | 18.1 |
| Neshoba | 15,026 | 15,091 | 5,901 | 5,711 | 35.0 | 48.6 | 41.0 | 20.7 |
| Tunica | 3,505 | 3,225 | 13,321 | 8,629 | 65.0 | 48.4 | 35.0 | 51.6 |
| Mississippi | 1,257,546 | 1,393,283 | 915,743 | 815,770 | 37.4 | 43.7 | 24.9 | 11.8 |

Sources:

^aU.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1960. General Population Characteristics Final Report PC (1)-26B Mississippi. USGPO, Washington, D.C. 1961.

^bU.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1970. General Population Characteristics Final Report PC (1)-B26 Mississippi. USGPO, Washington, D.C. 1971.

^cU.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1960. General Social and Economic Characteristics Final Report PC (1)-26C Mississippi. USGPO, Washington, D.C. 1961.

^dU.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1970. General Social and Economics Characteristics Final Report PC (1)-C26 Mississippi. USGPO, Washington, D.C. 1972.

Table 2. Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of the six Mississippi counties selected for Southern Regional Project, S-79, 1960 and 1970.

| County | Median Age | | Median Family Income | | Median of Years School Completed By Persons 25 Years Old and Older | | | | Family with Income Less than Poverty Level | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--|------|---------|------|--|-------------------|
| | 1960 ^a | 1970 ^b | 1960 ^c | 1970 ^d | Males | | Females | | 1960 ^c | 1970 ^d |
| | -- Years -- | | -- \$ -- | | -- Number -- | | -- % -- | | -- % -- | |
| Clay | 23.2 | 24.5 | 2,851 | 6,228 | 8.7 | 9.9 | 9.1 | 10.8 | 51.9 | 25.9 |
| Coahoma | 21.6 | 22.1 | 2,101 | 4,304 | 6.6 | 8.3 | 7.8 | 8.9 | 77.6 | 42.8 |
| Holmes | 21.3 | 23.0 | 1,453 | 3,089 | 6.9 | 8.1 | 8.1 | 8.9 | 77.9 | 53.0 |
| Lawrence | 26.2 | 27.0 | 2,422 | 5,049 | 8.4 | 9.9 | 9.0 | 10.6 | 59.6 | 36.6 |
| Neshoba | 27.3 | 29.3 | 2,384 | 5,504 | 8.7 | 9.9 | 9.3 | 10.6 | 50.8 | 29.9 |
| Tunica | 18.8 | 19.9 | 1,260 | 2,885 | 4.2 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 8.0 | 71.8 | 55.6 |
| Mississippi | 24.2 | 25.1 | 2,884 | 6,071 | 8.6 | 10.4 | 9.3 | 10.9 | 52.0 | 28.9 |

Sources: See Table 1.

Table 3. Selected characteristics of the Mississippi open-country household respondents selected for Southern Regional Project, S-79

| | Total | Blacks | Whites |
|--|--------------------|--------|--------|
| | ----- % ----- | | |
| <u>Sex</u> | | | |
| Male | 40 | 43 | 38 |
| Female | 60 | 57 | 62 |
| <u>Age</u> | | | |
| Under 35 | 16.0 | 12.2 | 19.1 |
| 35 - 49 | 20.0 | 20.9 | 19.2 |
| 50 - 64 | 31.7 | 32.4 | 31.1 |
| 65+ | 32.3 | 34.5 | 30.6 |
| <u>Education</u> | | | |
| Less than 9th Grade | 55.0 | 81.8 | 33.3 |
| Some high school | 21.5 | 12.3 | 29.0 |
| High School Diploma | 12.4 | 3.4 | 19.7 |
| 1 - 4 Years of College | 10.8 | 2.5 | 17.5 |
| Master's Degree or Above | 0.3 | --- | 0.5 |
| <u>Occupation</u> | | | |
| Homemaker | 3.0 | 4.1 | 2.2 |
| Farm Operator or Manager | 9.7 | 4.7 | 13.7 |
| Farm Laborer or Foreman | 15.7 | 27.7 | 6.0 |
| Manager, Proprietor (except farm, professional, technical) | 1.5 | --- | 2.7 |
| Sales | 3.0 | 0.7 | 4.9 |
| Clerical | 0.3 | --- | 0.5 |
| Craftsman and Foreman | 3.3 | --- | 6.0 |
| Operatives | 5.7 | 8.1 | 3.8 |
| Service Workers | 1.5 | 0.7 | 2.2 |
| Domestic Service | 1.0 | 2.0 | --- |
| Labor | 13.6 | 11.5 | 15.3 |
| Disabled | 15.1 | 18.2 | 12.6 |
| Retired | 25.7 | 21.6 | 29.0 |
| Unemployment | 0.3 | 0.7 | --- |
| No Information | 0.6 | --- | 1.1 |
| | ----- Number ----- | | |
| <u>Total</u> | 331 | 148 | 183 |

PERCEIVED CHANGES IN QUALITY OF LIFE FROM 1960 to 1973

Six general dimensions or areas of quality of life were examined---county government, education, income and employment, county services, over-all quality of life, the physical environment and the quality of life of selected sub-populations (the young, the old, the poor and blacks). Only the responses of those who had lived in the county for most of the 10 years before 1973 are included in this report because respondents were asked about changes since 1960. Therefore, data are reported for only 233 respondents---106 blacks and 127 whites.⁸

Household respondents were asked whether they felt that each quality-of-life area had improved, remained about the same or worsened since 1960. A larger percentage of black respondents expressed the belief that there had been an improvement in all aspects of county government than was the case for white respondents (Table 4). Examination of the educational items indicates that a larger percentage of black respondents thought the quality of public schools had improved. There were only minor black-white differences with regard to the other two educational items.

Black-white comparisons of the income and employment items indicate that a majority of blacks felt that real income had improved while a majority of whites did not. About the same percentages of blacks and whites felt that incomes of people who work for wages had improved, and a larger percentage of whites felt that employment opportunities had improved. The percentage of respondents expressing the belief that the agriculture and land use situation had improved was higher for whites than for blacks, while a larger percentage of blacks felt that quality of the physical environment had improved.

Table 4. Changes in quality of life as perceived by black and white open-country residents of Clay, Coahoma, Holmes, Lawrence, Neshoba and Tunica counties, Mississippi, by quality of life item, 1960 to 1973.

| Quality of Life Item | Type of Perceived Change Between 1960 and 1973 | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|-------------------|------|--------------|------|
| | Improved | | Remained the Same | | Gotten Worse | |
| | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. |
| COUNTY GOVERNMENT | | | | | | |
| Quality of county government | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 77.8 | (77) | 18.2 | (18) | 4.0 | (4) |
| Whites | 61.4 | (70) | 28.9 | (33) | 9.7 | (11) |
| Politics and political parties | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 76.7 | (69) | 20.0 | (18) | 3.3 | (3) |
| Whites | 50.5 | (50) | 32.3 | (32) | 17.2 | (17) |
| Crime and law enforcement | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 64.0 | (64) | 22.0 | (22) | 14.0 | (14) |
| Whites | 44.1 | (52) | 26.3 | (31) | 29.6 | (35) |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | |
| Quality of public schools | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 86.0 | (80) | 11.8 | (11) | 2.2 | (2) |
| Whites | 53.8 | (56) | 8.7 | (9) | 37.5 | (39) |
| Quality of private schools | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 84.3 | (59) | 12.8 | (9) | 2.9 | (2) |
| Whites | 90.1 | (82) | 7.7 | (7) | 2.2 | (2) |
| Opportunities for education and training beyond high school | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 92.5 | (87) | 7.5 | (7) | 0.0 | (0) |
| Whites | 85.7 | (96) | 11.6 | (13) | 2.7 | (3) |
| INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT | | | | | | |
| Real income | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 62.8 | (59) | 14.9 | (14) | 22.3 | (21) |
| Whites | 40.3 | (46) | 16.7 | (19) | 43.0 | (49) |
| Income for people who work for wages | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 88.2 | (91) | 10.7 | (11) | 0.1 | (1) |
| Whites | 89.9 | (107) | 7.6 | (9) | 2.5 | (3) |
| Employment opportunities in the county | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 74.5 | (76) | 17.7 | (18) | 7.8 | (8) |
| Whites | 84.5 | (98) | 11.2 | (13) | 4.3 | (5) |
| ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| Agriculture and land use situation | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 61.9 | (60) | 13.4 | (13) | 24.7 | (24) |
| Whites | 69.9 | (79) | 15.9 | (18) | 14.2 | (16) |
| Quality of the physical environment | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 77.4 | (65) | 16.7 | (14) | 5.9 | (5) |
| Whites | 61.3 | (65) | 28.3 | (30) | 10.4 | (11) |
| SERVICES | | | | | | |
| Quality of roads and transportation system | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 83.5 | (86) | 14.6 | (15) | 1.9 | (2) |
| Whites | 84.1 | (106) | 12.7 | (16) | 3.2 | (4) |
| Public utilities | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 88.0 | (88) | 12.0 | (12) | 0.0 | (0) |
| Whites | 81.0 | (98) | 18.2 | (22) | 0.8 | (1) |
| Quality of medical care and health services | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 90.4 | (94) | 5.8 | (6) | 3.8 | (4) |
| Whites | 75.6 | (93) | 11.4 | (14) | 13.0 | (16) |
| Quality of church and religion | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 60.8 | (62) | 24.5 | (25) | 14.7 | (15) |
| Whites | 56.5 | (69) | 32.0 | (39) | 11.5 | (14) |
| Welfare programs | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 86.1 | (87) | 9.9 | (10) | 4.0 | (4) |
| Whites | 80.0 | (84) | 9.5 | (10) | 10.5 | (11) |
| Effectiveness of government housing programs | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 90.0 | (90) | 8.0 | (8) | 2.0 | (2) |
| Whites | 87.5 | (98) | 10.7 | (12) | 1.8 | (2) |
| Recreational opportunities | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 58.6 | (51) | 36.8 | (32) | 4.6 | (4) |
| Whites | 54.1 | (60) | 38.7 | (43) | 7.2 | (8) |
| SUBPOPULATIONS | | | | | | |
| Situation and opportunities for young people | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 91.1 | (93) | 7.8 | (8) | 0.1 | (1) |
| Whites | 82.2 | (97) | 16.1 | (19) | 1.7 | (2) |
| Situation and opportunities for old people | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 86.5 | (90) | 10.6 | (11) | 2.9 | (3) |
| Whites | 68.3 | (84) | 26.0 | (32) | 5.7 | (7) |
| Quality of life for the poor | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 82.7 | (86) | 12.5 | (13) | 4.8 | (5) |
| Whites | 90.1 | (109) | 7.4 | (9) | 2.5 | (3) |
| Situation and opportunities for blacks | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 94.2 | (98) | 3.9 | (4) | 1.9 | (2) |
| Whites | 98.4 | (118) | 0.8 | (1) | 0.8 | (1) |
| OVER-ALL QUALITY OF LIFE | | | | | | |
| Quality of life for most people | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 76.4 | (81) | 17.9 | (19) | 5.7 | (6) |
| Whites | 81.9 | (104) | 8.7 | (11) | 9.4 | (12) |
| County as a place to live | | | | | | |
| Blacks | 89.4 | (93) | 10.6 | (11) | 0.0 | (0) |
| Whites | 83.0 | (103) | 14.5 | (18) | 12.5 | (3) |

Most respondents indicated that county services had improved. There were no major differences in opinions of blacks and whites except for medical service and health care.

A substantial majority of both black and white respondents believed there had been an improvement in the situations of young people, old people, blacks and the poor. This also was true for the two overall quality of life items--quality of life for most people and of their county as a place to live. Black-white differences for the subpopulations and overall quality of life items were not very large, except for situations and opportunities for old people---more than 86% of the blacks stated that the situation had improved while only about 68% of the whites responded positively.

Knowledgeables generally agreed with household respondents^{9,10} that quality of life had improved. However, less than 50% of the knowledgeables believed there had been improvement in quality of county government, the physical environment and church and religion (Table 5).

Crime and law enforcement, real income and agriculture and land use were areas where the percentage of respondents perceiving an improvement was substantially higher for knowledgeables than for household respondents. The situation was reversed for the quality of public schools and the situation and opportunities for young people, old people and blacks.

More than one half of the household respondents in the other southern states felt that eight items had not improved---all three county government items, real income,

Table 5. Changes in quality of life as perceived by open-country residents and knowledgeables of Clay, Coahoma, Holmes, Lawrence, Neshoba and Tunica counties, Mississippi by quality of life item, 1960 to 1973.

| Quality of Life Item | Type of Perceived Change Between 1960 and 1973 | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------|------|
| | Improved | | Remained the Same | | Gotten Worse | |
| | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. |
| COUNTY GOVERNMENT | | | | | | |
| Quality of county government | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 69.0 | (147) | 23.9 | (51) | 7.1 | (15) |
| Knowledgeables | 49.1 | (108) | 50.0 | (110) | 0.9 | (2) |
| Politics and political parties | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 63.0 | (119) | 26.4 | (50) | 10.6 | (20) |
| Knowledgeables | 61.9 | (135) | 34.9 | (76) | 3.2 | (7) |
| Crime and law enforcement | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 53.2 | (116) | 24.3 | (53) | 22.5 | (49) |
| Knowledgeables | 74.7 | (165) | 23.1 | (51) | 2.2 | (5) |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | |
| Quality of public schools | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 69.0 | (136) | 10.2 | (20) | 20.8 | (41) |
| Knowledgeables | 50.2 | (111) | 10.0 | (22) | 39.8 | (88) |
| Opportunities for education and training beyond high school | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 88.8 | (183) | 9.7 | (20) | 1.5 | (3) |
| Knowledgeables | 91.7 | (200) | 7.3 | (16) | 1.0 | (2) |
| INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT | | | | | | |
| Real income | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 50.5 | (105) | 15.9 | (33) | 33.6 | (70) |
| Knowledgeables | 70.6 | (156) | 27.6 | (61) | 1.8 | (4) |
| Employment opportunities in the county | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 79.8 | (174) | 14.2 | (31) | 6.0 | (13) |
| Knowledgeables | 80.0 | (176) | 14.5 | (32) | 5.5 | (12) |
| ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| Agriculture and land use situation | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 66.2 | (139) | 14.8 | (31) | 19.0 | (40) |
| Knowledgeables | 86.2 | (187) | 10.6 | (23) | 3.2 | (7) |
| Quality of the physical environment | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 68.4 | (130) | 23.2 | (44) | 8.4 | (16) |
| Knowledgeables | 20.0 | (44) | 63.6 | (140) | 16.4 | (36) |
| SERVICES | | | | | | |
| Quality of roads and transportation system | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 83.8 | (192) | 13.6 | (31) | 2.6 | (6) |
| Knowledgeables | 85.0 | (187) | 11.8 | (26) | 3.2 | (7) |
| Public utilities | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 84.2 | (186) | 15.4 | (34) | 0.4 | (1) |
| Knowledgeables | 87.7 | (192) | 11.4 | (25) | 0.9 | (2) |
| Quality of medical care and health services | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 82.4 | (187) | 8.8 | (20) | 8.8 | (20) |
| Knowledgeables | 84.6 | (187) | 14.5 | (32) | 0.9 | (2) |
| Quality of church and religion | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 58.4 | (131) | 28.6 | (64) | 13.0 | (29) |
| Knowledgeables | 31.2 | (67) | 65.6 | (141) | 3.3 | (7) |
| Welfare programs | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 83.0 | (171) | 9.7 | (20) | 7.3 | (15) |
| Knowledgeables | 81.0 | (175) | 11.1 | (24) | 7.9 | (17) |
| Recreational opportunities | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 56.0 | (111) | 37.9 | (75) | 6.1 | (12) |
| Knowledgeables | 56.4 | (124) | 32.3 | (71) | 11.3 | (25) |
| SUBPOPULATIONS | | | | | | |
| Situation and opportunities for young people | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 86.4 | (190) | 12.3 | (27) | 1.3 | (3) |
| Knowledgeables | 70.5 | (155) | 26.8 | (59) | 2.7 | (6) |
| Situation and opportunities for old people | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 76.7 | (190) | 18.9 | (43) | 4.4 | (10) |
| Knowledgeables | 63.2 | (139) | 35.4 | (78) | 1.4 | (3) |
| Quality of life for the poor | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 86.7 | (195) | 9.8 | (22) | 3.5 | (8) |
| Knowledgeables | 88.4 | (190) | 8.8 | (19) | 2.8 | (6) |
| Situation and opportunities for blacks | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 96.5 | (216) | 2.2 | (5) | 1.3 | (3) |
| Knowledgeables | 82.3 | (182) | 14.5 | (32) | 3.2 | (7) |
| OVER-ALL QUALITY OF LIFE | | | | | | |
| Quality of life for most people | | | | | | |
| Household respondents | 79.4 | (185) | 12.9 | (30) | 7.7 | (18) |
| Knowledgeables | 96.8 | (214) | 2.3 | (5) | 0.9 | (2) |

the two environment items, church and religion and recreational opportunities (Table 6). The percentage of respondents expressing the belief that quality of life had improved was higher for Mississippi than for the other southern states, for all items.

PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN 1973

A majority of respondents in Mississippi rated quality of all but three items "good" in 1973. Exceptions were citizens obedience of laws (black respondents), real income and recreational opportunities (white respondents). The quality of life of the various subgroups also was rated "good" by a majority of both black and white respondents, the one exception being the situation and opportunities for blacks (Table 7).

More than one half of the respondents in the seven other southern states rated the quality of six categories as only "fair" in 1973---all three county government items, real income, the agricultural and land use situation and recreational opportunities (Table 8). For categories that a majority of both groups rated "good", the percentages were higher in Mississippi than in the other southern states, with the exception of the situation and opportunities for blacks.

FEARS AND HOPES OF MISSISSIPPI RESPONDENTS¹¹

The S-79 project was not designed to determine respondents' perceptions of future changes in quality of life in their county; however, household respondents were asked to express their fears and hopes for the future of their families. The results provide insights into the improvements in

Table 6. Changes in quality of life as perceived by open-country residents of Mississippi and of seven other Southern States,* by quality of life item, 1960-1973.

| Quality of Life Item | Type of the Perceived Change Between 1960 and 1973 | | | | | |
|---|--|--------|-------------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | Improved | | Remained the Same | | Gotten Worse | |
| | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. |
| COUNTY GOVERNMENT | | | | | | |
| Quality of county government | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 69.0 | (147) | 23.9 | (51) | 7.1 | (14) |
| Other states | 35.0 | (486) | 47.5 | (658) | 17.5 | (242) |
| Politics and political parties | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 63.0 | (119) | 26.4 | (50) | 10.6 | (20) |
| Other states | 23.6 | (299) | 51.9 | (658) | 24.5 | (311) |
| Crime and law enforcement | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 53.2 | (116) | 24.3 | (53) | 22.5 | (49) |
| Other states | 29.2 | (438) | 35.4 | (532) | 35.4 | (532) |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | |
| Quality of public schools | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 69.0 | (136) | 10.2 | (20) | 20.8 | (41) |
| Other states | 58.0 | (848) | 13.1 | (191) | 28.9 | (422) |
| Quality of private schools | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 87.6 | (141) | 9.9 | (16) | 2.5 | (4) |
| Other states | 74.8 | (255) | 16.7 | (57) | 8.5 | (29) |
| Opportunities for education and training beyond high school | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 88.8 | (183) | 9.7 | (20) | 1.5 | (3) |
| Other states | 81.9 | (1192) | 14.9 | (216) | 3.2 | (47) |
| INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT | | | | | | |
| Real income | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 50.5 | (105) | 15.9 | (33) | 33.6 | (70) |
| Other states | 34.3 | (499) | 28.2 | (410) | 37.5 | (545) |
| Income for people who work for wages | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 89.2 | (198) | 9.0 | (20) | 1.8 | (4) |
| Other states | 81.9 | (1255) | 14.2 | (218) | 3.9 | (59) |
| Employment opportunities in the county | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 79.8 | (174) | 14.2 | (31) | 6.0 | (13) |
| Other states | 69.8 | (1069) | 18.6 | (284) | 11.6 | (178) |
| ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| Agriculture and land use situation | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 66.2 | (139) | 14.8 | (31) | 19.0 | (40) |
| Other states | 47.3 | (620) | 24.8 | (325) | 27.9 | (366) |
| Quality of the physical environment | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 68.4 | (130) | 23.2 | (44) | 8.4 | (16) |
| Other states | 31.9 | (447) | 45.2 | (633) | 22.9 | (321) |
| SERVICES | | | | | | |
| Quality of roads and transportation system | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 83.8 | (192) | 13.6 | (31) | 2.6 | (6) |
| Other states | 75.6 | (1204) | 14.9 | (237) | 9.5 | (152) |
| Public utilities | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 84.2 | (186) | 15.4 | (34) | 0.4 | (1) |
| Other states | 74.0 | (1080) | 20.3 | (296) | 5.7 | (84) |
| Quality of medical care and health services | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 82.4 | (187) | 8.8 | (20) | 8.8 | (20) |
| Other states | 61.9 | (956) | 19.5 | (302) | 18.6 | (287) |
| Quality of church and religion | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 58.4 | (131) | 28.6 | (64) | 13.0 | (29) |
| Other states | 40.7 | (604) | 39.9 | (592) | 19.4 | (289) |
| Welfare programs | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 83.0 | (171) | 9.7 | (20) | 7.3 | (15) |
| Other states | 58.1 | (717) | 20.4 | (251) | 21.5 | (265) |
| Effectiveness of government housing program | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 88.7 | (188) | 9.4 | (20) | 1.9 | (4) |
| Other states | 80.2 | (1045) | 13.0 | (169) | 6.8 | (89) |
| Recreational opportunities | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 56.0 | (111) | 37.9 | (75) | 6.1 | (12) |
| Other states | 47.5 | (655) | 36.3 | (500) | 16.2 | (224) |
| SUBPOPULATIONS | | | | | | |
| Situation and opportunities for young people | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 86.4 | (190) | 12.3 | (27) | 1.3 | (3) |
| Other states | 63.9 | (969) | 22.9 | (347) | 13.2 | (201) |
| Situation and opportunities for old people | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 76.7 | (174) | 18.9 | (43) | 4.4 | (10) |
| Other states | 55.7 | (840) | 31.4 | (474) | 12.9 | (195) |
| Quality of life for the poor | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 86.7 | (195) | 9.8 | (22) | 3.5 | (8) |
| Other states | 69.3 | (1038) | 21.0 | (314) | 9.7 | (145) |
| Situation and opportunities for blacks | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 96.5 | (216) | 2.2 | (5) | 1.3 | (3) |
| Other states | 84.9 | (1074) | 11.9 | (150) | 3.2 | (41) |
| OVER-ALL QUALITY OF LIFE | | | | | | |
| Quality of life for most people | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 79.4 | (185) | 12.9 | (30) | 7.7 | (18) |
| Other states | 69.5 | (1122) | 18.5 | (299) | 12.0 | (194) |
| County as a place to live | | | | | | |
| Mississippi | 86.0 | (196) | 12.7 | (29) | 1.3 | (3) |
| Other states | 72.4 | (1134) | 23.5 | (369) | 4.1 | (64) |

*Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee.

quality of life that open-country Mississippi residents desire for their families.

No fears were expressed by 108 (37.5%) of the 288 interviewees who responded. Fears were expressed by 87 (65.9%) of the black respondents and 93 (59.6%) of the white respondents. The 87 blacks mentioned 111 fears. The 93 whites mentioned 93 fears (Table 9).

Economic fears (concerns about how to earn money, how to get on welfare and that their car would break down) were mentioned most often by blacks, followed by fears about their children and about family health (Table 9). Health fears were mentioned most often by whites, followed very closely by economic fears (concern about being unable to pay bills, a possible depression and a business or farm failure).

No hopes were expressed by 56 (17.9%) of the 312 interviewees who responded to this question. Hopes were expressed by 114 (83.2%) of the black respondents and 142 (81.2%) of the white respondents. The 114 blacks mentioned 189 hopes. The 142 whites mentioned 164 hopes (Table 10).

The rank order of hopes was the same for blacks and whites. Hopes for economic improvement were mentioned most often, followed by hopes for better housing, better health and better opportunities for children.

Table 7. Rating of quality of life in 1973 by black and white residents of Clay, Coahoma, Holmes, Lawrence, Neshoba and Tunica counties, Mississippi, by quality of life item.

| Quality of Life Item | Current Rating ¹ | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|------|-------|
| | Fair | | Good | |
| | % | No. | % | No. |
| COUNTY GOVERNMENT | | | | |
| Quality of county government | | | | |
| Blacks | 33.0 | (32) | 67.0 | (65) |
| Whites | 42.0 | (47) | 58.0 | (65) |
| Politics and political parties | | | | |
| Blacks | 42.4 | (38) | 57.8 | (52) |
| Whites | 38.4 | (38) | 61.6 | (61) |
| Citizens' obedience of laws | | | | |
| Blacks | 61.1 | (63) | 38.9 | (40) |
| Whites | 47.8 | (56) | 52.2 | (61) |
| EDUCATION | | | | |
| Quality of public schools | | | | |
| Blacks | 18.3 | (17) | 81.7 | (76) |
| Whites | 39.0 | (39) | 61.0 | (61) |
| Quality of private schools | | | | |
| Blacks | 19.1 | (13) | 80.9 | (55) |
| Whites | 6.5 | (6) | 93.5 | (86) |
| Opportunities for education and training beyond high school | | | | |
| Blacks | 17.0 | (16) | 83.0 | (78) |
| Whites | 19.0 | (21) | 81.0 | (89) |
| INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT | | | | |
| Real income | | | | |
| Blacks | 49.4 | (46) | 50.6 | (47) |
| Whites | 62.6 | (72) | 37.4 | (43) |
| Income for people who work for wages | | | | |
| Blacks | 30.1 | (31) | 69.9 | (72) |
| Whites | 20.5 | (24) | 79.5 | (93) |
| Employment opportunities in the county | | | | |
| Blacks | 42.1 | (43) | 57.9 | (59) |
| Whites | 22.6 | (26) | 77.4 | (89) |
| ENVIRONMENT | | | | |
| Agricultural and land use situation | | | | |
| Blacks | 40.2 | (39) | 59.8 | (58) |
| Whites | 29.2 | (33) | 70.8 | (80) |
| Quality of the physical environment | | | | |
| Blacks | 31.0 | (26) | 69.0 | (58) |
| Whites | 26.7 | (28) | 73.3 | (77) |
| SERVICES | | | | |
| Quality of roads and transportation system | | | | |
| Blacks | 38.4 | (40) | 61.6 | (64) |
| Whites | 27.8 | (35) | 72.2 | (91) |
| Public utilities | | | | |
| Blacks | 28.0 | (28) | 72.0 | (72) |
| Whites | 16.5 | (20) | 83.5 | (101) |
| Quality of medical care and health services | | | | |
| Blacks | 17.8 | (18) | 82.2 | (83) |
| Whites | 21.9 | (27) | 78.1 | (96) |
| Quality of church and religion | | | | |
| Blacks | 34.3 | (35) | 65.7 | (67) |
| Whites | 15.7 | (19) | 84.3 | (102) |
| Welfare programs | | | | |
| Blacks | 28.7 | (29) | 71.3 | (72) |
| Whites | 31.5 | (33) | 68.5 | (72) |
| Effectiveness of government housing program | | | | |
| Blacks | 27.0 | (27) | 73.0 | (73) |
| Whites | 16.2 | (18) | 83.8 | (93) |
| Recreational opportunities | | | | |
| Blacks | 31.0 | (27) | 69.0 | (60) |
| Whites | 53.2 | (59) | 46.8 | (52) |
| SUBPOPULATIONS | | | | |
| Situation and opportunities for young people | | | | |
| Blacks | 27.5 | (28) | 72.5 | (74) |
| Whites | 26.2 | (31) | 73.8 | (87) |
| Situation and opportunities for old people | | | | |
| Blacks | 43.3 | (45) | 56.7 | (59) |
| Whites | 43.9 | (54) | 56.1 | (69) |
| Situation and opportunities for blacks | | | | |
| Blacks | 51.9 | (54) | 48.1 | (50) |
| Whites | 13.4 | (16) | 86.6 | (103) |
| OVER-ALL QUALITY OF LIFE | | | | |
| County as a place to live | | | | |
| Blacks | 32.7 | (34) | 67.3 | (70) |
| Whites | 14.5 | (18) | 85.5 | (106) |

¹"Fair" and "Poor" responses are combined into one Fair category while the "Good" and "Very Good" responses are combined into the Good category.

Table 8. Rating of quality of life in 1973 by open-country residents of Mississippi and of seven other Southern States*, by quality of life item.

| Quality of Life Item | Current Rating | | | |
|---|----------------|-------|------|--------|
| | Fair | | Good | |
| | % | No. | % | No. |
| COUNTY GOVERNMENT | | | | |
| Quality of county government | | | | |
| Mississippi | 37.8 | (79) | 62.2 | (130) |
| Other states | 59.0 | (822) | 41.0 | (570) |
| Politics and political parties | | | | |
| Mississippi | 40.2 | (76) | 59.8 | (113) |
| Other states | 67.4 | (857) | 32.6 | (414) |
| Citizens' obedience of laws | | | | |
| Mississippi | 54.0 | (119) | 46.0 | (101) |
| Other states | 57.2 | (861) | 42.8 | (644) |
| EDUCATION | | | | |
| Quality of public schools | | | | |
| Mississippi | 29.0 | (56) | 71.0 | (137) |
| Other states | 41.8 | (608) | 58.2 | (848) |
| Quality of private schools | | | | |
| Mississippi | 11.9 | (19) | 88.1 | (141) |
| Other states | 30.1 | (115) | 69.9 | (268) |
| Opportunities for education and training beyond high school | | | | |
| Mississippi | 18.1 | (37) | 81.9 | (167) |
| Other states | 26.1 | (377) | 73.9 | (1063) |
| INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT | | | | |
| Real income | | | | |
| Mississippi | 56.7 | (118) | 43.3 | (90) |
| Other states | 66.7 | (953) | 33.7 | (484) |
| Income for people who work for wages | | | | |
| Mississippi | 25.0 | (55) | 75.0 | (165) |
| Other states | 35.4 | (532) | 64.6 | (971) |
| Employment opportunities in the county | | | | |
| Mississippi | 31.8 | (69) | 68.2 | (148) |
| Other states | 45.4 | (691) | 54.6 | (832) |
| ENVIRONMENT | | | | |
| Agricultural and land use situation | | | | |
| Mississippi | 34.3 | (72) | 65.7 | (138) |
| Other states | 51.0 | (661) | 49.0 | (635) |
| Quality of the physical environment | | | | |
| Mississippi | 28.6 | (54) | 71.4 | (135) |
| Other states | 44.4 | (616) | 55.6 | (772) |
| SERVICES | | | | |
| Quality of roads and transportation system | | | | |
| Mississippi | 32.6 | (75) | 67.4 | (155) |
| Other states | 37.5 | (592) | 62.5 | (985) |
| Public utilities | | | | |
| Mississippi | 21.7 | (48) | 78.3 | (173) |
| Other states | 32.8 | (473) | 67.2 | (968) |
| Quality of medical care and health services | | | | |
| Mississippi | 20.1 | (45) | 79.9 | (179) |
| Other states | 41.6 | (643) | 58.4 | (902) |
| Quality of church and religion | | | | |
| Mississippi | 24.2 | (54) | 75.8 | (169) |
| Other states | 42.1 | (620) | 57.9 | (850) |
| Welfare programs | | | | |
| Mississippi | 30.1 | (62) | 69.9 | (144) |
| Other states | 45.9 | (571) | 54.1 | (673) |
| Effectiveness of government housing program | | | | |
| Mississippi | 21.3 | (45) | 78.7 | (166) |
| Other states | 33.5 | (421) | 66.5 | (835) |
| Recreational opportunities | | | | |
| Mississippi | 43.5 | (86) | 56.5 | (112) |
| Other states | 60.1 | (819) | 39.9 | (544) |
| SUBPOPULATIONS | | | | |
| Situation and opportunities for young people | | | | |
| Mississippi | 26.8 | (59) | 73.2 | (161) |
| Other states | 47.0 | (706) | 53.0 | (797) |
| Situation and opportunities for old people | | | | |
| Mississippi | 43.6 | (99) | 56.4 | (128) |
| Other states | 48.7 | (729) | 51.3 | (768) |
| Situation and opportunities for blacks | | | | |
| Mississippi | 31.4 | (70) | 68.6 | (153) |
| Other states | 25.6 | (318) | 74.4 | (923) |
| OVER-ALL QUALITY OF LIFE | | | | |
| County as a place to live | | | | |
| Mississippi | 22.8 | (52) | 77.2 | (176) |
| Other states | 24.0 | (374) | 76.0 | (1186) |

* See footnote, Table 6.

Table 9. Expressed fears of 87 black and 93 white open-country residents of Clay, Coahoma, Holmes, Lawrence, Neshoba and Tunica counties, Mississippi, 1973

| Type of Fear | Frequency of Expression | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Total Sample | | Blacks | | Whites | |
| | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. |
| Economic | 34.2 | (70) | 37.0 | (41) | 31.2 | (29) |
| Health | 27.0 | (55) | 21.6 | (24) | 33.3 | (31) |
| Children | 23.5 | (48) | 27.9 | (31) | 18.3 | (17) |
| Crime | 4.9 | (10) | 2.7 | (3) | 7.5 | (7) |
| Other | 10.3 | (21) | 10.8 | (12) | 9.7 | (9) |
| Total Fears Mentioned | 100.0 | (204) | 100.0 | (111) | 100.0 | (93) |

Table 10. Expressed hopes of 114 black and 142 white open-country residents of Clay, Coahoma, Holmes, Lawrence, Neshoba and Tunica counties, Mississippi, 1973

| Type of Hope | Frequency of Expression | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Total Sample | | Blacks | | Whites | |
| | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. |
| Economic | 26.4 | (93) | 28.6 | (54) | 23.8 | (39) |
| Housing | 21.2 | (75) | 20.1 | (38) | 22.6 | (37) |
| Health | 20.7 | (73) | 20.1 | (38) | 21.3 | (35) |
| Children | 18.1 | (64) | 19.6 | (37) | 16.5 | (27) |
| Religion | 7.7 | (27) | 6.3 | (12) | 9.1 | (15) |
| Other | 5.9 | (21) | 5.3 | (10) | 6.7 | (11) |
| Total Hopes Mentioned | 100.0 | (353) | 100.0 | (189) | 100.0 | (164) |

¹Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse and Willard L. Rodgers, *The Quality of American Life* Sage Foundation: New York, 1976. p. 3.

²See Preface for objective quality of life reports for Mississippi.

³W. I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl*, Harper and Row, Publishers: New York, 1967. p. xii.

⁴These segments had been selected for the S-44 project, a predecessor of the S-79 project. For a more detailed discussion of the sampling procedure, see "Sampling Design for the Regional Rural Sociology Project, S-44" unpublished paper, Department of Statistics, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, Spring, 1960.

⁵For further information on the sampling procedure, see, for example: A. L. Coleman, C. M. Coughenour, A. V. Gabbard and D. Zeirath, "Rural Development and the Quality of Life in Harlan, Perry, Whitley and Wolfe Counties: Summaries of Data from Surveys of Households in 1961 and 1973;" mimeographed papers, Department of Sociology, University of Kentucky, December, 1973; H. G. Pieper, N. A. Holt and H. M. Miller "Perceptions of Quality of Life in Open-Country Areas: A Case Study," published in *Rural Sociology in the South: 1974*, Proceedings (Rural Sociology Section) Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, Memphis, Tennessee, February, 1974.

⁶For more details on the selection of knowledgeable, see: Tatree Nontasak, "Community Knowledgeables' Attitudes Concerning Changes in Selected Socioeconomic Activities of Certain Counties in Mississippi," unpublished Masters thesis, Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi, December 1973, pp. 24-29; Gerald O. Windham and Tatree Nontasak, "Attitudes of Knowledgeables Toward Community Change," published in *Rural Sociology in the South: 1974*, Proceedings (Rural Sociology Section) of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, Memphis, Tennessee, February 1974; and Virginia Steelman, "Knowledgeables' Opinions of Changes in the Quality of Life in Twenty-six Southern Counties, 1960-1972: S-79 Regional Research Project," published in *Rural Sociology in the South: 1975*, Proceedings (Rural Sociology Section) of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, Memphis, Tennessee, February 1974.

⁷Although one of the Mississippi counties contained an Indian Reservation and some of the knowledgeable from that county are Indians, there were no Indians in the Mississippi household sample. It should be noted that Indian reservations were not included in the S-79 sampling universe.

⁸The actual household respondent interviewing started in 1972 and continued into 1973. For ease of presentation we will refer to it as 1973 data.

⁹Answers for four of the items elicited from the household respondents were not obtained from the knowledgeable (namely, the quality of private schools, the income for people who work for wages, county as a place to live, and the effectiveness of the government housing programs) so of necessity these are excluded from our analysis.

¹⁰For a comparison of black and white household respondents' and knowledgeable's perceptions of changes in the quality of life using Mississippi S-79 data see: Tatree Nontasak and Wolfgang Frese "Perceptions About Changes in the Quality of Life in Rural Mississippi: A Comparison Between Knowledgeables and Household Respondents" published in *Rural Sociology in the South: 1975* the Proceedings (Rural Sociology Section) of the Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, New Orleans, Louisiana, February, 1975.

¹¹It should be noted that using family hopes and fears to estimate the situation in the county must be done with caution and that we do so for heuristic purposes only.