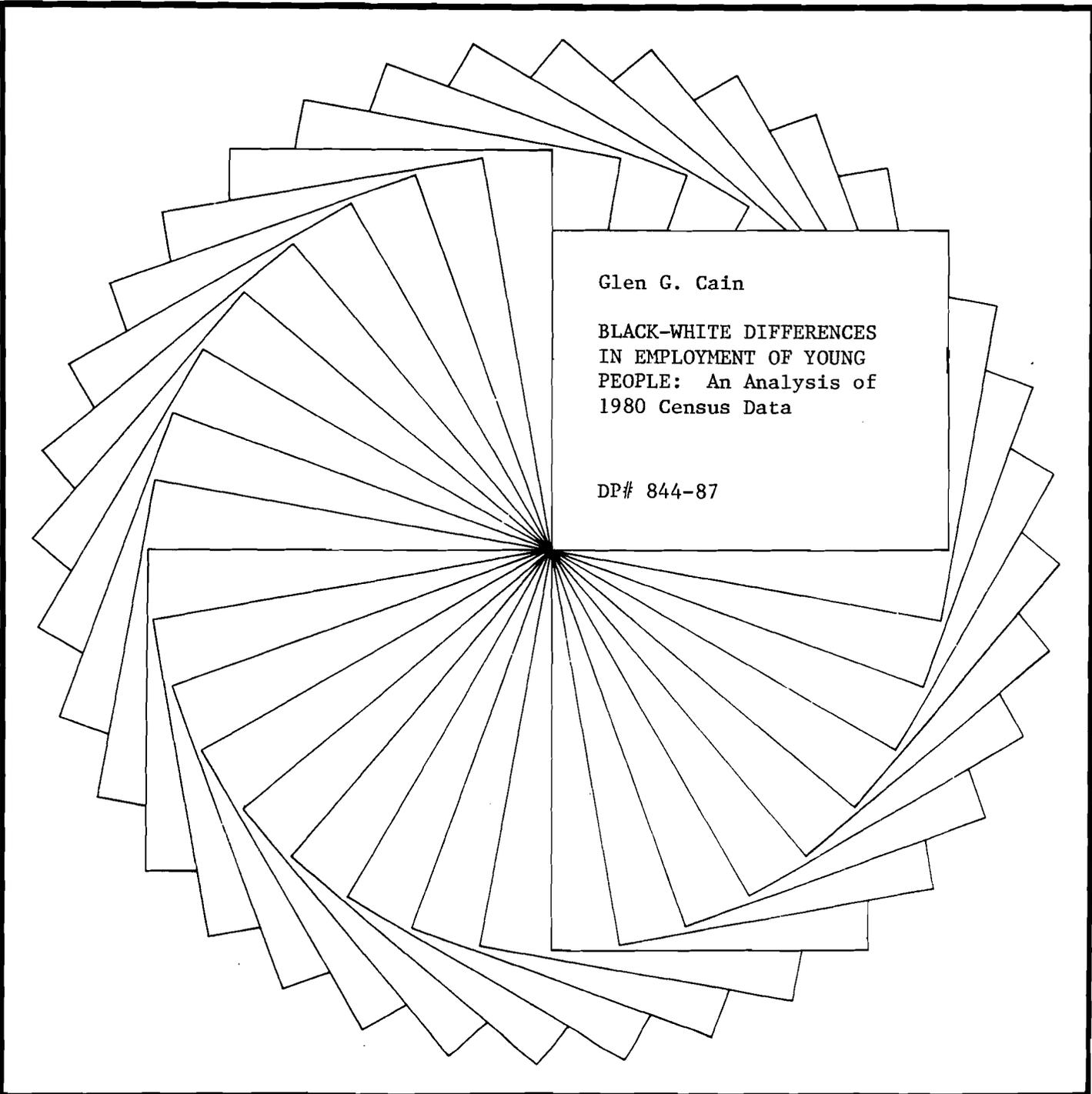# Institute for Research on Poverty

Discussion Papers

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BLACK-WHITE DIFFERENCES
IN EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG
PEOPLE: An Analysis of
1980 Census Data

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Black-White Differences in Employment of Young People:
An Analysis of 1980 Census Data

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Abstract

The 1980 Census of the United States contains the largest number of observations that are available for describing and analyzing the labor force status of various demographic groups. In this paper the Public Use Sample, based on a one-in-100 sample from the 1980 Census, is used to examine the labor force status of four demographic groups: white and black young men and women aged 16 to 24. Their employment and unemployment status is tabulated in relation to their schooling, family income, marital status, and other variables. The basic finding is that while young people appear productive in several types of activities, particularly in work and schooling, black youth lag behind. The gap is large in several respects and has implications for inequality in economic well-being on a wider scale.

Black-White Differences in Employment of Young People: An Analysis of 1980 Census Data

Two apparently contradictory views are often expressed about the work status of young people, defined in this paper as persons aged 16 to 24. One is that their experience in the labor force is crucially important as a determinant of the next 40 or so years of their working career. Developing attitudes favorable to work, establishing a good work record, and matching one's capacities with the appropriate job are all commonly expressed as reasons. A contrary view is that the labor force experiences of young people, particularly in the years prior to completing their schooling, is rather unimportant because they have not and are not expected to have settled down. Their training at home and in school and, particularly among teenage females, their decisions about marriage and bearing children are emphasized in this second view.

Along with a deemphasis on the importance of these early years of labor force experience, the conventional classifications of employment, unemployment, and not being in the labor force may lose their customary implications for well-being or in other ways be called into question for youth. Consider the following hypothetical comments:

"A is on the high school swimming team and has long hours of practice, and B is taking a full load of courses in college. so being out of the labor force is not considered a problem. C is looking for a part-time job, but his parents say they hope he does not find one because his school work is more important and, anyway, he would just spend his money on records and clothes. D's job

requires long hours, pays a low wage, and has no future, but everyone realizes

it is just a temporary fill-in until a better job is found."

Statistical analysis of conventional sources of data is not capable of determining whether

these types of comments express correct or incorrect judgments.

To reconcile these apparently conflicting views of the importance of the work experience

of young people, we can simply appeal to the variety and changeability of their situations.

School plans and their uncertainty, trial-and-error job searches, and the frequent absence of

any perceived economic need for extra earnings for the young person's family are all good

reasons why a young person might take a casual attitude toward employment. But in other

times or circumstances the employment experience of young people can have important

long-run consequences.

As an aid in assessing the importance of the labor force status of young people, we may

take into account their school and family statuses and other demographic characteristics.

Particular attention is given to separate tabulations for blacks and whites, which reveal

large differences in the labor force status that surely reflect a serious disparity in the

economic well-being of the two racial groups.

An overview of several economic and demographic classifications of young people is

shown in Table 1. Among men 80 percent of the whites and 87 percent of the blacks are

single (a shorthand term used to designate the never-married group). Less than 30 percent

are married in each age group up to age 22 among whites and up to age 24 among blacks.

(These statistics are derived from the source used for Table 1 but are not shown.) Among

Table 1

Marital and Residential Status of Youth Aged 16-24, by Gender
and Race, 1980 (Percentages)

	White Men[a]	Black Men	White Women[a]	Black Women
Marital Status[b]				
Single[c]	80	87	66	80
Married	18	11	29	16
Divorced	1	1	3	2
Separated	1	1	1	3
Total	100	100	100	100
Residential Status (Living Arrangements)				
Household	90	86	93	94
Group Quarters[d]	6	4	6	4
Military	4	6	<1	<1
Institutionalized[e]	1	4	<1	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample
size = 544,000.

[a]White refers to non-Hispanic whites.

[b]Widows and widowers were too few to be included in the table.

[c]Shorthand term used for never married.

[d]About 90 percent or more of the young people living in group quarters are in college.

[e]Most of the institutionalized are in long-term health care facilities or in correctional and penal institutions.

white women the percentage single, 66, is considerably less than among black women, 80. Differences in marital status will be discussed below, but the main point for now is that most young people are single.

The bottom part of Table 1 shows that around 90 percent of all young people live in households, which usually means living with one's family. About 6 percent of whites and 4 percent of blacks live in group quarters, which usually means living away from home at college. A closer look at school enrollment is provided below. Military service is relatively rare, especially among women. Among men, only 4 percent of whites and 6 percent of blacks are in the military, although about 10 percent of black men aged 19 to 22 are in the military.

Finally, only a minuscule percentage of young people are institutionalized, usually either in some long-term health care facility or in correctional (penal) institutions. Even the 4 percent figure for black men is very small, except in comparison with the other three gender-and-color groups. Being institutionalized generally represents a disadvantaged status, whether we use the current income or the long-run prospects of the group as a criterion. No analysis of this small group is undertaken, but let us note that excluding the institutionalized youth from the subsequent tabulations will serve to overstate, if only slightly, the economic well-being of young black men.

Labor Force Status

Market employment can represent both the favorable outcome of an opportunity for attaining a higher standard of living and for personal fulfillment and the unfavorable

outcome of a sacrifice in such desirable nonmarket activities as schooling, child care, or leisure. The decline from 1890 to the current period in the employment of children under 16 years of age and in the proportion employed among young men aged 16 to 24, reflects two major favorable trends: (a) the rise in family income, which virtually eliminated the parents' need for child labor, and (b) the rise in schooling, which became the primary "outside" activity of boys and girls under 18 years of age. A third trend is the shift from agricultural to urban living, but young people in rural areas have also experienced a rise in their standard of living and in their educational attainment. Although the long-run trend in the labor force participation rates (LFPRs) of young men aged 16 to 24 has been downward, this trend rose from the mid-1960s to the present for white youth, but not for black youth.

The long-term increase in the proportion of young people enrolled in school tapered off for youth aged 16 to 24 in the 1960's and has not much changed in the last 10 years or so. For young men there has been some decline since 1970, but female enrollment proportions have continued to rise slightly.[1] The LFPRs of six demographic groups, men and women aged 16-17, 18-19, and 20-24, increased slightly from 1970 to 1980, with larger increases for women. The LFPRs of each group except men aged 20 to 24 increased from 1960 to 1980.[2] The unemployment rate of young people has risen during these years, just as it

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[1] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1984* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985) p. 142.

[2] U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, June 1985, Bulletin 2207, pp. 18-21.

has for all age groups. The employment-to-population ratio has barely increased for male youth and substantially increased for female youth.

The most important source of these modest increases in labor supply has been the rise in LFPRs of young people enrolled in school. Clearly, we would have a less favorable interpretation of the rise in LFPRs of young people if it were accompanied by declines in school enrollment, but this has not occurred. In the 1950's about 33 percent of the student population aged 16-19 was in the labor force, and this proportion has trended up so that by the mid-1980's around 45 percent of the enrolled population was in the labor force.[3] Thus, for the overall population of young people the amount of productive activity, defined in terms of work and schooling, has increased. As discussed below, however, black youths have experienced increases in schooling, but their LFPRs and employment-to-population ratios declined from 1960 to 1980.

The overall rise in the LFPRs of young people during the last 20 years has, by itself, a favorable interpretation; namely, as the consequence of a growth in demand for part-time jobs that are attractive to young people. Their recent increase in work rates occurred, after all, during a period when their families' incomes and their own educational attainment were increasing. Thus, although there are many exceptions, market work by young people today has favorable connotations. In addition to the income they earn for their personal use, the work provides a learning experience of value for their future career. The benefits of work outweigh the sacrifice in time and the sometime drudgery of the jobs. At least this

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[3] *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, p. 139.

conclusion follows from the assumption that young people have considerable latitude and choice about working in the market and that they and their parents are good judges of what is best for them.

This benign view of the recent increase in work rates of young people is supported by two findings, which are discussed in more detail later. One is that white youngsters have higher work rates than blacks of the same age. Given the lower incomes of black families and the lower educational attainment of black youth, their lower LFPR does not mean that young blacks have a relative preference for the alternatives of voluntary leisure or more schooling. Instead, their lower LFPR is a result of a combination of weaker demand conditions, which translates into fewer and poorer job offers than those available to white youngsters, and various supply-side shortcomings, including fewer family connections to job opportunities relative to white youth.

A second finding in support of the favorable view of teenage job-holding is the positive association between the work rates of the young people and their families' income, excluding the young person's own earnings. Thus, the dominant force determining the increase in work by young people is not the negative "need" factor of low family income, but rather the positive "opportunity." Evidence for the argument that youngsters in high-income families have better jobs is presented below, but it should not be surprising to find that high-income parents and the communities they live in provide better job opportunities for their children.

White and Black Men

Table 2 shows advantages for white male youth relative to blacks in three measures of labor force status: LFPRs, unemployment rates (URs), and employment-to-population ratios (EPs). Whites are much more likely to hold jobs despite the facts (shown below) that their family incomes and school enrollment proportions are higher than black youth of the same age.

The higher LFPRs of white male youth compared with blacks are shown in the top panel of Table 2. The top row shows this for civilian youth who live at home, most of whom are single (row 2), and it is true for the minority of young men who are married (row 3) and for the still smaller percentage in group quarters, who mainly are college students (row 4). Black youth are more likely to be in the military than whites, and those in the military are, by definition, employed, so adding the military to the totals slightly improves the black comparison, as shown in row 5. Even so, the LFPRs of whites are still substantially higher than those of blacks of the same age. For examples, 36 percent of white men aged 16 are either working or looking for work (rows 1, 2, and 5), despite the fact that (as discussed below) well over 90 percent are enrolled in school, while only 18 percent of black men aged 16 are in the labor force. The school enrollment proportion of male 16-year-olds of both races is about the same. For those aged 19, who are almost all out of high school, the LFPRs for civilians and the military combined, row 5, are 72 percent for whites and 59 percent for blacks. The contrast is even sharper among singles who are living at home, 76 versus 57 (row 2).

Table 2

Labor Force Status of Young Men, by Race, Age, Marital
Status, and Residential Status (Percentages)

Marital and Residential Status	Age Group of Whites[a]						Age Group of Blacks					
	16	17	18	19	20–22	23–24	16	17	18	19	20–22	23–24
					Labor Force Participation Rates							
1. Living at Home, All[b]	36	51	67	78	85	91	18	29	55	58	74	82
2. Single[c]	36	51	66	76	81	87	18	29	54	57	71	78
3. Married[d]	(51)	67	90	94	95	96	19	46	63	81	91	92
4. Living in Group Quarters (GQ)[e]	...	(37)	26	30	40	48	...	(15)	27	27	31	39
5. Total: Home, GQ, and Military[f]	36	51	64	72	81	91	18	29	57	59	74	83
					Unemployment Rates							
6. Total: Home, GQ, and Military[f]	17	14	12	12	11	8	30	27	25	21	19	16
					Employment to Population Ratios							
7. Single, at Home[c]	30	43	57	66	71	79	13	20	32	42	54	62
8. Total: Home, GQ, and Military[f]	30	44	56	64	72	84	13	21	35	47	60	70

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample.

Notes: All cells are based on more than 100 observations unless the number is in parentheses, which means that the number of observations is between 50 and 100. Cells for which the sample size is less than 50 are not tabulated and are shown by three dots. Total sample size = 269,000.

[a]Refers to non-Hispanic whites.

[b]Living at home includes all youth except for those in the military, living in group quarters (see note e below), or living in an institution.

[c]Refers to never married.

[d]Excludes divorced, separated, and widowed.

[e]About 90 percent of the young people living in group quarters are in college.

[f]Includes all five marital statuses (see notes b and c) and all residence types except those living in institutions.

The unemployment rates for black male youth are about twice as high as those for whites of the same age, as shown in the middle panel (row 6). As a consequence, the EPs are even less favorable for blacks in comparison with whites. For example, the last row shows that 30 percent of young black men aged 23–24 are not working, compared with only 16 percent of whites of that age. Among 18-year-olds, 65 percent of blacks are without a job compared to 44 percent of whites.

White and Black Women

The LFPRs of young women are generally lower than those for men, as we would expect. The LFPRs and EPs of single white women are, however, only slightly less than those for single white men of the same age. Compare rows 2 and 7 in Table 2 with rows 2 and 9 in Table 3. This is not a new development. The LFPRs for single men and women aged 20–24, for example, have been similar since 1949. [4]

Young women are more likely to be married than men of the same age, and among whites the LFPRs of young married women are around 25 percent less than those of young single women, while the LFPRs of young married white men are around 15 percent higher than those for their single counterparts. The LFPRs of white divorced and separated women are lower than the LFPRs of singles and higher than those of married women living with their husbands. The presence of young children and the mother's role as the main caretaker of the children are obvious reasons for these differences by marital status. Nevertheless, the decline in fertility and in the proportions married among young women,

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[4] *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, p. 119.

Table 3

Labor Force Status of Young Women, by Race, Age, Marital
Status, and Residential Status (Percentages)

Marital and Residence Status	Age Group of Whites[a]				20-22	23-24	Age Group of Blacks				20-22	23-24
	16	17	18	19			16	17	18	19		
					Labor Force Participation Rates							
1. Living at Home, All[b]	31	47	62	68	71	72	15	24	37	47	59	67
2. Single[c]	31	47	64	73	79	87	15	24	34	47	59	67
3. Married[d]	24	36	45	55	60	61	20	31	40	50	61	68
4. Divorced	...	...	...	64	76	79	...	...	...	50	65	72
5. Separated	...	...	62	60	69	71	...	...	48	48	52	59
6. Living in Group Quarters (GQ)[e]	...	(36)	32	37	46	56	...	38	30	31	36	42
7. Total: Home, GQ, and Military[f]	31	47	58	63	69	72	15	24	37	46	59	67
					Unemployment Rates							
8. Total: Home, GQ, and Military[f]	17	11	11	9	7	6	32	28	26	27	21	16
					Employment to Population Ratios							
9. Single, at Home[c]	26	42	57	66	73	83	10	17	26	33	47	56
10. Total: Home, GQ, and Military[f]	25	41	52	57	64	67	10	17	27	34	47	56

Note: See notes to Table 2. Sample size = 275,000.

and the rise in LFPRs of those who are married and have children, have served to narrow the gap in LFPRs between men and women aged 16 to 24. In 1940 and 1950 the LFPRs for white men who were between the ages of 14 and 24 were about twice as high as those for white women of these ages, but in 1980 the LFPRs for men aged 16 to 24 were only 10 to 20 percent higher than those for women.[5]

The LFPRs of black single women are consistently and substantially lower than those of black men of the same age. Indeed, the dominant impression from Table 3 concerning young black women is that their LFPRs and EPs are very low. The Census shows that almost 90 percent of them are single, and their employment percentages range between 10 and 56 for the age groups shown (rows 9 and 10). By contrast, the percentage employed among white single women ranges between 25 and 83 percent for the corresponding age groups. Generally, the gap in favor of white women relative to black women is even greater than the sizable gap in favor of white men relative to black men among these young people.

Since 1950 black single women in all age groups have had lower LFPRs than white single women.[6] Writing in 1958, Gertrude Bancroft speculated that common-law marriages and the presence of own children were more prevalent among single blacks than among single whites, and that these factors contributed to the lower LFPRs of black single women.[7] These are plausible reasons for the period before 1950, but they are probably minor factors

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[5]Gertrude Bancroft, *The American Labor Force*(New York: Wiley, 1958) p. 48, in comparison with rows 5 and 7 in Tables 2 and 3.

[6]Bancroft, p. 54.

[7]Bancroft, pp. 55-57.

in 1980, as shown below, when the presence of children is examined.

Four findings from Tables 2 and 3 deserve special attention.

- Black men have higher work rates than black women, but black men have lower employment and labor force participation rates than white women. This is shown in row 2 in the two tables, for single young people. For the total sample the percentage of white women employed is substantially higher than that of black men, except for those aged 23 to 24, as shown in the last row of each table. For example, among 18-year-olds, 52 percent of white women but only 35 percent of black men have jobs.

- Black married women between the ages of 16 to 24 generally have higher LFPRs than black single women of the same age (rows 2 and 3 of Table 3). In contrast, white women aged 16 to 24 who are married have lower LFPRs than white single women of the same age, which is what we expect because of the housework performed by married women. The reason why young black married women have higher LFPRs than young black single women is that the LFPRs of the single women are so low. Lower LFPRs of young black single women is a fairly recent development. In 1940 and 1950 the LFPRs of both white and black married women aged 14 to 24 were considerably lower than those of white and black single women in that age group.[8]

- Young black wives tend to have slightly lower LFPRs than white wives until age 23 or older. Lower LFPRs for young (under 24) black wives than for young white wives

[8]Bancroft, p. 54.

dates back to 1950, but before that time the LFPRs of young black wives were higher than those of whites.[9]

- Low LFPRs and EPs for black men aged 18 to 24 relative to white men is surely a reason for the higher percentage of blacks of these ages who have never married. This claim implies that the direction of causality is mainly from employment to marriage, although some causal influence may operate *from* marriage *to* employment. Success in the labor market also influences the choices of young people to live separately from their families, as discussed below.

These findings and suggested interpretations support the argument that a large gap in labor force status between white and black youth in the 1980's has implications for inequality on a wider scale. We see or anticipate from the tabulation of labor force participation the consequences of higher unemployment, lower current earnings, lower future earnings, and fewer or delayed marriages.

Schooling and Labor Force Participation

The proportion of young people enrolled in school is widely viewed as a favorable indicator of their current and future socioeconomic status. These proportions at the time of the census are shown in Table 4 by age and gender for whites, blacks, and Hispanics. For those aged 16 to 19 the proportions enrolled are high and similar for whites and blacks, with the Hispanic youth lagging behind by around 10 percentage points per age group.

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[9]Bancroft, p. 54.

Table 4

Proportion of Young People Aged 16-24
Enrolled in School, by Age, Gender, and Ethnicity
(excluding those in the military or in institutions)
(Percentages)

Age	Whites[a]		Blacks		Hispanics	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
16	93	93	92	93	87	86
17	85	85	83	84	74	74
18	63	62	61	63	53	54
19[b]	43	44	39	44	34	36
20	36	36	28	34	25	26
21	32	30	23	28	22	21
22	25	20	19	20	18	17
23	19	14	15	15	15	13
24	16	12	13	12	14	11
Proportion of enrolled 19-year-olds who are in college	85	92	61	77	65	74

Source: 1980 Census of Population, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Part 1, U.S. Summary, PC80-1-D1-A, Table 260 (March 1984).

[a]Refers to non-Hispanic whites.

[b]See last row for percentage of 19-year-olds who are in college as a proportion of those enrolled in school.

For those 16 and 17, one minus the proportion in the table indicates the proportion of high school dropouts, which is under 10 percent for 16-year-old whites and blacks and 13 to 14 percent for Hispanics. At age 17 the dropout percentages nearly double, although this produces only modest declines in the enrollment proportions. At age 18, when many have graduated from high school, the enrollment proportion declines to between 50 and 60 percent, representing a mix of high school and college attendance.

By age 19 most of those enrolled in school are in college, here used as a shorthand term for postsecondary schooling institutions. Only 15 percent of the enrolled white men and 8 percent of white women who are 19 are in high school, but from 26 to 39 percent of 19-year-old blacks and Hispanics who are in school are still in high school. (See the last row of the table.) Thus, school enrollment has a somewhat more favorable interpretation for whites aged 17 to 19 than it does for blacks and Hispanics. Moreover, quality differences in the schools attended by whites would undoubtedly reinforce the idea that they are receiving larger educational investments in a variety of skills, including job-market skills.

The proportions enrolled in school among white men aged 20 to 24 are moderately higher than those for black and Hispanic men. The enrollment proportions among white and black women are similar and higher than those for Hispanic women. It should be noted that white women aged 20 to 24 are more likely to be married than black women, and married women at these ages are less likely to be in school than single women. Single white women are more likely to be enrolled in college than single black women in each age group, shown in Table 5.

Table 5

School Enrollment and Labor Force Status of Single Persons
Aged 16-24, by Age, Gender, and Race
(excluding persons in the military)
(Percentages)

	Group	Age:	16	17	18	19-21	22	23-24
			Panel A.	School	Enrollment			
1.	White Male		94	87	67	45	34	24
2.	Black Male		93	84	64	35	23	16
3.	White Female		95	89	70	51	34	22
4.	Black Female		93	85	66	41	24	17
			Panel B.	LFPRs	by Enrollment	Status		
	In School							
5.	White Male		34	48	51	49	55	63
6.	Black Male		17	26	33	41	50	57
7.	White Female		30	46	51	51	62	73
8.	Black Female		15	23	31	40	55	59
	Not in School							
9.	White Male		52	65	83	90	91	92
10.	Black Male		27	37	57	68	74	75
11.	White Female		38	56	79	86	90	90
12.	Black Female		19	28	44	58	66	67

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample size = 414,000.

Notes: Single refers to those who have never married; white refers to non-Hispanic whites. Single persons in these age groups who are in the military constitute about 5 percent of the sample among black men, 3 percent among white men, and less than 1 percent among the two female groups. If military personnel are included, the LFPRs for black men not in school are (row 10) 63 percent for 18-year-olds, 72 percent for 19- to 21-year-olds, 76 percent for 22-year-olds, and 76 for 23- to 24-year-olds. The corresponding percentages for white men are 84, 91, 91, and 92. No other figures in the table are changed.

Let us focus on single persons, who represent over 80 percent of the 16 to 24 age group, and examine the relation between school enrollment and labor force status for whites and blacks. Table 5 is divided into two panels to show the enrollment percentages and the LFPRs for the two enrollment statuses for selected age groups (for brevity). As shown in Panel A, the enrollment proportions are similar for the gender and racial groups of a given age, and the proportions are high by historical and international standards.

The LFPRs in the bottom panels are also similar for men and women in the same racial group. In contrast, the differences in LFPRs by race are large, disturbingly so because of what they imply for current and long-run inequality between blacks and whites. The LFPRs to concentrate on are blocked out in Panel B. Young people who are in school dominate the 16 to 18 age group, and we see that the LFPRs of whites are much higher than those of blacks. The comparison of EPs, which is not shown to avoid excessive detail, would worsen the relative status of blacks because a much higher fraction of blacks are unemployed. For example, the EP for enrolled 18-year-old men is 46 percent for whites and 26 percent for blacks. The black-to-white ratio of these EP percentages is .57. The corresponding LFPRs, shown in rows 5 and 6, are 51 and 33 percent, which yields a black-to-white ratio of .65. Another measure of labor supply, shown in Table 6, is the average of hours worked in 1979, which results in black-to-white comparisons that are close to the EP ratio. If we agree that experience in the labor force generally represents more an opportunity chosen than a burden imposed, it appears that the enrolled blacks are in a less-favored status compared to enrolled whites.

The last part of Panel B deals with unmarried youth who are not enrolled in school, and a more serious gap in racial outcomes is revealed. Consider those 19 to 24, for whom job holding is virtually imperative for long-run economic success. (Those aged 16 to 18 who are not enrolled have more time to get their bearings, one could argue, and they are in any case a small minority of their age group.) The LFPRs of male and female whites aged 19 to 24 are uniformly high, around 90 percent. The LFPRs of blacks are substantially lower. Indeed, by subtracting the LFPR from one, we see that between 25 and 32 percent of black men aged 19 to 24 who were not in school were not holding jobs and were not looking for jobs during the survey week. The proportion of unenrolled black women aged 19 to 24 who were neither employed nor looking for jobs ranges from 33 percent to 42 percent, which is in sharp contrast to the 10 percent of corresponding white women. Again, the EPs (not shown) would accentuate the disparity in success in the labor market. For example, for 22-year-old single men 80 percent of whites and only 56 percent of blacks who were not in school were employed in the survey week.

Adding those in the military to the labor force figures for men in these age groups improves the black-white comparisons. For example, the LFPRs for 18-year-old unenrolled men are 84 percent for whites and 67 percent for blacks, as compared to the 83 and 57 percentages in Table 5. For the age group 19 to 21 the white and black LFPRs that include the military are 91 and 72.

The women represented in this table are single, which is here defined by the respondent's report that she had never married. Black single women were more likely to report having

a child than were white women, but the percentage is low and would not explain much of the gap between LFPRs of white and black women. About 8 percent of these single black women between 16 and 24 report having a child, compared to 1 percent among the whites. (These statistics are shown in Table 14 and are discussed below.)

Table 6 presents a comparison of hours worked in 1979 for single people who are not in institutions, in group quarters, or in the military. Hours worked is measured as the product of weeks worked in 1979 times the "usual hours" worked per week in 1979. This measure has the advantage of covering a longer time span than the snapshot measures for the census week in 1980, but it has the disadvantage of relying on the respondent's memory. Moreover, there is some error in assuming a respondent's status at the time of the census, such as one's school enrollment or family status, is the same as that during all or most of the previous year. The use of averages for large groups, however, should minimize these disadvantages.

For brevity the table compares only 16- to 18-year-olds who are enrolled and 19- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled. Panel A shows the average hours worked for selected age groups. Consider the 18-year-olds who are enrolled in the census week and may be assumed to have been students during 1979. White male 18-year-olds worked an average of 520 hours in 1979, which is an average of 10 hours per week. Black men of this age and enrollment status worked just half as much. The comparison for female 18-year-olds shows a similar racial disparity in hours worked.

Among young persons aged 19 to 24 who were not enrolled in school, white men worked

Table 6

Hours Worked in 1979 and Comparisons with Labor Force Participation
Rates in 1980 for Single Persons Aged 16-24, by Age, Gender, and Race
(excluding persons in the military, institutions, or group quarters)

Panel A. Average Hours Worked in 1979 by Enrollment Status, Selected
Comparisons

			Enrolled			Not Enrolled		
		Age:	16	17	18	19-21	22	23-24
1.	White Male		188	378	520	1427	1531	1566
2.	Black Male		84	168	258	875	1051	1080
3.	White Female		124	288	438	1300	1430	1484
4.	Black Female		64	122	219	633	876	978

Panel B. Ratios of Gender-Specific Black-to-White Hours Worked in 1979
and LFPRs in 1980, Selected Comparisons[a]

			Enrolled			Not Enrolled		
		Age:	16	17	18	19-21	22	23-24
5.	Hours Worked Ratio, Male, B/W		.46	.44	.50	.60	.69	.69
6.	LFPR Ratio, Male, B/W[a]		.50	.54	.60	.79	.86	.86
7.	Hours Worked Ratio, Female, B/W		.52	.39	.50	.49	.61	.66
8.	LFPR Ratio, Female, B/W		.63	.50	.57	.67	.78	.75

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample.
Sample size = 217,000.

Notes: Single refers to those who have never married; white refers to
non-Hispanic whites. Single persons in these age groups who are in the
military, group quarters, and institutions constitute about 10 percent of
the sample.

[a]Ratios of LFPRs are based on tabulations similar to those shown in Panel
B of Table 5, except that the sample excludes persons in institutions,
group quarters, and the military.

an average of 27 to 30 hours per week in 1979. Considering that some of these young men were unemployed or between jobs or were in school part of that year, to cite only the main sources of time spent not at work, an average of close to 30 hours per week indicates substantial success in the labor market. By contrast, the unenrolled 19- to 24-year-old black men worked only an average of 17 to 21 hours per week in 1979.

For women the measure of annual hours worked is more difficult to interpret because housework may be another important activity, in addition to job search and schooling. Nevertheless, the finding that black women who were aged 19 to 21, currently single, and not enrolled in school worked an average of only 12 hours per week, compared to 25 for the corresponding white women, suggests meager contributions to household incomes and minimal investments in on-the-job training.

Panel B of Table 6 shows the black-to-white ratios for each gender for the two measures of labor force activity. The hours-worked comparison is even more unfavorable to blacks than that for LFPRs.

Table 6 excludes the minority of single young people who do not live with their families—about 20 percent, even after excluding those who are in the military, group quarters, or institutions. This minority is mainly found in the oldest age groups. Consider the group aged 22 to 24. Table 7 shows the proportions who do not live in families, their proportion in school, and their LFPRs. Their enrollment proportions are somewhat higher than those for the total sample, suggesting off-campus living arrangements for those attending college. As expected, the LFPRs of those who are not enrolled are higher than

Table 7

Living Arrangements, School Enrollment, and Labor Force
Participation Rates of Single Persons Aged 22-24
(excluding persons in the military, living in group
quarters, or in institutions)
(Percentages)

Group	Not Living in a Family	Enrolled as a Percentage of Those Not Living in a Family	LFPRs of Those Not Living in a Family	
			Enrolled	Not Enrolled
White Men	41	31	62	96
Black Men	22	25	64	90
White Women	46	28	72	96
Black Women	17	24	72	86

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample size = 89,000.

[a]Single refers to those who have never married; white refers to non-Hispanic whites. About 5 percent of the single women in this age group are in the military, group quarters, or institutions. About 10 percent of the single white men and 20 percent of the single black men are in these categories. The larger percentage for black men occurs because the military and institutional categories are larger.

those in the same enrollment status who live with their families. Compare the LFPRs in Table 7 with those in the last two columns in Panel B of Table 5.

An interesting finding in Table 7 is that the proportions of whites aged 22 to 24 not living in families are considerably larger than those of blacks. One explanation is that the opportunity to attend college and to get a good job are determinants of separate living arrangements by young unmarried persons. Access to good housing and higher parental income may also play a role. All this is consistent with the higher married proportion among white youth and with the interpretation that income advantages, labor market success, and access to good housing increase the likelihood of marrying. The advantaged position of white youth relative to blacks is, therefore, reinforced by the statistics in Table 7.

Employment and schooling can be substitutable activities, and the relation of each to age and marital status requires little comment. We understand why young single people are more likely to be in school, and why older people are more likely to be employed. The relations of school and labor force statuses to economic variables are, however, complicated.

In a conventional model of economic behavior, young people are assumed to divide their time among market work, housework, schooling, or leisure (using this term for any other nonwork activity), depending on the costs and benefits of these activities and depending on their income, which often comes directly or indirectly from their parents. The benefits and costs of these activities are difficult if not impossible to measure with available census and survey data. The immediate benefit of market work is earnings, but the most important

aspect of the job may be its training component, which is not observable. The cost of an extra hour of market work—assuming for convenience that an hour is the unit of choice—is the value to the person of his or her best alternative use of that hour: schoolwork, housework, or leisure.

The benefits of schooling may be divided into monetary and nonmonetary factors, but neither are easy to measure. A monetary rate of return on additional years of schooling is mainly based on the future earnings of the young person, which are unknown. This does not mean that young people have no knowledge of this rate of return; rather, it depends on an uncertain future that is to a large extent particularistic to the individual. Housework is closely linked with other decisions and constraints involving marriage, fertility, and living arrangements. Economic factors may play only a minor role.

The income of the family unit of the young person is usually observable, at least for the large majority who live with their families rather than alone, in group quarters, or in an institution. However, the relation of income to school and work choices is difficult to interpret. To what extent is the observed income relation attributable to a statistical association (correlation) between income and some other causal variable, such as the individual's earnings capacity or personal preferences? To what extent is the income relation causal in its own right; that is, attributable solely to the person's budget constraint and holding constant the relation income might have to the young person's earnings capacity or preferences?

Family income is expected to cause increases in years of schooling. Schooling is partly

a consumption activity, and even when schooling is not enjoyed, the children from high-income families may respond to parental and peer-group pressure to continue their schooling. Beyond high school, the direct money costs of schooling, such as tuition, constrain poor families from purchasing as much schooling as well-to-do families. Although a high school education is usually free of direct costs, the opportunity cost in terms of forgone earnings may lead to a higher proportion of dropouts in poor families. On the other hand, as suggested above, children of poor parents may not be able to obtain the good jobs that are available to affluent youth, and this will discourage them from taking or even looking for a job. Finally, children of affluent parents have had access to better earlier schooling and various benefits that are likely to increase their returns from further schooling. Such well-to-do youth will tend to choose schooling over full-time work, while maintaining their advantage in obtaining part-time jobs.

A positive empirical relation between enrollment and income is expected and observed in the 1980 census. Table 8 shows the positive relation for two ages (for brevity), 17 and 20, selected to represent a predominantly high school age and a predominantly college age. College enrollment among the 20-year-olds appears more responsive to income differences than high school enrollment among the 17-year-olds. The two relations of enrollment to income are similar for whites and blacks. Note that enrollment proportions are somewhat higher for blacks with family incomes below $15,000. White families with incomes this low are a relatively small fraction of the total white population, and they are disproportionately residents of rural areas, where school enrollment among those aged 16 to 24 is somewhat

Table 8

School Enrollment Percentages for Persons Aged 17 and 20
Who Are Not Heads of Households, by Race, Gender, and Family Income
(excluding the person's earnings)

Group	<$5	$5-10	$10-15	$15-20	$20-25	$25-30	$30-50	$50+	Total (all incomes)
				(thousands of dollars)					
White Men									
Age 17	72	75	81	84	89	90	92	95	87
Age 20	18	22	26	26	28	34	38	52	32
Black Men									
Age 17	79	82	84	86	89	90	91	89	85
Age 20	18	24	26	29	30	31	35	35	26
White Women									
Age 17	75	81	86	89	91	91	93	95	90
Age 20	27	26	31	29	35	38	44	57	38
Black Women									
Age 17	79	83	86	87	89	91	92	88	86
Age 20	17	27	30	33	36	36	41	45	33

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample size = 331,000.

Notes: Excludes young persons who do not live in a family, such as persons living alone, in the military, in group quarters, or in institutions. These groups constitute less than 5 percent of the 17-year-olds and less than 10 percent of the 20-year-olds. White refers to non-Hispanic whites.

lower.

As shown in Table 9, the median family incomes of whites are much higher than those of blacks for each age and enrollment classification, but the enrollment differences by color are minor compared to the income differences by color. Unmarried white and black men aged 16 to 19 were shown in earlier tables to have similar enrollment rates, yet the family incomes of these enrolled youth are vastly different: a median of $26,500 for whites and $14,100 for blacks. Even the highest median income for black men reported in Table 9, $16,100 for those aged 20 to 24 who are enrolled in college, is far below the smallest median income for white men, which is $21,300 for whites aged 16 to 19 who are not enrolled. Black youth who are not enrolled in school have very low family incomes: from $8,700 to $12,600. About 15 percent of single blacks aged 16 to 19 who are living with their families are not enrolled; 32 percent of those aged 20 to 24. Low family incomes, not being enrolled, and low LFPRs and EPs characterize a significant segment of black youth, and these characteristics all point to a long-run shortfall in economic well-being relative to the national average.

Further Comparisons of White and Black Labor Force Status

Why are the LFPRs of blacks relatively low? It seems reasonable to believe that their low LFPRs reflect meager opportunities in the labor market rather than preferences for recreation and leisure consumption. The low family income of black youth compared to white youth should, by itself, lead blacks to work more and to consume less leisure. However, it turns out that a positive rather than a negative relation is shown between the

Table 9

Median Family Income and Percentage Distribution
of Single Persons Aged 16-24 Living with Their in Families, by
Enrollment, Age, Gender, and Race[a]
(family income excludes the earnings of the young person)

Group	Enrolled in School, Ages:			Not Enrolled in School, Ages:			Total
	16-19	20-24	16-24	16-19	20-24	16-24	
White Men	$26.5[a]	$28.5	$26.8	$21.3	$22.6	$22.1	
	47%	9%	56%	16%	27%	43%	100%
Black Men	$14.1	$16.1	$14.3	$12.4	$12.6	$12.4	
	44%	8%	52%	16%	32%	48%	100%
White Women	$27.4	$28.7	$26.8	$22.2	$23.0	$22.6	
	54%	9%	63%	15%	22%	37%	100%
Black Women	$14.1	$14.5	$14.1	$10.1	$ 8.7	$ 9.4	
	43%	10%	53%	15%	32%	47%	100%

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample size =
331,000.

Notes: Single refers to those who have never married, and white refers to
non-Hispanic whites. Excluded are those in the military, institutions, and group
quarters. Note that those in group quarters are almost all in college, so excluding
this group (about 6 percent of whites and 4 percent of blacks) lowers the enrolled
proportions and lowers the median incomes slightly—more so for whites than for
blacks. However, excluding those in the military and in institutions serves to
raise the enrollment proportions and median incomes slightly.

[a]Family incomes are in thousands of dollars. Thus, the median family income for
white men aged 16-19 who are enrolled in school is $26,500, rounded, and is written
as $26.5.

LFPRs of young people and their family income, where income excludes the earnings of the young person. This suggests that certain pro-work factors are positively related to family income and dominate the "pure" negative effect of income on work. This argument will be pursued in this section.

The relation between family income and the LFPRs for single young persons aged 17 and 20 and living with their parents is shown in Table 10. Most of the 16 to 24 age group are single and living at home, and the 17- and 20-year-olds are again used as representatives. The LFPRs rise moderately with family income for all eight groups of young people, classified by gender, race, and age. It should be noted that the positive relation between LFPRs and family income emerges despite the facts that LFPRs are lower for enrolled youth (see Table 5) and that school enrollment is positively related to family income (see Table 8). The LFPRs do show a slight decline for the highest income group, $30,000 and over, compared to the income groups reporting $25,000 to $29,999, and this probably reflects the higher school enrollment proportions for youth from the highest-income families. Nevertheless, the LFPRs of the youth in the highest-income group are generally higher than the average LFPRs for all incomes.

An explanation for the unexpected pattern in Table 10 is that young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who live with affluent parents have more and better job opportunities available as a consequence of living in more prosperous communities and having parents with good connections. This hypothesis is difficult to test directly, because we cannot identify job availabilities or job offers with the data at hand. However, we can measure

Table 10

Labor Force Participation Rates (in percentages) of
Single Persons Aged 17 and 20 Living with Their Families, by
Gender, Race, and Income of the Family
(excluding the earnings of the young person)

Family Income (in $000's)	Age 17				Age 20				Percentage Distribution by Race[a]	
	White Men	Black Men	White Women	Black Women	White Men	Black Men	White Women	Black Women	W	B
≤0	31	22	(34)	16	(74)	56	...	(42)	1	1
0-15	46	26	41	21	80	62	74	48	19	51
15-20	50	28	44	25	83	69	77	56	12	14
20-25	52	31	46	24	83	71	78	58	14	11
25-30	53	34	49	27	85	72	80	60	14	8
30+	52	33	51	28	79	72	75	59	40	15
All Incomes	50	28	47	24	81	66	76	53	100	100

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample size = 83,000.

Notes: All cells have more than 100 observations, unless the number is in parentheses, which means that the number observations is between 50 and 100. The cell with less than 50 observations is not reported. Single refers to never married. The young persons are also reported to be the child of the head of the household. White refers to non-Hispanics.

[a]The distribution refers to whites (W) and blacks (B) of both age and gender groups.

wages as an indicator of demand conditions, and as shown in Panel A of Table 11 the hypothesis is supported. The average hourly wage for working youth is generally higher for young people whose family incomes are higher.[10] The figures in Table 11 are again for selected age groups, for brevity, this time combining 17- and 18-year-olds to achieve a more reliable estimate of wage rates. This sample is restricted to those who worked in 1979.

If we assume that the relatively high wage available to children in affluent families is an indicator of better job opportunities generally, this helps to explain why the well-off children have higher labor force and employment rates, despite the facts that they are also more likely to be in school and presumably have less "need" for earnings. But is the higher wage merely an effect, rather than a cause, of working more? Evidence against this interpretation, shown in Panel B in Table 11, is that the hours of work *among the working youth* are *not* positively related to family income. So we are not just observing higher wages in full-time (or long-hour) jobs. Instead, the interpretation suggested is that the availability of higher wages for similar amounts of hours worked induces more young

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[10]The average wage per hour is computed by summing total earnings of working youth in 1979 and dividing by the total hours worked in 1979. Hours of work is a product of weeks reported working and usual hours worked per week. This average wage is essentially weighted by the hours worked. A worker who works 40 hours in a week contributes 8 times as much to the average as a worker who works 5 hours a week, assuming both worked the same number of weeks. It is preferred to an average computed by summing each worker's wage, obtained by dividing the worker's earnings by the worker's hours, and then dividing by the total number of workers, because too often reporting errors in earnings or hours would produce unbelievably large wages, particularly among part-time workers.

Table 11

Average Wage Rates and Average Annual Hours Worked in 1979
for Employed Single Persons Aged 17-18
Enrolled in School, and Employed 20-Year-Old Single Persons Not Enrolled,
Living with Their Families, by Gender, Race, and
Income of the Family
(excluding the earnings of the young person)

	Panel A. Average Wage Rates (per hour) in 1979[a]							
	Age 17-18, Enrolled				Age 20, Not Enrolled			
Family Income (in $000's)	White Men	Black Men	White Women	Black Women	White Men	Black Men	White Women	Black Women
0-15	$3.10	$3.25	$2.93	$3.32	$4.06	$3.62	$3.55	$3.30
15-20	3.07	3.49	3.14	3.03	4.09	3.91	3.51	3.54
20-25	3.17	3.15	2.92	3.47	4.51	3.98	3.51	3.85
25-30	3.16	3.27	2.96	2.96	4.51	4.04	3.60	3.48
30+	3.39	3.61	3.19	3.32	4.70	4.45	3.70	3.81
All Incomes	3.24	3.37	3.07	3.26	4.42	3.94	3.62	3.53

	Panel B. Average Annual Hours Worked in 1979 for Persons Who Worked							
0-15	624	506	522	452	1561	1239	1402	1063
15-20	631	528	541	499	1592	1331	1556	1181
25-25	636	501	537	464	1564	1369	1518	1187
25-30	620	535	539	495	1625	1334	1554	1175
30+	599	524	525	479	1616	1322	1520	1214
All Incomes	615	515	530	469	1594	1288	1507	1129

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample size = 54,000.

Notes: Single refers to never married, and white refers to non-Hispanics. The young persons are also reported to be the child of the head of the household.

[a]See text footnote 10 for a definition of the average wage rate.

people to take jobs and thereby increases LFPRs.

Because Table 11 is restricted to those who worked in 1979, the reported average hours worked are much higher than those in Table 5, which included those who did not work in 1979. Note that the racial disparities in employment are much less among working youth. For the two age groups, 17-18 and 20, the averages of hours worked by black men are slightly more than 80 percent as large as the averages for white men, and the black-to-white ratios of hours worked for the young women are .88 for those aged 17-18 and .75 for 20- year-olds. (These ratios are based on the figures in the bottom row of the table.) Evidently the important source of the black youth's disadvantage in employment is in getting a job in the first place.

The fact that the percentage of 17- and 18-year-old blacks who did work in 1979 is so much smaller than the percentage of whites may be the reason for the surprising result of generally higher average wages for blacks than whites in the young age groups. There may be more selective "creaming" of the most skilled black youth relative to the selection among white youth. Another explanation is that the black wage advantage merely reflects measurement error. There is considerable error in measuring the wages of part-time young workers, who dominate the group of working 17- and 18-year-olds. Measures of wages for full-time workers (see Table 12) consistently show a sizable wage advantage to white workers.

Table 12 provides more information about wage rates of the young people examined in this section. Here, the average hourly wage rates are for young, full-time, year-round

Table 12

Average and Median Hourly Wage Rates in 1979 of Not Enrolled, Full-Time,
Year-Round Young Workers by Gender, Race and Age, and Median Hourly
Wage Rates for All Workers Aged 16-24

| | Average Wages of Full-Time Average Workers, Ages: | | | | | | | | Median Wages | |
| | | | | | | | | | Full-Time Workers 16-24 | All Workers 16-24 |
Group	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	All Ages 16-24		
White Men	$3.21	$3.80	$4.38	$4.77	$5.18	$5.57	$5.90	$5.05	$4.85	$4.20
Black Men	2.90	3.25	3.62	3.82	4.10	4.48	4.78	4.10	4.15	3.65
White Women	2.82	3.31	3.67	3.90	4.12	4.40	4.68	4.08	3.96	3.56
Black Women	2.87	3.07	3.55	3.60	3.82	3.98	4.24	3.83	3.79	3.37

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample. Sample sizes: 96,000 for columns 1-7; 125,000 for columns 8-9; 367,000 for column 10.

Notes: White refers to non-Hispanics. Full-time refers to workers whose usual weekly hours of work exceed 35 hours and who worked 48 or more weeks in 1979.

workers who are not enrolled in school. Wages are shown for those aged 16 to 24 and by single year of age between 18 and 24, where the population groups are reasonably large. White men are shown to have about a 20 percent advantage relative to black men and to white women—the latter two groups earn about the same and about 8 percent more than black women.

Two points about these comparisons are noteworthy. A larger fraction of white men are working full time, so they have higher wages despite the fact that their population is probably less selective than is the case among the other groups. Furthermore, all the youth represented in the table, except for the last column, are full-time, year-round workers who are not enrolled in school, so their wage is more likely to measure what they *can* earn, not what they, in some sense, choose to earn. The wages measured in Table 12 are probably better indicators of the wages available to these racial and gender groups than the wages shown in Table 11, where the main purpose was to show the relation of youth wages to their family incomes.

The following hypotheses concerning the decision-making process may be suggested. The primary choice of youth between the ages of 16 and 22 or so is whether to stay in school, and income has a positive effect on this choice. Choosing military service or an early marriage may also be less common among youth in higher-income families, but this is speculative because the data do not permit testing these relations to family income. Thus, family income is correlated with labor force participation of young people in an indirect and a direct way. Indirectly, the family income of a young person will partly determine whether

he or she stays in school, gets married, or joins the military. In these indirect ways family (or parental) income probably decreases market work. That is, by increasing schooling, reducing military service, and delaying marriage, higher parental income is decreasing labor force participation. On the other hand, by far the largest group of young people are in school, are civilians, and are unmarried. Among this group, the correlation of income and LFPR is positive, because, it is suggested, family income is positively associated with better part-time job opportunities, and this offsets the negative association that income has with market work based on "need" considerations.

The labor market status of black youth appears considerably disadvantaged relative to whites in 1980, as it has appeared before and since. Two mitigating conditions may be suggested. The first is that a more favorable comparison between white and black male youth is shown in measures of overall "economic activity," defined as being engaged in at least one of the following activities: schooling, civilian employment, or military service. Table 13 shows two such measures for men aged 16 to 24: a broad measure that includes unemployment status as being economically active, and a narrow definition that excludes the unemployed and instead requires that the young person be employed.

In rows 1 and 2, which refer to the broader definition, 96 percent of white male youth and 88 percent of black male youth are defined to be active, on average, by virtue of being either enrolled in school, in the military, or in the labor force. Correspondingly, only 12 percent of black men and 4 percent of white men are inactive. A less favorable comparison of blacks to whites is shown in rows 3 and 4, where the unemployed component of the

Table 13

Percentage of Young Men Who Are "Economically Active"
during the Census Week, April 1980, by Age and Race

Group and Type of Activity	16-17	18	Age 19-21	22	23-24	Ages 16-24
In the Military, Enrolled, or in Labor Force						
White	96	95	96	96	96	96
Black	93	87	85	88	88	88
In the Military, Enrolled, or Employed						
White	95	90	88	89	90	90
Black	91	80	74	75	76	79

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use
Sample. Sample size = 263,000.

Note: White refers to non-Hispanics. Those institutionalized
and those living in group quarters are excluded.

labor force is excluded from the active proportion. We see that 10 percent of white men and 21 percent of black men between the ages of 16 and 24 are inactive by this narrower and more strict criterion, although we should keep in mind that the census definition of unemployment generally requires that the respondent has actively searched for a job during a four-week period prior to the survey.

Even using the broader definition of economic activity, the finding that about 12 percent of black men aged 16 to 24 are not in school and not working in either civilian or military jobs and are not looking for work is of some concern. Let us assume that the 4 percent of white men in this classification of economic inactivity represents a normal proportion of male youth who, for reasons of physical or mental health or even for personal desires for leisure, have disengaged themselves from these conventional forms of productive activity. Recall that the institutionalized population has been excluded already. The eight additional percentage points among blacks surely reflect general conditions of weaker economic opportunities.

If we emphasize that 88 percent of the black men are engaged in at least one of the above-mentioned productive activities, we should note that an insight into their unfavorable status relative to whites is the limited extent to which they are engaged in more than one such activity. In particular, they are much less likely to be both in school and employed than are white male youth. It is difficult to arrive at a conclusive judgment about these statistics. Clearly, all these activities can be finally evaluated, if at all, by how they train and prepare the young people for the next 40 or more years of their lives. The social

sciences cannot reliably predict the outcomes with the data at hand.

The comparisons of economic activity proportions for the two racial groups of female youth are complicated by the necessity and difficulties of measuring housework. A simple measure adopted in Tables 14 and 15 is to use motherhood and marriage as presumptions of economic activity in the form of housework. Realistically, we are faced with complicated interpretations of these statuses in terms of economic well-being. For young women aged 16 to 19, being in school, employed, married, or some combination of these activities surely implies a more favorable economic status than being an unwed mother who is out of school. Nevertheless, the housework required in mothering is a form of economic productive activity. With these remarks in mind, let us examine Tables 14 and 15.

In Table 14 the sample is restricted to the large majority of young women who are single and living in households. The tiny percentage of young women who are in the military, group quarters, or institutions are excluded. The most inclusive measure of economic activity for these single women is shown in rows 1 and 2, where we see that 95 percent of the white women, and 88 percent of the black women, aged 16 to 24 are either working or looking for work (that is, in the labor force), enrolled in school, mothering, or doing some combination of these activities. These are high levels of activity. Others among these young people may be doing other forms of housework, such as caring for ill relatives or for sibling children.

There is a notable contrast between white and black women that may be placed in sharper focus if we note the percentage who are in none of these categories. Among

Table 14

Percentage of Unmarried Young Women Who Are "Economically Active"
during the Census Week, April 1980, by Age and Race

Type of Activity	Group	Age 16-17	18	19-21	22	23-24	Ages 16-24
Enrolled, in Labor Force,	1. White	96	94	94	95	94	95
or Mothers	2. Black	93	86	84	88	89	88
Enrolled, Employed,	3. White	95	91	91	92	91	92
or Mothers	4. Black	92	82	78	82	84	84
Enrolled or in Labor	5. White	96	94	92	92	90	93
Force	6. Black	92	81	75	74	73	80
Enrolled or	7. White	95	90	88	88	86	88
Employed	8. Black	91	76	66	63	63	73
Percentage of Unmarried Women Who	9. White	<1	<1	2	3	4	2
Are Mothers	10. Black	1	4	9	14	16	8

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample.
Sample size = 274,000.

Note: White refers to non-Hispanics. Unmarried refers to women who are
single (never married) and to women who are divorced, separated, or
widowed.

Table 15

Percentage of All Young Women Who Are "Economically Active"
during the Census Week, April 1980, by Age and Race

Type of Activity	Group		Age					Ages 16-24
			16-17	18	19-21	22	23-24	
Enrolled, in Labor Force, Parent, or Married	1.	White	96	95	96	97	97	96
	2.	Black	93	87	87	91	93	90
Enrolled or Employed	3.	White	92	83	77	73	70	79
	4.	Black	89	73	62	63	62	70
Married[a]	5.	White	4	13	32	47	56	29
Employed[b]	6.		25	39	53	56	57	56
Unemploye[c]	7.		7	7	6	5	4	5
Married[a]	8.	Black	2	6	16	27	32	16
Employed[b]	9.		17	27	45	54	59	51
Unemploye[c]	10.		11	13	13	10	10	11

Source: Special tabulations from the 1980 Census, Public Use Sample.
Sample size = 274,000.

Notes: White refers to non-Hispanics. "All women" refers to the unmarried women used in Table 13 plus married women with husband present. Institutionalized women and women in group quarters are excluded.

[a]Refers to married and living with husband.

[b]Percentage of the married women with husband present. The statistic is, therefore, the employment-to-population ratio for the married group.

[c]Percentage unemployed of the married women with husband present. It is not the conventional unemployment rate, which is calculable as the unemployment percentage of the combined employed-plus-unemployed percentages. For example, the unemployment rate for black 22-year-olds is 10/(54+10) = 15.6 percent.

the age group 18 to 22, which is generally past the ages for high school, the inactive proportions of single women are only 5 or 6 percent for whites, 12 to 14 percent for blacks. The disadvantaged status of blacks is even more pronounced than these figures indicate because the percentage of black mothers without husbands present is notably higher than for whites (see rows 9 and 10). Among blacks, from 9 to 16 percent of the age groups from 19 to 24 are mothers without husbands present. Thus, when we look at rows 5 and 6, which measure activity by school enrollment or labor force participation and exclude motherhood, the overall levels of activity are 93 percent for whites and 80 percent for blacks. For the ages 19 to 24 in these rows, we see that only 8 to 10 percent of white single women are not economically active in ways that earn them money, search for jobs, or invest in schooling. Around 26 percent of black women aged 19 to 24 are in this category.

The narrowest measure of economic activity, based on employment and schooling, is shown in rows 7 and 8. Overall, 12 percent of white women and 27 percent of black women are inactive by this measure. In the 19 to 24 age group about 36 percent of black single women are inactive by these two measures of activity—measures that imply receiving higher current and future earnings.

Although Table 14 is restricted to women who are not married and living with husbands, the picture is reasonably complete for the youngest age groups, from 16 to 19, for whom marriage is uncommon, especially for black women. Table 15 offers a more complete picture of economic activity among female youth by including those who are married. The percentage married by age for the two racial groups are shown in rows 5 and 8. For brevity,

only two measures of economic activity are presented.

In rows 1 and 2 the percentage of those who are enrolled in school, labor force partici-
pants, mothers, or married and living with their husbands are combined. Only 4 percent
of white women are inactive by this measure, 10 percent of black women. Obviously, these
are high levels of activity. White women were already at such high levels of activity, close
to 100 percent, that adding the substantial fraction of married women could not increase
the percentage much more. For the entire 16 to 24 age group of whites, 29 percent are
married, and the proportion is about 43 percent for those aged 19 to 24, who are beyond
high school age. Black women between 16 and 24 are much less likely to be married: 16
percent overall and about 23 percent for the 19 to 24 group. However, even these relatively
small percentages, when included in the activity measures for blacks, raise the overall level
by one to four percentage points.

The percentages of white and black married women aged 19 to 24 who are employed
or in the labor force are similar. About 55 percent are employed and 60 to 65 percent
are in the labor force (see rows 6-7 and 9-10). Among white women, these percentages
are substantially lower than the employment proportions or LFPRs for the single women
shown in Table 14. Among blacks the LFPRs of the single women aged 19 to 24 are
only slightly higher than those of the married women of these ages. Thus, the use of the
narrowest measure of economic activity, enrollment and employment, serves to decrease the
proportion of active white women from 88 for singles to 79 for singles and wives combined.
(Compare the last columns in row 7, Table 14 with row 3 in Table 15.) The decline is less

for blacks: from 73 to 70.

In summary, the two tables pertaining to young women show high levels of economic activity, using the broad measures of school enrollment, labor force participation, and housework as measured by motherhood and marriage. This general conclusion is a mitigating factor in the pessimistic picture about black youth that sometimes accompanies a fixation on their labor force status. Even so, among the majority of young women who are single, a substantial portion, 12 percent, of blacks are economically inactive by this measure (see Table 14, row 2). Moreover, the distinction between economically active and economically well off is sharply revealed by separating the single women with children, who form a substantial proportion of the 19 to 24 age group among blacks. This group, while economically productive in performing housework, tends to be poverty- stricken. Separating the unemployed from the employed also distinguishes groups of labor force participants by economic well-being. We can use the last six rows of Table 14 to see this for the young married women. The unemployment-to-population ratios are much higher for black than for white women (see rows 7 and 10).[11]

When the measure of economic activity is restricted to being employed or in school, the proportion of black single women who are in neither category is shown to be disturbingly large: 27 percent for the entire group aged 16 to 24 and around 36 percent among the 19

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[11] The standard definition of an unemployment rate is given as the quotient (for blacks) of row 10 divided by the sum of row 7 and row 10. The conventional unemployment rates are high for white women and very high for blacks; for example, 8 percent for whites overall ($= 5/(5 + 56)$) and 18 percent for blacks overall ($= 11/(11 + 51)$).

to 24 group. The corresponding figures for white women are 12 percent and 13 percent (see Table 14, rows 7 and 8).

A second mitigating point about the relative economic status of black youth is that their "statistical" deterioration in the labor force that shows up in the 1980 census and in surrounding years, which is based entirely on the facts of rising unemployment rates and declining LFPRs, is largely illusory over the sweep of the 40 years from 1940 to 1980. In 1940 and 1950 from 20 to 40 percent of black men 14 to 24 years old lived on farms, mainly in the South, and their relatively high LFPRs and low unemployment rates coincided with desperate poverty and minimal schooling. After the migration into urban areas the lower LFPRs and higher unemployment rates of that generation of black youth were, 20 years later, generally offset by much higher incomes and school enrollments among the next generations of black youth.

This paper has consisted mainly of descriptive statistics bearing on the labor market status of black and white youth. The cross-section picture derived from the 1980 Census holds true in its essentials for the years since 1980, and the basic finding is that while young people appear productive in several types of activities, particulary in work and schooling, black youth are lagging behind. Further research is planned to describe the recent time trends more fully and to attempt to explain the outcomes in terms that convey policy implications.