

Education and Socio-Economic Wellbeing in Racially Diverse Rural Counties: The  
Contribution of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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## Abstract

This thesis examines trends in the socio-economic well-being in rural counties where Blacks represent one-third or more of the population. In addition, this thesis also examines the impact that college education has on the economic development of these counties, with particular focus on the role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The thesis is composed of two papers: “Education and Socioeconomic Wellbeing in Racially Diverse Rural Counties”, and “Economic Growth in Racially Diverse Rural Counties: The Contribution of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.”

The first of the two papers provides a descriptive review of the racially diverse rural counties (RDRCs) which are located exclusively in the rural south and generally have very low levels of economic well-being. On a positive note, college education levels in RDRCs are found to have increased rapidly between 1990 and 2000. County-level, regression analysis suggests that these increases were in part due to the concentration of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the region. Local investments in K–12 education are also found to be linked to county education levels.

The second paper uses county subdivision level regression analysis, and finds that proximity to HBCUs influences college education amongst Blacks in RDRCs positively. Further county subdivision-level regression analysis suggests that the rate of college education attainment in these counties amongst Blacks and the general population has a significant positive impact upon income growth in RDRCs.

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