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Twenty-Five Years of Black America: Two Steps Forward and One Step Back?

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The nature of social and economic inequality as it exists now between Blacks and Whites in the United States is explored in this paper. Summary statistics on education, earnings, employment, family structure, incarceration and life expectancy are presented by age, sex and race. It is suggested that, while progress has been made in narrowing the racial gap in social standing, there remains a significant disparity that warrants continuing concern.

I. INTRODUCTION

The data concerning the state of America, black and white, over the past 25 years is both disheartening and encouraging. Disheartening are many measures of the opportunities and difficulties faced by black children and, to a lesser extent, white children. Infant mortality has declined, but black children are less and less likely to be raised by both of their parents.

Many objective measures of achievement—exam scores (national proficiency exams as well as SAT exams), levels of education, and income—are more encouraging. Even as scores on several exams have remained roughly constant for white children and young adults, scores for blacks have increased. More remarkable is the fact that these increases seem to have occurred while the black exam-taking population has *increased*.

Based on a report of the former Center for New Black Leadership compiled by Russell D. Murphy, Jr. under the supervision of Professor Glenn C. Loury, and with the assistance of Kasimir Nwuke, at the Institute on Race and Social Division, Boston University.

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So, looking at black America over the past quarter century, there is much for both optimists and pessimists.

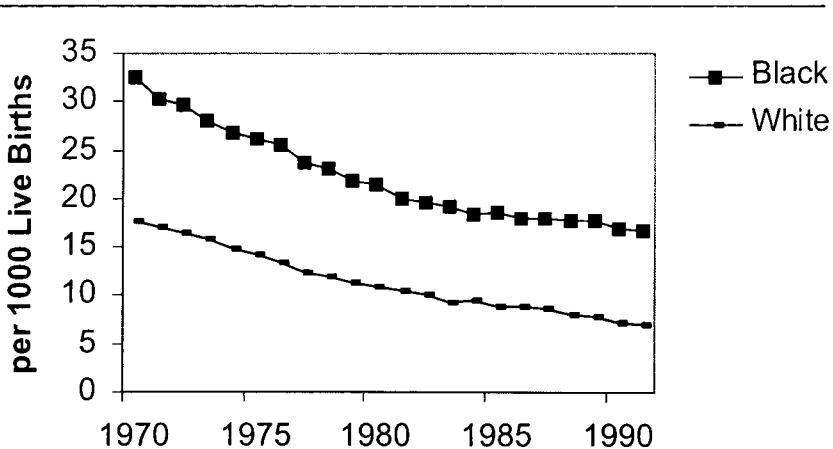
II. CHILDREN

Birth is much safer today than it was 25 years ago (Figure 1), but arriving in this world is still more hazardous for black children than for white ones. The infant mortality rate¹ for black children was 17.0 in 1990, while for white children it was only 7.3. This difference has persisted over time even though substantial progress has been made. In 1970, rates for both were considerably higher: 32.6 for black children and 17.8 for white ones.

A. Family structure

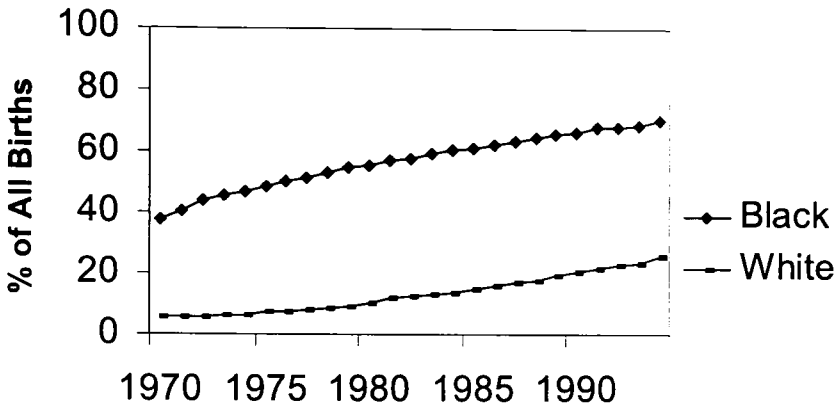
The families into which these children are born are fairly different than the ones of their counterparts of 25 years ago. Among black women, unmarried mothers accounted for 68% of all births in 1992 (Figure 2), while in 1960 they accounted for only 22%. For white mothers, the increase has been even more

Figure 1
Infant Mortality



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1996, Table 2-2; race of the child.

Figure 2
Births to Unmarried Mothers



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1995, Table 1-76; race of the child through 1980, race of the mother 1981-1992.

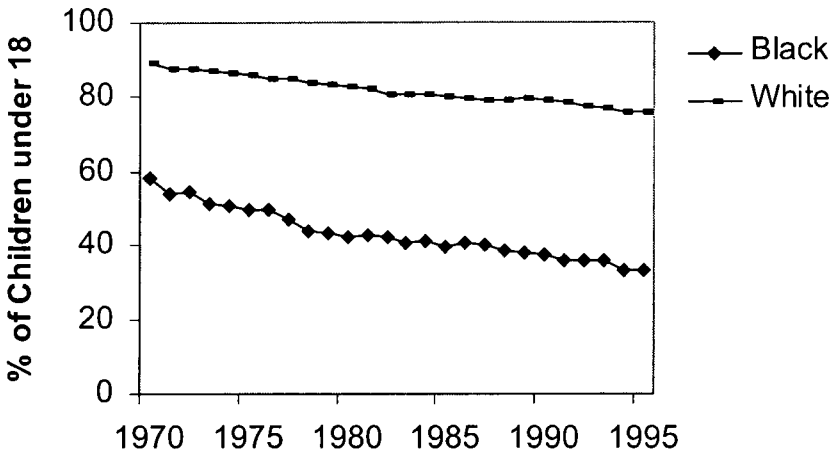
dramatic, although from a smaller base: from 2% in 1960 to 23% in 1992.

Not surprisingly, as fewer children are born to married mothers, fewer live with both of their parents. The decline has been steady for both black and white children, but black children face a much larger problem: less than 40% of black children lived with both of their parents in 1994. Children of educated parents are more likely to live with two parents (Table 1). There remain significant differences between whites and blacks at all education levels, but the most dramatic differences are for those children whose parents have a high school education or less.

B. Poverty

Poverty rates for both black and white children have increased slightly, but most of the increase has been among white children. Although poverty rates for black children have not changed much over the past 20 years, the rates are strikingly high: 42% in 1995 (Figure 4). Rates for white children *have* increased: from 10.5% in 1970 to 15.5% in 1995.

Figure 3
Children Living with Both Parents



Source: Saluter, 1994 and previous years.

Table 1

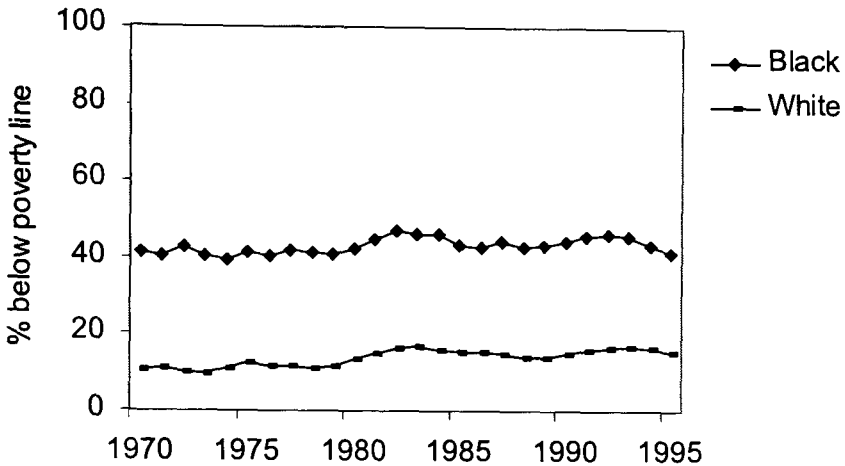
Children under 18 living with both parents (% in 1995)

<i>Parent's Education</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
Less than 12	35.0	73.8
Grades 9-12 (no diploma)	18.1	62.1
High school graduate	38.8	74.1
College: Associates degree or none	40.0	77.6
Bachelor's degree	62.8	90.3
Graduate or professional degree	66.9	92.6

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996, Table No. 82.

For children, a major factor associated with living in poverty is living in a family headed by a woman. The poverty rate for these families is quite high: roughly 60% for families headed by black women and roughly 40% for families headed by white women (Figure 5a, 5b). Although the risk has improved somewhat for

Figure 4

Poverty Rate: children under 18

Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C147B01.

black families over the past 20 years, it is still larger than the comparable risk for families headed by white women. For married couple families, the risk is much lower. Black families still face higher risks than white ones, but the gap has narrowed.

C. School enrollment

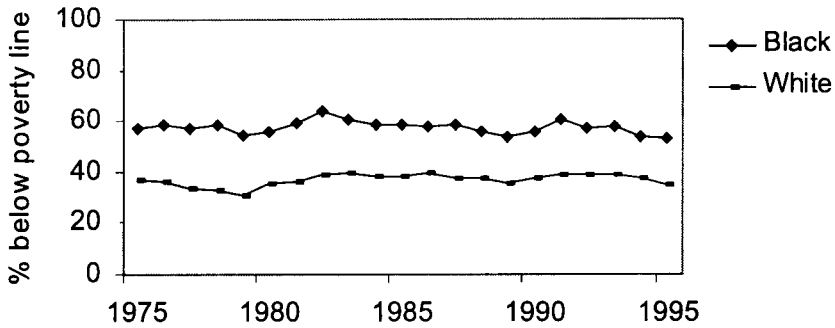
Preschool enrollment rates for 3 to 4 year old black children increased from 18.7% in 1973 to 29.8% in 1993. For white children, enrollment rates increased more: from 17.8% to 38.0% (Figure 6a, 6b). By the early 1990s, enrollment of 5 year olds in kindergarten had increased slightly while enrollment in first grade decreased slightly (Figure 7). Both kindergarten and first grade enrollment rates are similar for black and white 5 year olds.

D. School progress

National assessment tests of proficiency in reading and mathematics have shown fairly steady improvements since 1970 (1973 for mathematics). Increases in average scores for black students

Figure 5a

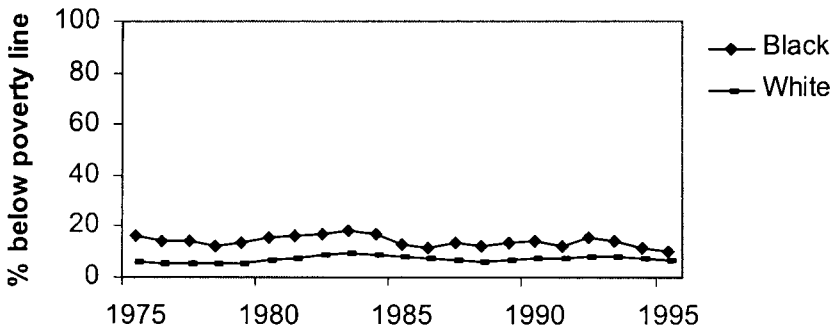
Poverty Rate: female headed families (with children under 18)



Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C147B01.

Figure 5b

Poverty Rate: married couple families (with children under 18)

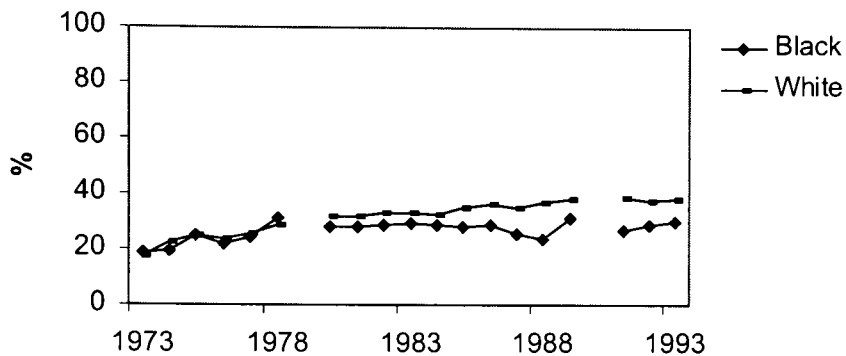


Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C147B01.

aged 9, 13, and 17 have been fairly impressive, particularly relative to increases in average scores for white students (Table 2). In 1973, the average mathematics score for black students aged 17 was 270 (out of 500); by 1994 it had increased to 286.

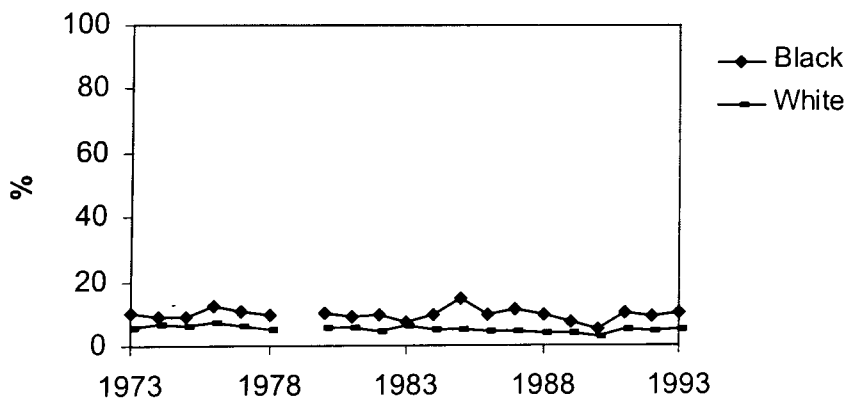
Average reading scores for both white and black students fell in the 1980s. For black students, the decrease came later (between

Figure 6a
Enrollment, 3-4 year olds: Pre-school



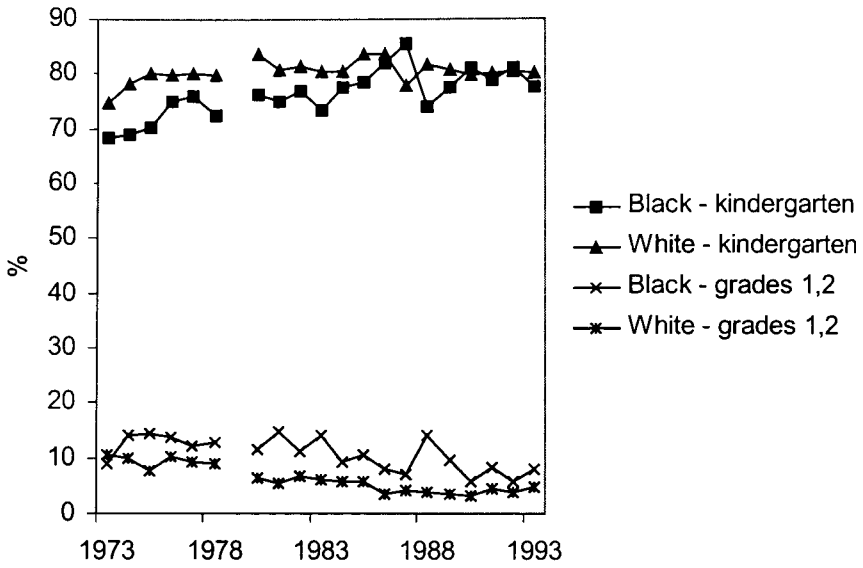
Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C002D01; Pre-school enrollment is full- and half-day enrollment in nursery school.

Figure 6b
Enrollment, 3-4 year olds: Kindergarten



Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C002D01; Pre-school enrollment is full- and half-day enrollment in nursery school.

Figure 7

Enrollment of 5 year olds

Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C002D02.

1988 and 1990 instead of between 1980 and 1984) and was larger. The scores of black 13 year olds reached a peak of 243 in 1988 and fell to 234 by 1994; the scores of white 13 year olds fell from 264 in 1980 to 261 in 1988.

The distribution of scores suggests that improvements were widespread: the scores of black students at the 5th, 50th, and 95th percentile all climbed (relative to those of white students) from 1978 to 1994 (Table 3). Unfortunately, the gaps between black and white students seem to have been smallest in the 1986 to 1990 period (for the older students) and appear to have increased again after that.

E. Conclusion

The story of American childhoods is a mixed one. In some respects, black children face large and growing deficits compared to white children:

Table 2
Average proficiency scores

	Mathematics						Reading						
	Black			White			Black			White			
	Age 9	13	17	Age 9	13	17	Age 9	13	17	Age 9	13	17	
1973	190	228	270	225	274	310	1971	170	222	239	214	261	291
1978	192	230	268	224	272	306	1975	181	226	241	217	262	293
1982	195	240	272	224	274	304	1980	189	233	243	221	264	293
1986	202	249	279	227	274	308	1984	186	236	264	218	263	295
1990	208	249	288	235	276	310	1988	189	243	274	218	261	295
1992	208	250	286	235	279	312	1990	182	242	267	217	262	297
1994	212	252	286	237	281	312	1992	185	238	261	218	266	297
							1994	185	234	266	218	265	296

Scale from 0 to 500:

150 – Simple arithmetic facts

200 – Beginning skills and understanding

250 – Numerical operations; beginning problem solving

300 – Moderately complex procedures and reasoning

350 – Multi-step problem solving and algebra

Scale from 0 to 500:

150 – Simple, discrete reading levels

200 – Partial skills and understanding

250 – Interrelate ideas and make generalizations

300 – Understand complicated information

350 – Learn from specialized reading materials

Stubbs, 1996, Tables C013B02 and C015B02.

Table 3
Differences in percentile scores (black-white)

Percentile	Mathematics								Reading							
	1978	1982	1986	1990	1992	1994	Percentile	1980	1984	1988	1990	1992	1994			
Age 9:							Age 9:									
5	-32	-31	-25	-26	-27	-22	5	-38	-31	-25	-29	-34	-33			
50	-32	-28	-25	-28	-27	-25	50	-31	-33	-31	-36	-36	-35			
95	-20	-29	-27	-26	-25	-24	95	-29	-32	-29	-34	-27	-27			
Age 13:							Age 13:									
5	-42	-34	-24	-26	-31	-29	5	-30	-25	-13	-22	-34	-30			
50	-43	-34	-24	-28	-28	-31	50	-33	-27	-20	-20	-29	-31			
95	-42	-34	-27	-27	-28	-25	95	-31	-24	-17	-19	-27	-29			
Age 17:							Age 17:									
5	-35	-28	-24	-15	-26	-24	5	-50	-18	-19	-28	-41	-30			
50	-39	-33	-28	-23	-26	-26	50	-50	-27	-21	-30	-31	-30			
95	-37	-32	-31	-19	-26	-33	95	-50	-32	-19	-29	-26	-26			

Calculations from data in Stubbs, 1996, Tables C015D03 and C013D03.

- the likelihood of being born to an unmarried mother
- the likelihood of *not* living with both parents
- the likelihood of living in poverty

However, not all is bleak:

- the poverty rate for black children in married couple households has fallen (even while that for their white counterparts has increased)
- school enrollment rates for young children have increased
- national measures of mathematics and reading proficiency show both absolute and relative progress for black children at all ages
- the proficiency gains are widespread: they are *not* limited to only high or only low achieving students

III. TEENS

A. Educational choices

Up through the age of 17, the school enrollment rates of black and white teens are roughly equivalent (Table 4). Rates are also similar for those over the age of 25, with black enrollment rates often slightly higher than white ones. For the late teens and early twenties, however, black enrollment rates have tended to be lower than white ones. Over the 20 years since 1975, the gaps between black and white young adults aged 18–19 and 20–21 have grown. In 1975, black and white 18–19 year olds had almost identical school enrollment rates (46.8% and 46.9%). By 1994, however, the rate for white 18–19 year olds had risen to 62.6% while the rate for black 18–19 year olds had risen to only 53.4%. Similarly, while black 20–21 year olds were only 5.4 points less likely to be enrolled than their white counterparts in 1975, by 1994, the gap had grown to 14.8 points.

High school dropout rates have varied from year to year for both black and white teens (Figure 8). While the single year event dropout rate (proportion of those in grades 10–12 dropping out within a given year) has fallen slightly for white students (from 5.7% in 1973 to 4.1% in 1993) it has fallen sharply for black students (from 10.1% in 1973 to 5.4% in 1993). Status dropout rates (all

Table 4

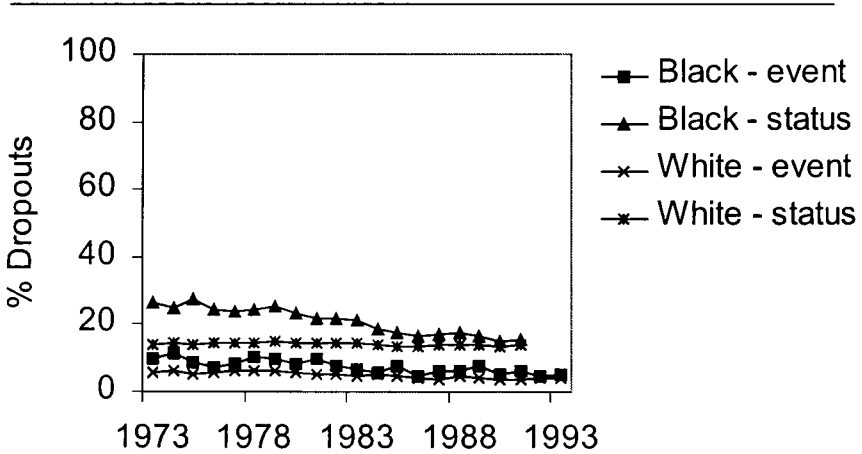
Enrollment rates (% of population group)

		16-17	18-19	20-21	22-24	25-29	30-34
1975	B	86.8	46.9	26.7	13.9	9.4	7.1
	W	89.5	46.8	32.1	16.4	10.1	6.6
1980	B	90.7	45.8	23.3	13.6	8.8	6.9
	W	89.2	47	33	16.8	9.4	6.4
1985	B	91.8	43.5	27.7	13.8	7.4	5.2
	W	92.5	53.7	37.2	17.5	9.6	6.2
1990	B	91.7	55	28.3	19.7	6.1	4.5
	W	93.5	59.1	43.1	21.9	10.4	6.2
1994	B	95.3	53.4	35.3	22.8	10.5	7.3
	W	95.1	62.6	50.1	24.9	10.8	6.7

Stubbs, 1996, Table DTAB007.

Figure 8

Dropout rates: event and status



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States.

of those aged 18-24 who are neither in high school nor have completed high school) have also fallen significantly for black students while rates for white students have remained roughly

constant. The rate for young black adults is now (1991) only slightly higher than that for young whites, while in 1973 it was more than 85% higher.

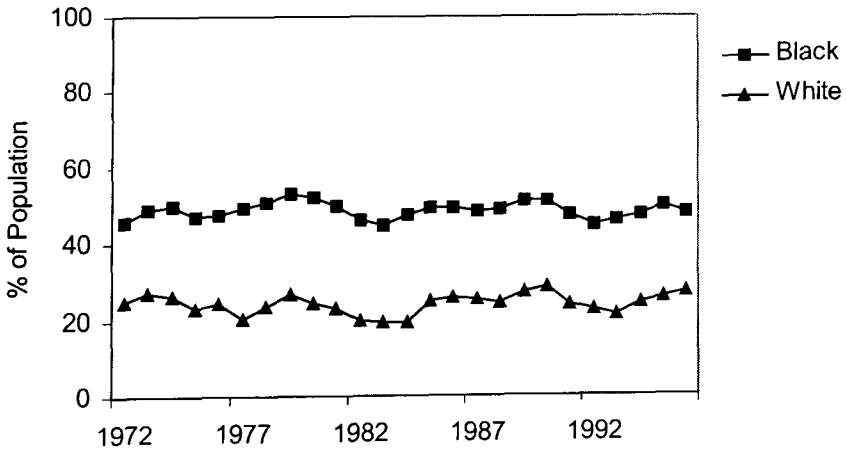
B. Labor force

The employment rates for teens have fluctuated up and down without much apparent trend. However, the rate for black teens has generally been about 20 points lower than that for white teens (Figure 9).

C. Dropouts and the labor force

Dropping out of high school seems to be an increasingly bad signal about one's future prospects. Between 1973 and 1993, employment rates (and labor force participation rates—both relative to population) for recent high school dropouts² (as proportions of the 16–24 year old population) dropped (Figure 10a). For young black adults, the declines have been relatively large: the participation rate fell from 59.4% to 43.6% while the employment rate fell from 43.9% to 26.9%. For young white adults, the declines

Figure 9
Employment to Population Ratio: 16–19 year olds



Source: BLS data on-line; Series LFS1600830, LFS1600810.

were much smaller: from 71.0% to 68.0% in participation and from 55.1% to 52.8% in employment. As the labor market prospects of dropouts has worsened, the likelihood of their calling upon government transfer programs has increased (Figure 10b). For young (25–34 year old) black adults with 9–11 years of education, the use of AFDC or public assistance has increased by almost 50%: from 23.2% to 35.6%. For similarly situated whites, use has almost doubled: from 6.0% to 11.3%.

D. High School graduates and the labor force

The overall labor market experiences of recent high school graduates who do not enter college have remained fairly constant over the past 20 years. The labor force participation rate for recent (within the year) black and white graduates has remained roughly constant, perhaps declining a little for black graduates. Employment rates for recent graduates have declined somewhat for both black and white graduates (Figure 11a). Both participation and employment rates for black graduates remain significantly lower than for their white counterparts. Use of government transfer programs among both black and white high school graduates

Figure 10a
Recent High School Dropouts: employment

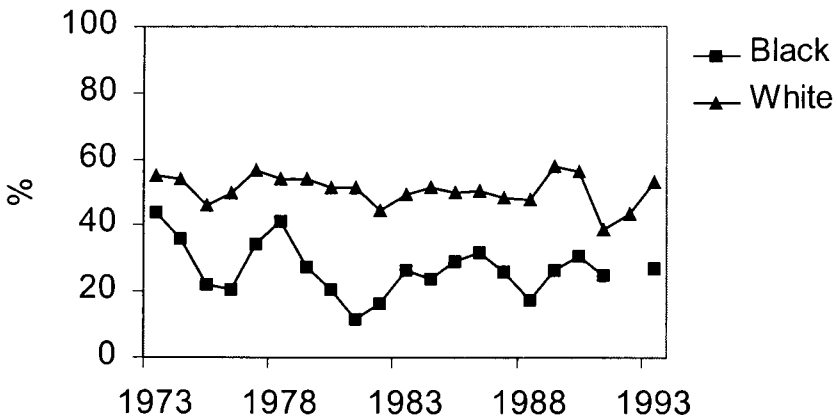
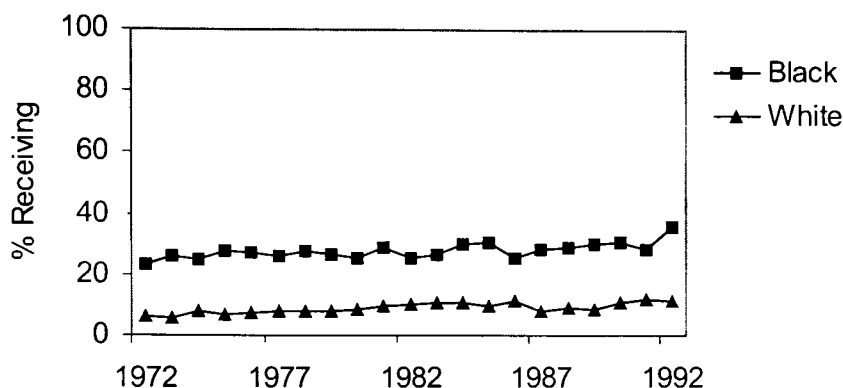


Figure 10b

AFDC or Public Assistance: 25–34 year olds with 9–11 years of education



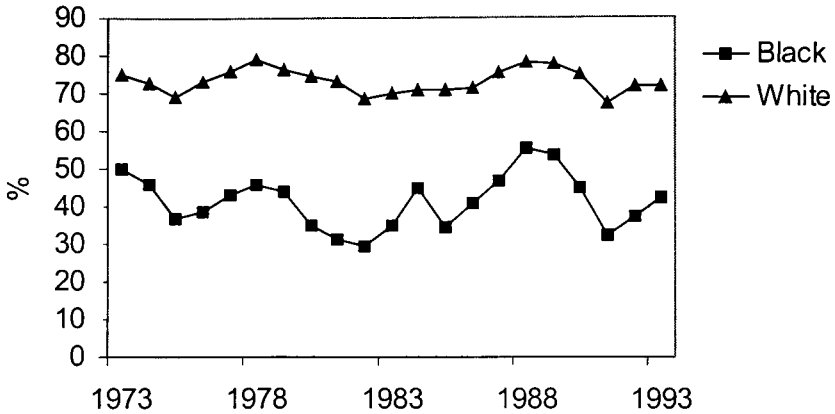
Source: Stubbs, 1996, Tables C028D04 and C032D02.

(individuals aged 25–34 with exactly 12 years of schooling) has been relatively low and constant, although the rate for white graduates has been increasing slowly (Figure 11b).

E. College

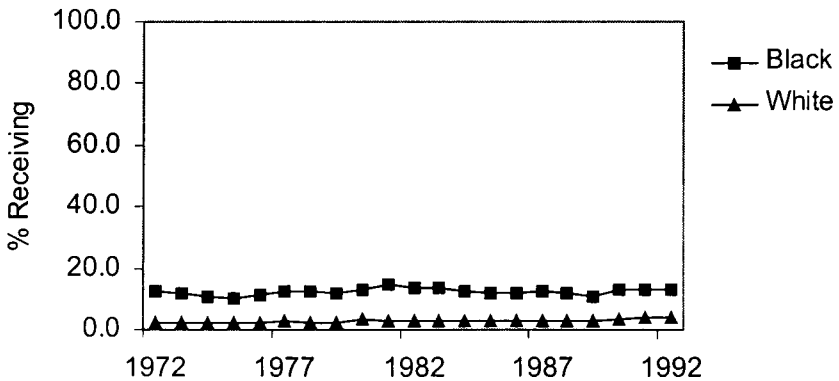
SAT scores suggest a pattern similar to that of high school dropout rates: both the dropout rates of white high school students and the SAT scores of white college-bound seniors have remained roughly constant over the 1976–1994 period (before re-norming). However, the dropout rates of black high school students have dropped *and* the SAT scores of black college-bound seniors have steadily increased (Figure 12). Mean scores of black seniors remain below those of white seniors, however. The total score³ for black college-bound seniors was 78.9% of the total score for white college-bound seniors in 1994, up from 72.7% in 1976. Over this period, the proportion of all SAT test-takers who were classified as members of a minority group increased from 15.0% in 1976 to 31.0% in 1994. The overall mean score has declined as the share of minority students in the test-taking population has increased. However, black students taking the SAT have done *better* over time—even as the pool of black test-takers expanded.

Figure 11a
Recent High School Graduates: employment



Source: Stubbs, 1996, Tables C028D03 and C032D02.

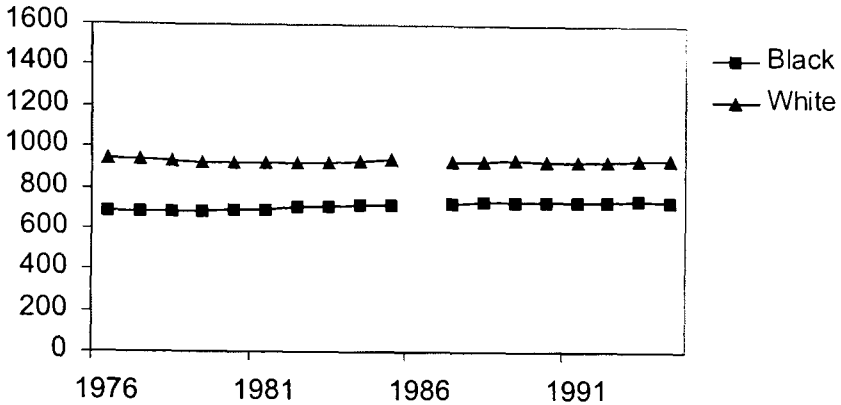
Figure 11b
AFDC or Public Assistance: 25–34 year olds with 12 years of education



Source: Stubbs, 1996, Tables C028D03 and C032D02.

Higher education has expanded dramatically over the past 35 years and the expansion has been most dramatic for black Americans. White enrollment (full-time) in 1993 was 6.7 million,

Figure 12
 Mean Total SAT (Verbal+Math) Scores



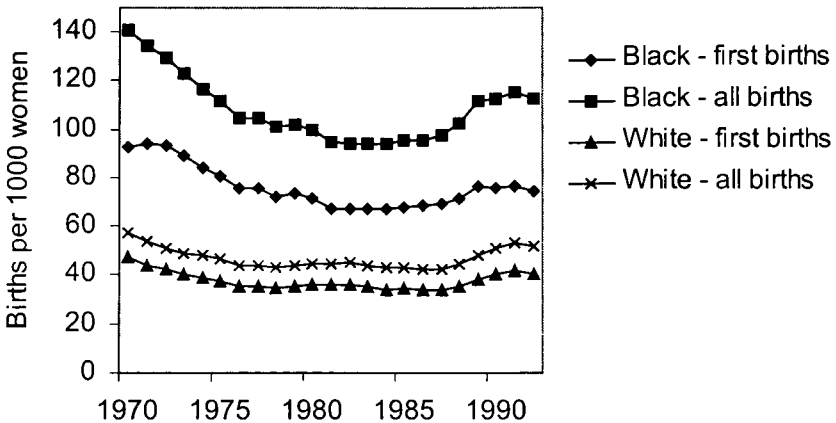
Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table C020D02.

an increase of 64% over its 1965 level. For blacks, enrollment in 1993 was 0.9 million, an increase of 319% over its 1965 level. While black students represented only 4.9% of total enrollment in 1965 and 7.4% in 1970, by the mid-1970s, they reached 11.4%.

E. Teen pregnancy

Teen age (15–19 years old) black women are more than twice as likely to give birth than are white teens (Figure 13). Both in relative and in absolute terms, this is an improvement over the early 1970s. In 1970, black teens had a birth rate almost 2.5 times as large as white teens (140.7 per 1000 versus 57.4). By 1992, the rate for black teens had dropped to 112.2 while the rate for white teens had only fallen to 51.8. For both black and white teens, rates dropped by the mid-1980s to even lower rates (94.1 for blacks and 42.9 for whites in 1984). By 1988 the rates were rising again. Part of the difference between black and white teen birth rates arises from the increased likelihood of more than one birth for black teens. The first birth rates of black and white teens are closer than are the total birth rates: 74.3 per 1000 for black teens in 1992 versus 40.5 for white teens.

Figure 13
 Teen births (women 15–19)



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1995, Tables 1–9, 1–10.

IV. ADULTS

A. Educational attainment

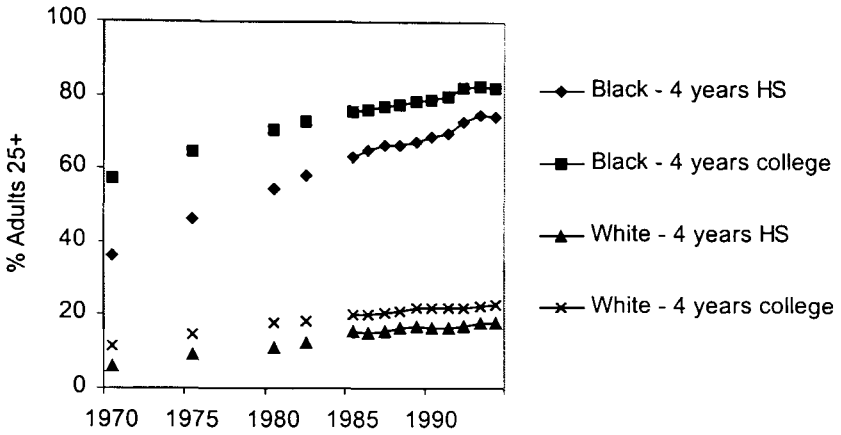
Both the white and black populations are increasingly well educated (Figure 14). The proportions of those with at least 4 years of high school or at least 4 years of college have increased dramatically for whites as well as for blacks, but the increases for blacks have been larger—both in absolute and in relative terms.

B. Employment

Employment rates for women have risen considerably over the past 25 years for both blacks and whites (Figure 15). For men, rates have fallen slightly. Employment rates for black men were only slightly lower than rates for white men in 1972, but the gap widened through the mid-1980s. After 1985, the gap tended to narrow, with a small retreat in the early 1990s. Black and white women have almost identical employment rates.

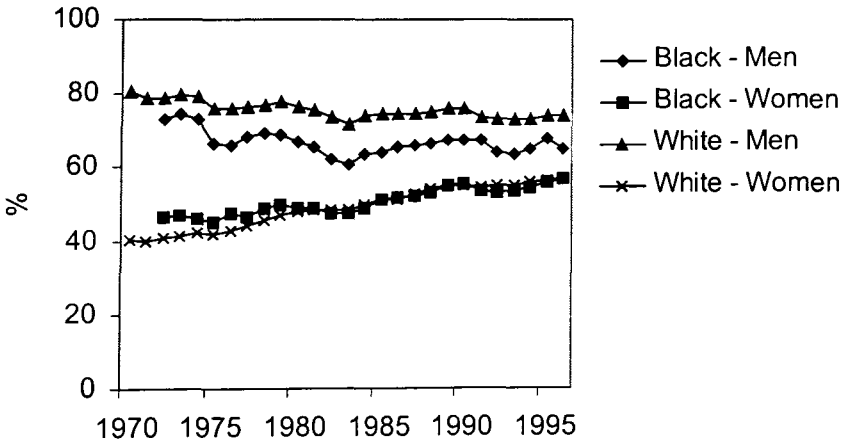
Black men and women tend to work in different occupations than do white men and women (Table 5). Black men are more

Figure 14
 At Least 4 years of High School, College



Source: Stubbs, 1996, Table DTAB008.

Figure 15
 Employment to Population Ratio: 20+ years old



Source: BLS data on-line; Series LFS1601731, LFS1601732, LFS1601711, LFS16011712.

Table 5

Employed Men and Women 16+ (%)

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
Managerial and professional specialty	14.7	27.5	20.1	29.9
Technical, sales, and administrative support	17.6	20.6	39.4	43.2
Service	20.0	9.8	26.9	16.8
Farming, forestry, and fishing	2.0	4.3	0.2	1.2
Precision production, craft, and repair	15.0	18.5	2.5	2.1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	30.7	19.3	10.8	6.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Current Population Reports, 1995, Table 2.

heavily represented in the *Service* and *Operators, fabricators, and laborers* categories than are white men (51% vs. 29%). White men are more represented particularly in the *Managerial and professional specialty* but also the *Technical, sales, and administrative support* and *Precision production, craft, and repair* occupations than are black men. Black women are also more heavily represented in the *Service* and *Operators, fabricators, and laborers* categories than are white women.

Employment status has a significant effect on the likelihood an individual will face poverty. Among individuals employed year-round, poverty rates are generally less than 10%, although not for teens (Table 6). The poverty rate for blacks employed full time is slightly higher (roughly 2 points) than for whites. Among those who did not work, not only are poverty rates much higher (37% for white 25–34 year olds), but the rates for blacks relative to whites are also higher (59% vs. 37% for 25–34 year olds).

C. Economic well-being

Inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient⁴, has increased over the past 25 years (Figure 16). Among black families, inequality has been generally higher than among white households and this has persisted over time. At the same time, official measurements of poverty status show some year to year variation.

Table 6

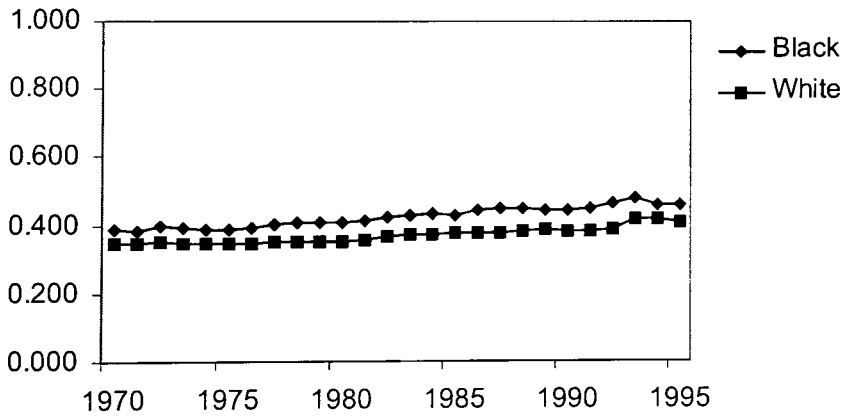
Below Poverty Level (%)

	Black			White		
	<i>Worked Full time</i>	<i>Worked Part time</i>	<i>Did Not Work</i>	<i>Worked Full time</i>	<i>Worked Part time</i>	<i>Did Not Work</i>
16-17 years	NA	29.3	40.8	18.7	7.3	19.3
18-24	6.7	24.7	48.2	4.4	15.0	36.2
25-34	6.7	34.5	59.0	2.8	16.6	36.7
35-54	4.5	18.6	44.8	1.7	8.1	18.0
55-64	4.1	18.6	44.8	1.7	8.1	18.0
65 and over	0.0	12.8	30.5	1.5	2.6	11.6

Current Population Reports, 1996, Table 10.

Figure 16

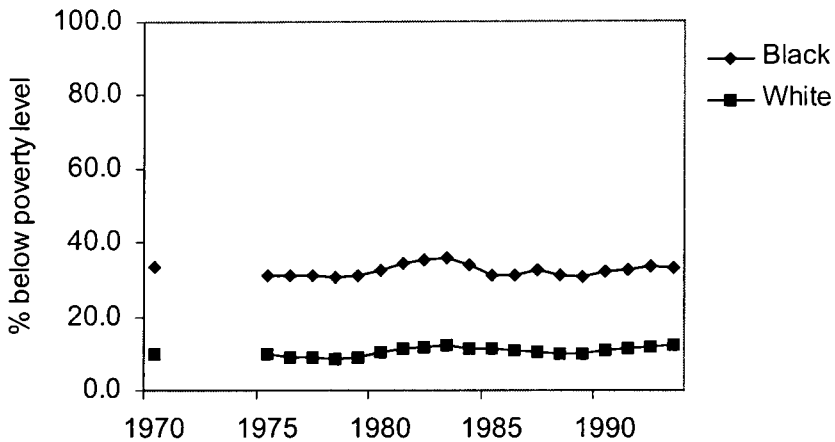
Inequality—Gini Coefficient: Families



Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-60; (WWW: Historical Income Tables-Households, Families).

The poverty rates for blacks is roughly where it was 25 years ago while the rate for whites is somewhat higher than it was (Figure 17).

Figure 17
Poverty Status of Persons

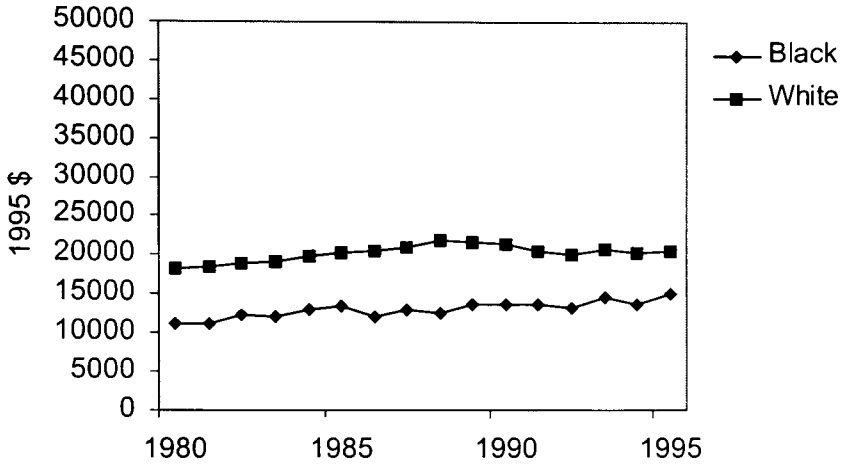


Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 189, Income, Poverty and Valuation of Noncash Benefits (1994) Table B-6.

Non-family households have lower incomes, in general, than do family households. Over the past 15 years, however, the median income in non-family households has increased by more (proportionally) than has the median income in family households (Figures 18a, 18b).

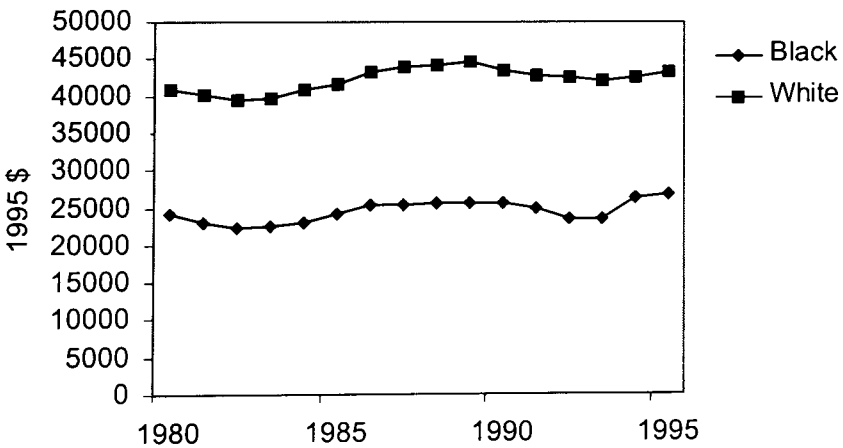
Among year-round, full time workers, the gap between whites and blacks is narrower, particularly for workers with similar levels of education (Table 7). Median earnings for black men with at least a bachelor's degree were 76% of median earnings for their white counterparts. For black men with less than a high school education, the ratio was higher: 85%. The increase in earnings associated with moving from the less than high school group to the high school group is significantly lower for black men than for any other group (11% vs. 26% for black women). Moving from a high school education to some college is associated with large gains for black men and women; for white men and women, the gains are a third to a half smaller. All groups have large gains associated with moving from some college to at least a bachelor's degree, although the gain for black men is smaller.

Figure 18a
Median Income—Non-family Households



Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-60, (WWW: Historical Income Tables-Households, Table H-12C).

Figure 18b
Median Income—Family Households



Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-60, (WWW: Historical Income Tables-Households, Table H-12C).

Table 7

Median earnings—1993; Year-round full time workers

		<i>Less than High School</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Some College</i>	<i>Bachelor's or more</i>	<i>Total</i>
Thousands of \$						
Men	—Black	18.6	20.6	26.6	35.9	24.1
	—White	22.0	28.4	32.4	47.2	33.8
Women	—Black	13.1	16.5	21.1	31.2	20.3
	—White	14.7	19.8	23.4	32.9	23.5
Black/White ratio:						
Men		0.9	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7
Women		0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.9
% Increase over next lower educational level:						
Men	—Black	—	11.0	29.0	35.0	
	—White	—	29.0	14.0	46.0	
Women	—Black	—	26.0	28.0	48.0	
	—White	—	35.0	18.0	41.0	

Current Population Reports, 1995, Table 12.

For educated workers in the same age group, the difference between blacks and whites is narrower still. Among college educated workers who are employed one year after graduation (year-round, full time), the ratio of black to white salaries was 0.96 in 1990, up from 0.92 in 1977. As a comparison, the similar ratio of women's salaries to men's was 0.87 in 1990 (up from 0.77 in 1977).

Black households tend to have fewer assets than do white ones. Even by income quintile (quintiles defined for all households), households headed by blacks tend to be poorer (Table 9). Furthermore, black households are more heavily represented at the lower income quintiles.

D. Household and family formation

Marriage is declining in the United States (Figure 19). Among black women over age 15, less than 30% were married in 1994; in 1970, more than 40% were⁵. Among white women, the decline has been just as steady, although not quite as fast. The corresponding

Table 8

Median salaries: college graduates employed full-time, 1 year after graduation (1992 \$)

	Black	White	Men	Women
1977	23,018	24,975	28,108	21,649
1978				
1979				
1980	21,515	23,105	26,334	20,318
1981				
1982				
1983				
1984	20,995	23,556	25,974	21,387
1985				
1986	22,653	25,021	27,153	23,054
1987				
1988				
1989				
1990	22,676	23,637	25,825	22,343

figures for black and white men are similar to those for black and white women, although the proportions of men married tend to be several points higher than for women (roughly 7 points higher for black men and 5 points higher for white men).

Interracial marriage has increased significantly over the past few decades. Although still only a tiny fraction of all marriage (0.41% of all married couples in 1990), black-white interracial marriages were still more than 3 times as likely in 1990 as in 1960 (0.41% vs. 0.13% (U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996), *Statistical Abstract of the United States*)).

Fertility has also declined over the past 25 years among American women; births per 1,000 women aged 15–44 declined sharply in the early 1970s (Figure 20). Since 1975, fertility has fluctuated a little, but has been largely constant. Black and white women have become more similar in their overall child bearing: in 1994 the rate for black women was roughly 12 births higher than for white women, while in 1970, the rate for black women was roughly 31 births higher.

Abortion rates remain fairly high for both black and white women; roughly one quarter of the pregnancies⁶ of white women

Table 9
Asset ownership by Income Quintile

	Median net worth (1993 \$)						Households (000s)			
	1991		1993		1991		1993		1993	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
1st Quintile	0	10,743	250	7,605	4,041	14,480	4,066	14,662		
2nd Quintile	3,446	26,665	3,406	27,057	2,436	16,006	2,663	16,162		
3rd Quintile	8,302	35,510	8,480	36,341	2,124	16,388	2,126	16,591		
4th Quintile	21,852	55,950	20,745	54,040	1,353	17,043	1,454	17,218		
5th Quintile	56,922	128,298	45,023	123,350	814	17,492	937	17,558		
All Households	4,844	47,075	4,418	45,740	10,768	81,409	11,248	82,190		

Census <http://www.census.gov/hhes/wealth/wlth93f>.

end in abortion and roughly 40% of the pregnancies of black women do as well⁷ (Figure 21). Crude estimates based on these frequencies and other Centers for Disease Control data suggest that, over time, significant fractions of both black and white women may have abortions. Among white women, perhaps more than a third will have at least one abortion by the age of 44; for black women the fraction may be considerably larger—well over one half.

E. Health

Maternal mortality, the rate at which mothers die in childbirth, has improved dramatically during the 20th century. In the early years of this century, more than 700 women died for each 100,000 live births. By 1940, the overall rate had dropped to 376 per 100,000 births, but the rate for the mothers of black children was 782 (for mothers of white children it was 320 (National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1996)). Considering those levels, the current figures -less than 20 per 100,000 for both blacks and whites—are almost miraculous, although the rate for black mothers is still more than twice that for white mothers (Figure 22).

F. Victimization

Men are more likely than women and blacks more likely

Figure 21
Abortion Rate—Women 15–44

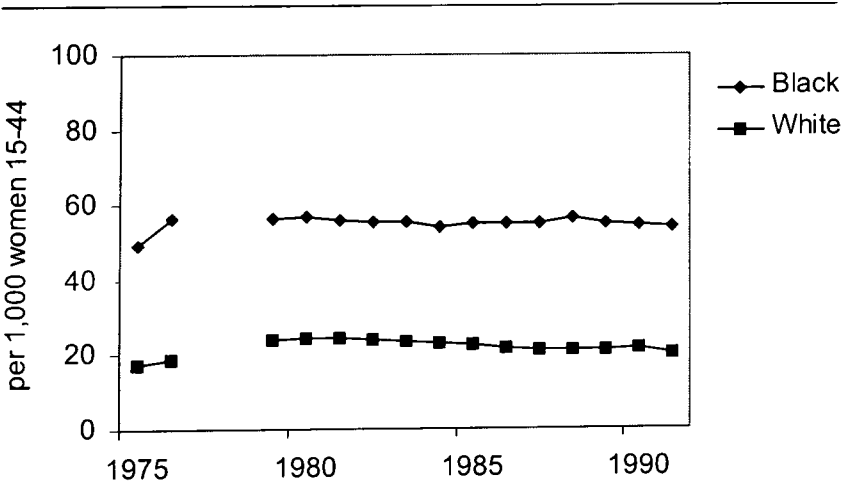
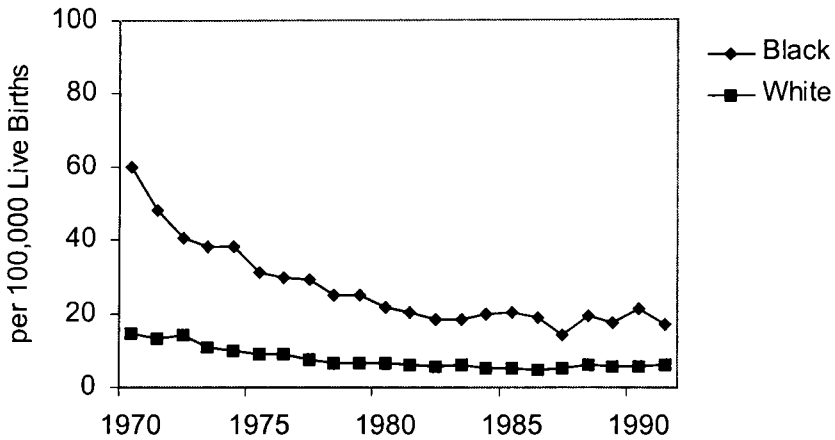


Figure 22
Maternal Mortality

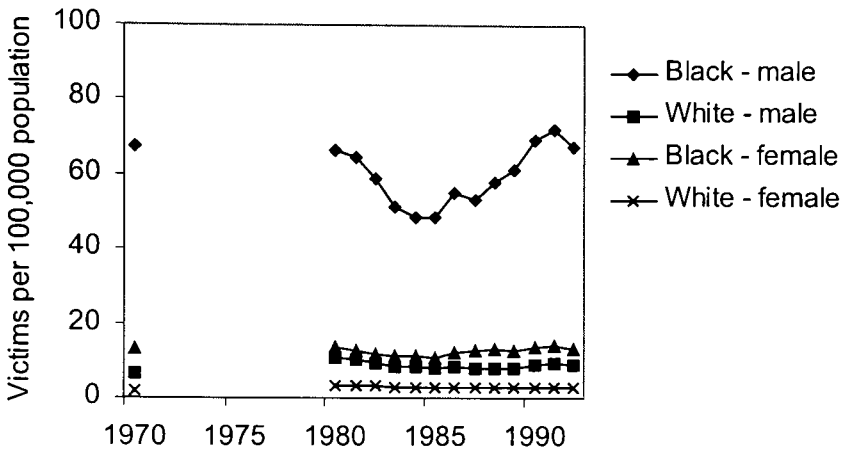


Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1996.

than whites to be homicide victims. Black men in particular face homicide rates well in excess of those faced by other demographic groups (Figures 23a, 23b). In the first half of the 1980s, homicide rates for black men dropped sharply; the rate for white men fell simultaneously, but from a smaller base. Unfortunately, the rates climbed again after 1985. The rate of less serious violent crime (rapes, robberies, or assaults) has been relatively steady, with a slight decline through 1990 for both blacks and whites. During the 1990s, however, the rate faced by black men and women rose sharply.

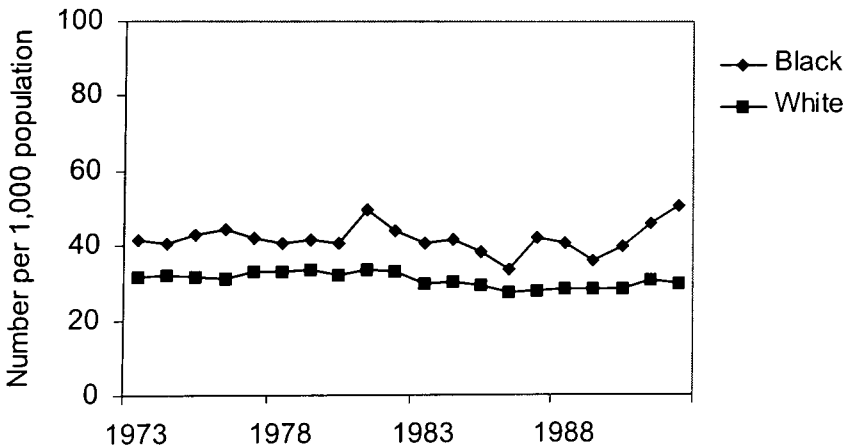
Victimization rates for violent crimes other than murder (Table 10) suggest that black men and women along with white men are particularly likely to be victims at young ages (through age 25). After 25, victimization for women, black and white, falls rapidly, from 127 per 1,000 black women age 20–24 to 44.5 per 1,000 age 25–34. For white men, the victimization rates fall quickly among the older groups as well. For black men, victimization rates do not fall as far and more importantly, the rates remain high even among older age groups (75 per 1,000 for black men age 35–49).

Figure 23a
Homicide Rate



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994.

Figure 23b
Crime Rate: rapes, robberies, assaults



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994.

Table 10

Violent crime (not murder): victimization rate per 1,000 population (1993)

<i>Victim's Age</i>	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
12-15	146.0	148.4	112.3	93.2
16-19	91.9	144.5	145.6	90.4
20-24	99.2	104.3	127.0	79.0
25-34	74.5	69.6	44.5	49.0
35-49	75.4	43.0	43.4	39.1
50-64	33.1	21.1	3.8	13.8
65+	14.3	5.4	12.2	4.5

Table 11

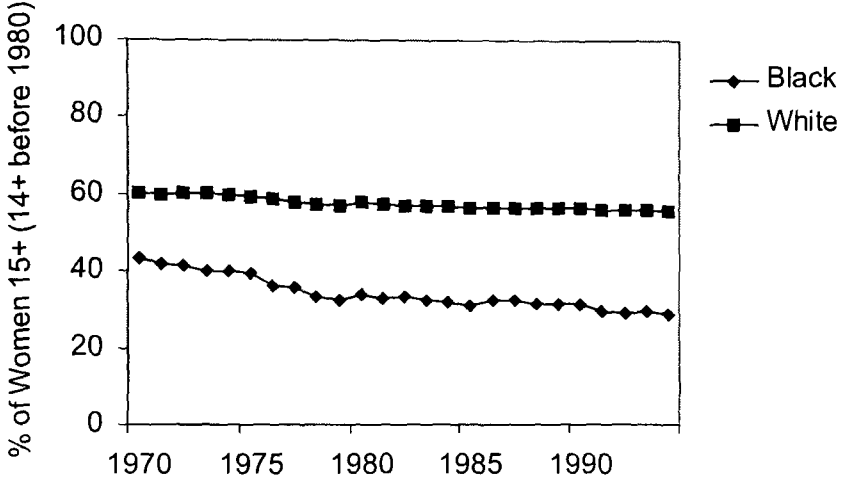
Adults per 100,000 population held in local jails, state or federal prisons (1993)

	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
1985	3,544	528	183	27
1986	3,850	570	189	29
1987	3,943	594	216	35
1988	4,441	629	257	41
1989	5,066	685	321	47
1990	5,365	718	338	48
1991	5,717	740	356	51
1992	6,014	774	365	53
1993	6,259	805	403	56
1994	6,753	860	435	60

G. Incarceration

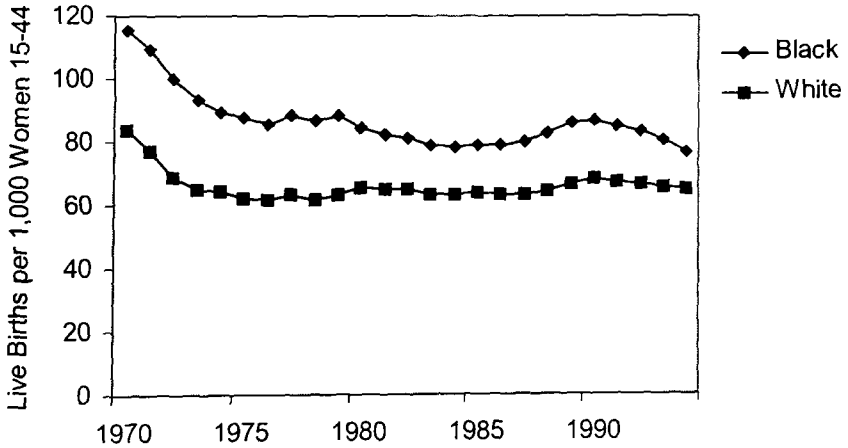
Adults, men and women, are increasingly facing the criminal justice system as adversaries (Table 11). Relative to population sizes, black men and women have been more likely to be imprisoned. In 1994, the rate of imprisonment for white men was 1.6

Figure 19
Women: Married, Husband Present



Source: Saluter, 1994.

Figure 20
Fertility: Women 15-44



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 44, No. 11(S) (1996) Table 1.

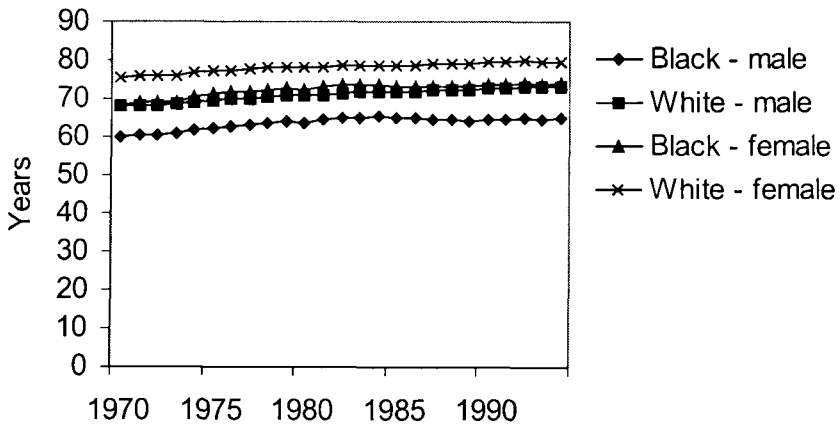
times the 1985 value; for black men the 1994 rate was 1.9 times its 1985 value. For black women, the 1994 imprisonment rate was 2.4 times the 1985 rate, while for white women the 1994 rate was 2.2 times the 1985 rate.

H. Health and life expectancy

Life expectancy at birth has increased fairly dramatically over the past few decades. Since 1940, the expected life for a black man has increased⁸ by almost 14 years and for a black woman, it has increased by almost 20 years. For whites, the increases have been slightly less dramatic, but still impressive: roughly 11 years for white men and 13 for white women. The increases have continued over the past 25 years (Figure 24), although for black men, life expectancy seems to have plateaued shortly after 1980 at roughly 65 years. Life expectancy at different ages shows generally the same patterns, although the differences between black men and white men and between black women and white women are less pronounced at age 65 than at younger ages.

This analysis has used census and other statistical data to describe the nature of social and economic inequality as it exists

Figure 24
Life Expectancy at Birth



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1996, Table 6-5.

Table 12
Life Expectancy

	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
At birth:				
1969-71	60.0	67.9	68.3	75.5
1979-81	64.1	70.8	73.9	78.2
1991	64.6	72.9	73.8	79.6
At age 1:				
1969-71	61.2	68.3	69.4	75.7
1979-81	64.6	70.7	73.3	78.0
1991	64.9	72.5	73.9	79.1
At age 20:				
1969-71	43.5	50.2	51.2	57.2
1979-81	46.5	52.5	54.9	59.4
1991	46.9	54.1	55.4	60.4
At age 65:				
1969-71	12.5	13.0	15.7	16.9
1979-81	13.3	14.3	17.1	18.6
1991	13.4	15.4	17.2	19.2

National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service, 1996, Section 6, Table A.

between Blacks and Whites in the United States. Attention has been given to trends over time to illustrate how the nature of the historic disadvantage suffered by blacks has changed in the last generation. As noted earlier, while some measures of difficulties, such as the number of black children being raised by single parents, are disheartening; the increases in levels of education and income among black Americans over the past 25 years are encouraging.

NOTES

1. Infants are less than one year of age; rates are per 1000 live births and are based on the race of the child. See National Center for Health Statistics, Public Health Service (1996).

2. Those who were neither enrolled nor high school graduates, but were enrolled 12 months earlier.
3. Mean verbal plus mean math.
4. A measure of concentration of income that varies between 0 and 1; larger values indicate *more* concentration. The measure sums up—over each level of the income distribution—the difference between the group's population fraction and its income fraction. If income is perfectly evenly distributed—i.e. $x\%$ of the population has $x\%$ of the income, then the differences will be 0 and the Gini coefficient will be 0 as well.
5. From 1970 to 1979, the figures are for people over age 14; from 1980, the figures are for those over age 15. (Saluter, 1994 and earlier issues).
6. Measured pregnancies—live births and abortions—but not miscarriages.
7. 1991 estimates: 303 abortions per 1,000 live births for white women; 661 per 1,000 live births for black women.
8. For 1940, the figure is for *All other races*; for 1970 and later, figures are for *Black*

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