

GEOPHAGY AMONG BLACKS IN NORTHEASTERN ALABAMA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis determines and analyzes the occurrence, distributions, and cultural characteristics of geophagical practices among Blacks in northeastern Alabama. The data were gathered by interviewing 300 Black respondents and 25 medical doctors concerning the consumption of clay and/or laundry starch. It has been determined that, despite a considerable decline in the habit, a significant number of Blacks within the area continue to practice geophagy. Results revealed that geophagy is almost totally a female culture trait, and that 248 out of the 300 women interviewed had, at some time during their lives, practiced geophagy. At the time of this survey, 39 percent of all respondents were actively engaged in the consumption of clay and/or laundry starch. Indications from this study are that the custom is declining and that within another decade or two the Black culture trait may be defunct in the study area.