

When Black Lives Matter

What's a Self-Respecting "Black" Intellectual
To Do in the Face of Persistent
Racial Inequality in the United States?

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Lecture for Winter School, Delhi School of Economics
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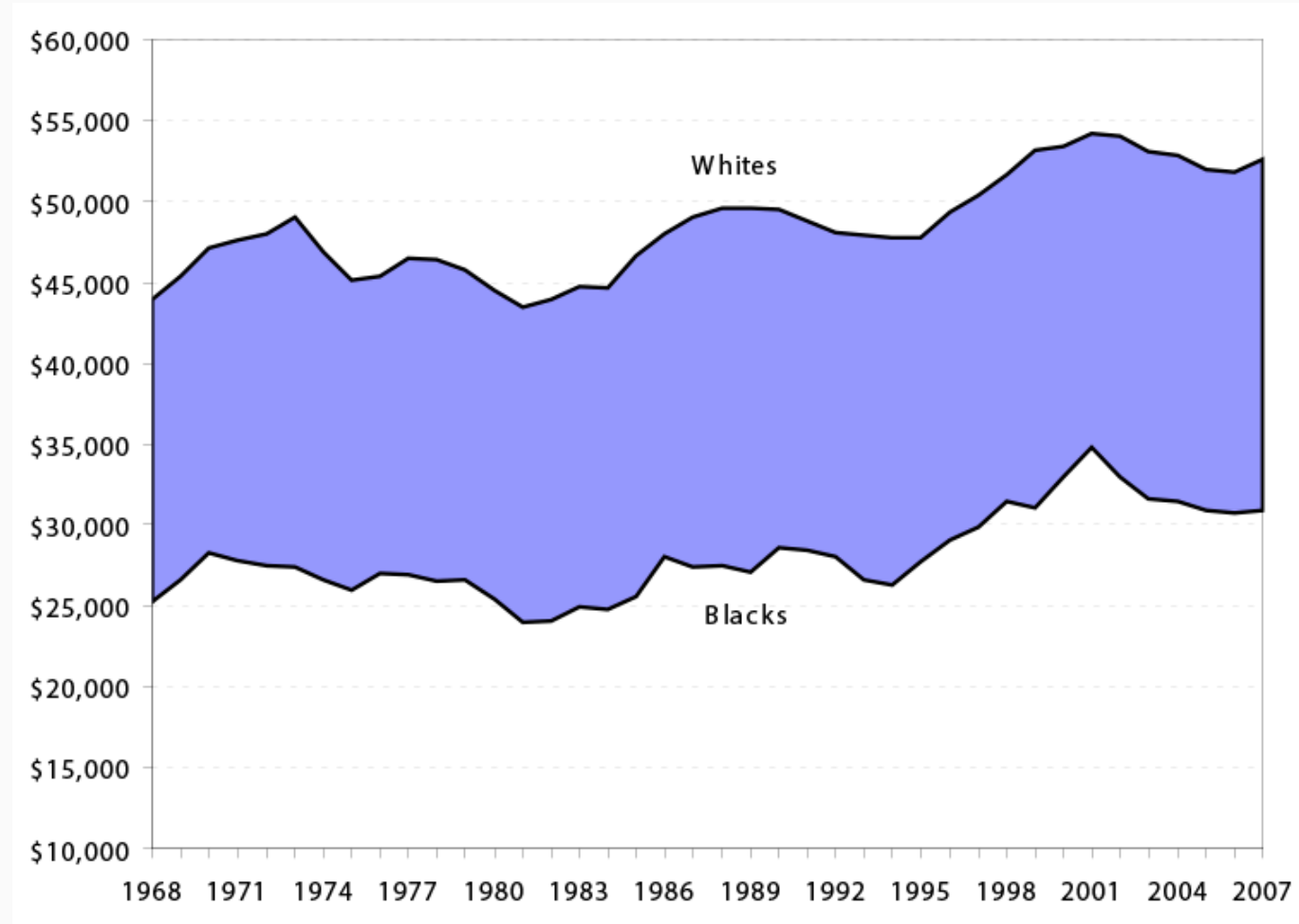
Outline of this presentation

- Motivation: What's Next for the 'American Dilemma?
- Facts About Persistent Racial Inequality in US post-1960s
- The Incarceration Explosion: A Case in Point
- “Relations before Transactions” (Social Capital + Racial Segregation = Persistent Racial Inequality)
- Some Personal Considerations:
 - What's a “self-respecting black intellectual” to do? What are my responsibilities?
 - Reflexivity - the problem of self-regard: report on “my year of living dangerously”

Race: America's Seemingly Permanent Dilemma

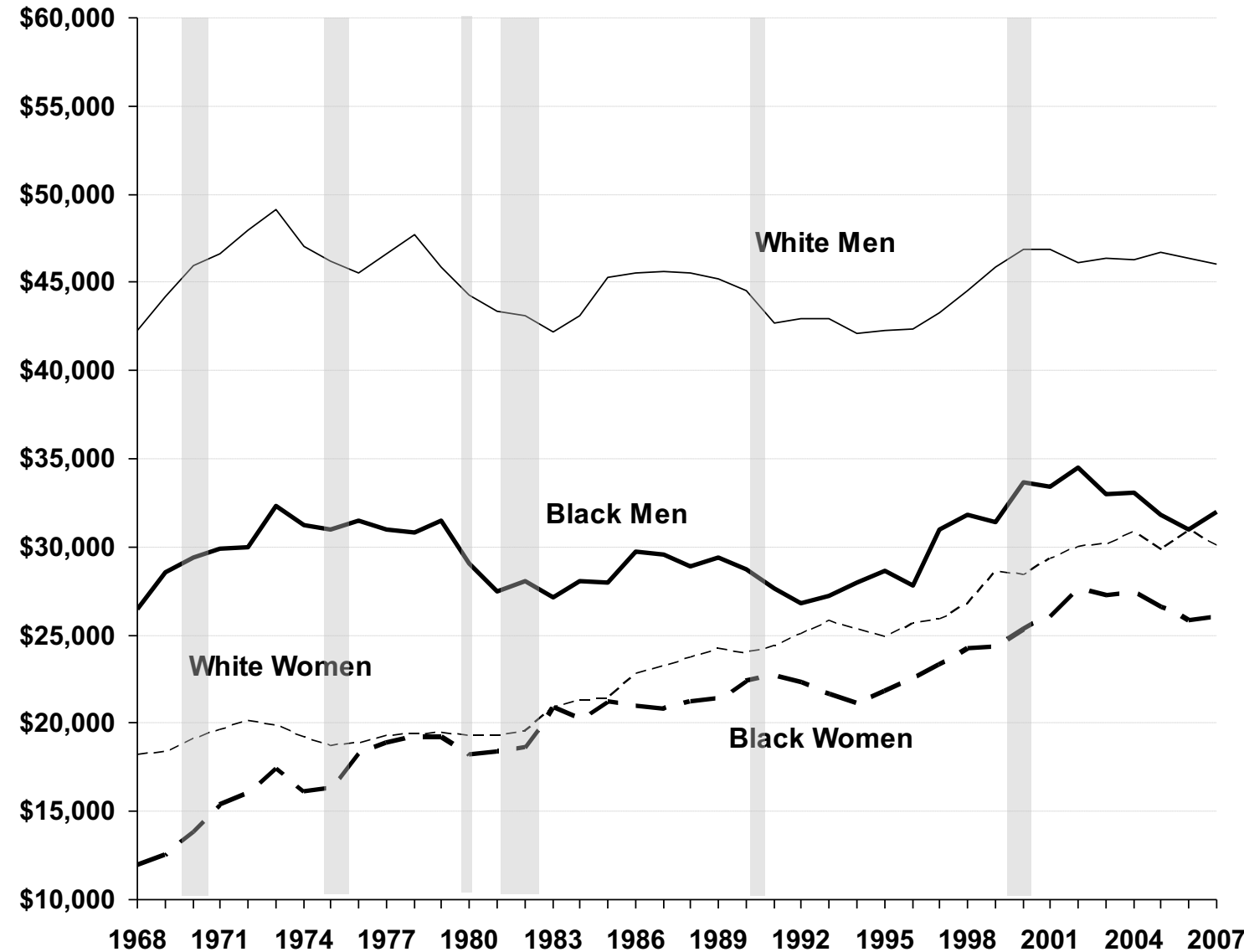
- This year marked sixty-second anniversary of U.S. Supreme Court's fabled *Brown* decision. It's ancient history – and yet ...
- Reckoning with what Myrdal called the “American Dilemma” of race was the country's biggest domestic challenge post-WWII.
- The large scale of non-European immigration post-1965 reforms has transformed social/political landscape on racial inequality issues.
- Concerning blacks, while “enormous progress has been made,” we have NOT solved this problem, and may be in danger of losing our way.
- Though still relevant, notions of “racial bias” inherited from mid-20th century US are inadequate to fully understanding current problem.
- In addition, remediation of “developmental” disparities that inhibit blacks' participation in 21st century American society is now crucial.

Median Households Incomes of Native-Born Non-Hispanics Blacks and Whites (Shown, in constant 2007 dollars, for the first four post-CR decades)

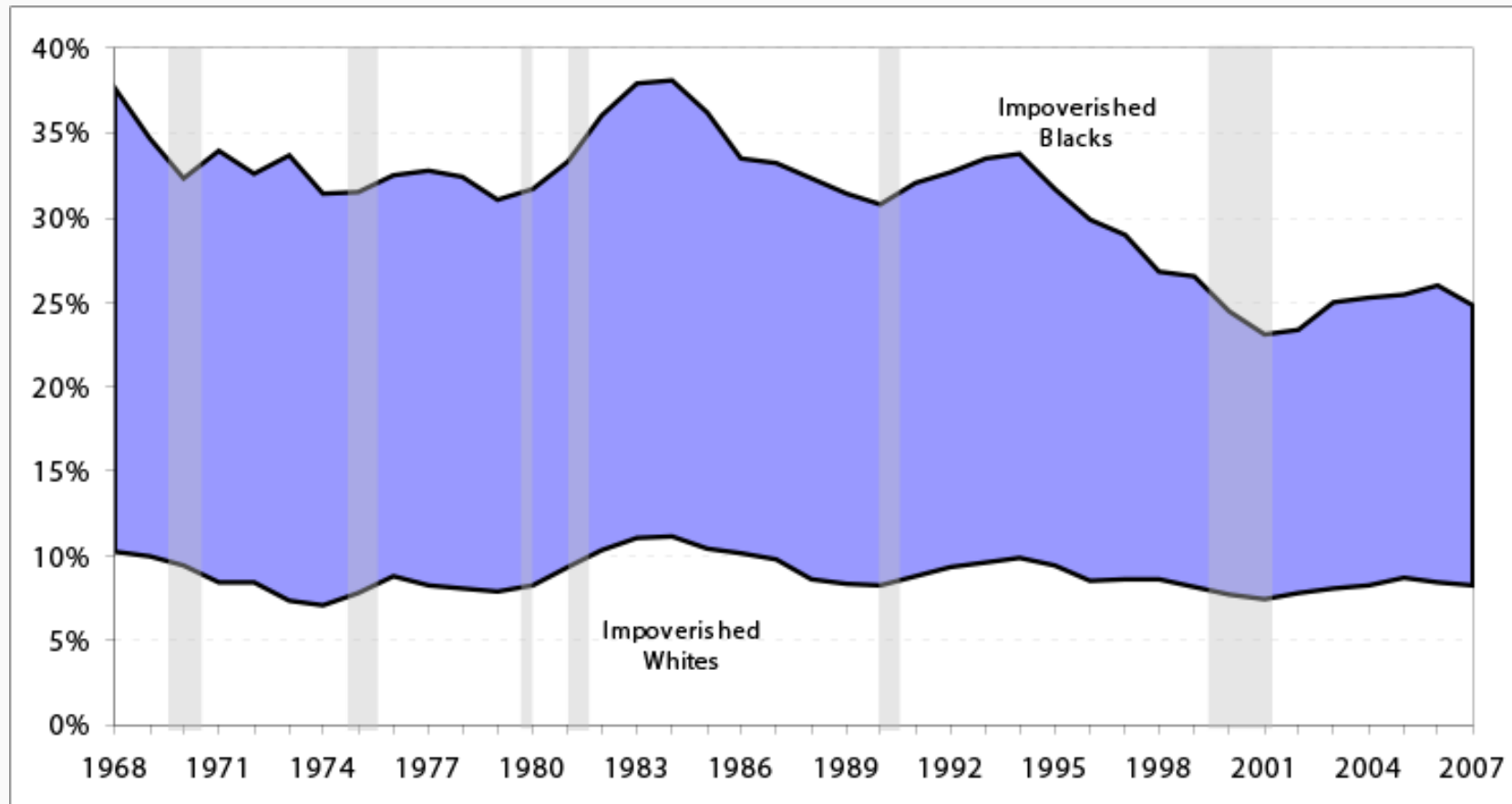


Note: A huge disparity by race; with no trend toward convergence.

Median Wage and Salary Earnings for Native-Born Non-Hispanics Reporting Earnings

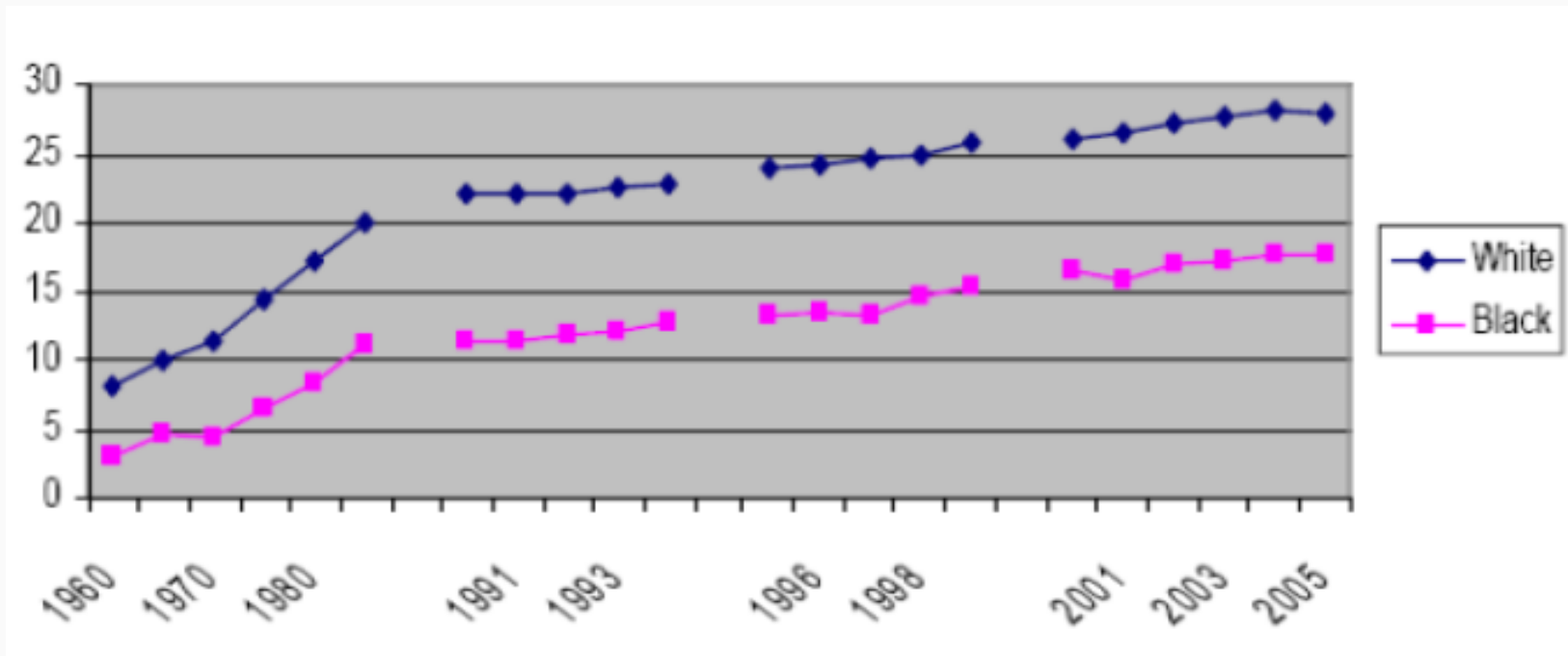


Percent of Native-Born Non-Hispanics Below the Poverty Line 1968 to 2007



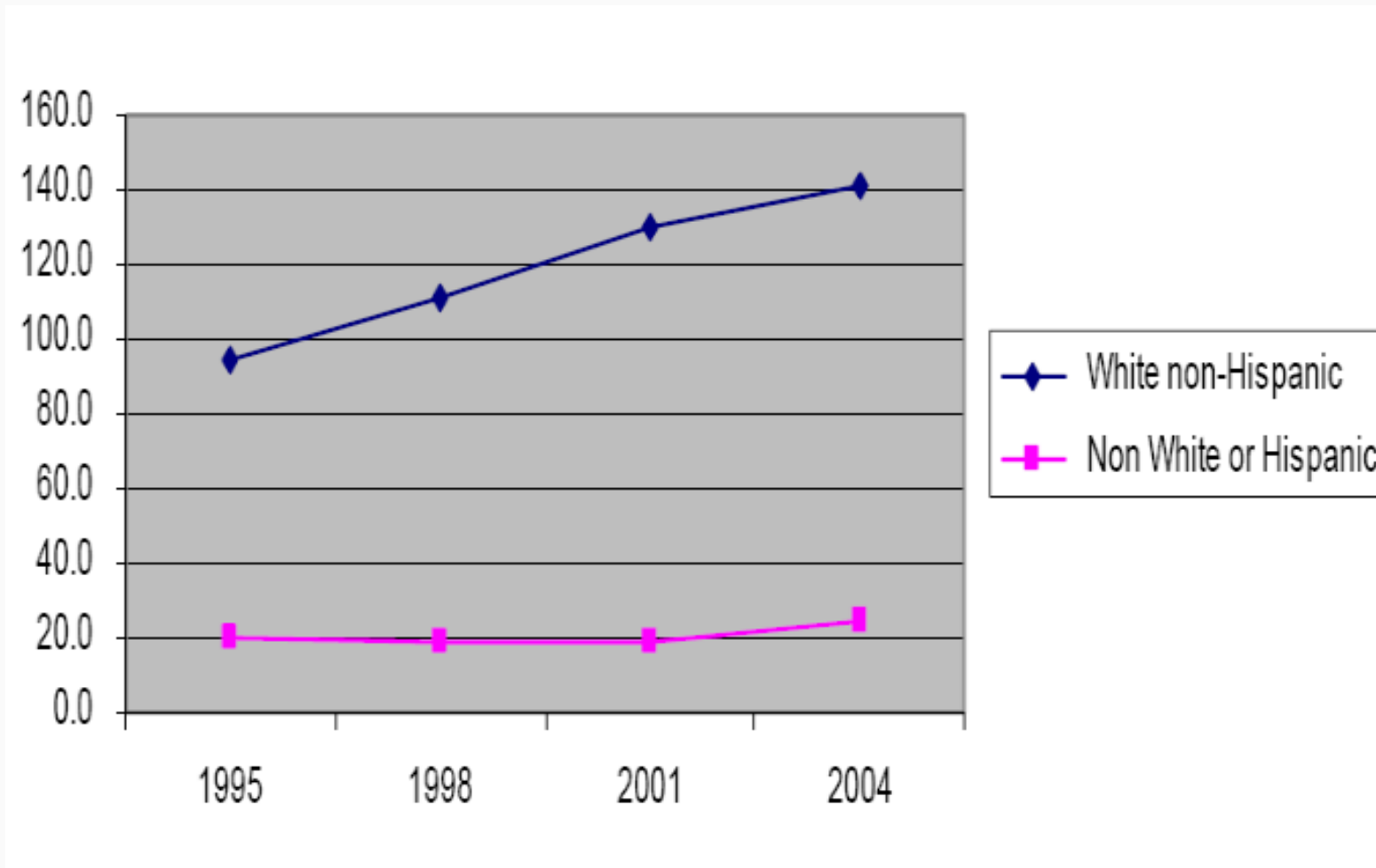
Note: A huge disparity by race; with only a slight convergence.

Percent of 25-34 year old persons who are college graduates, by race



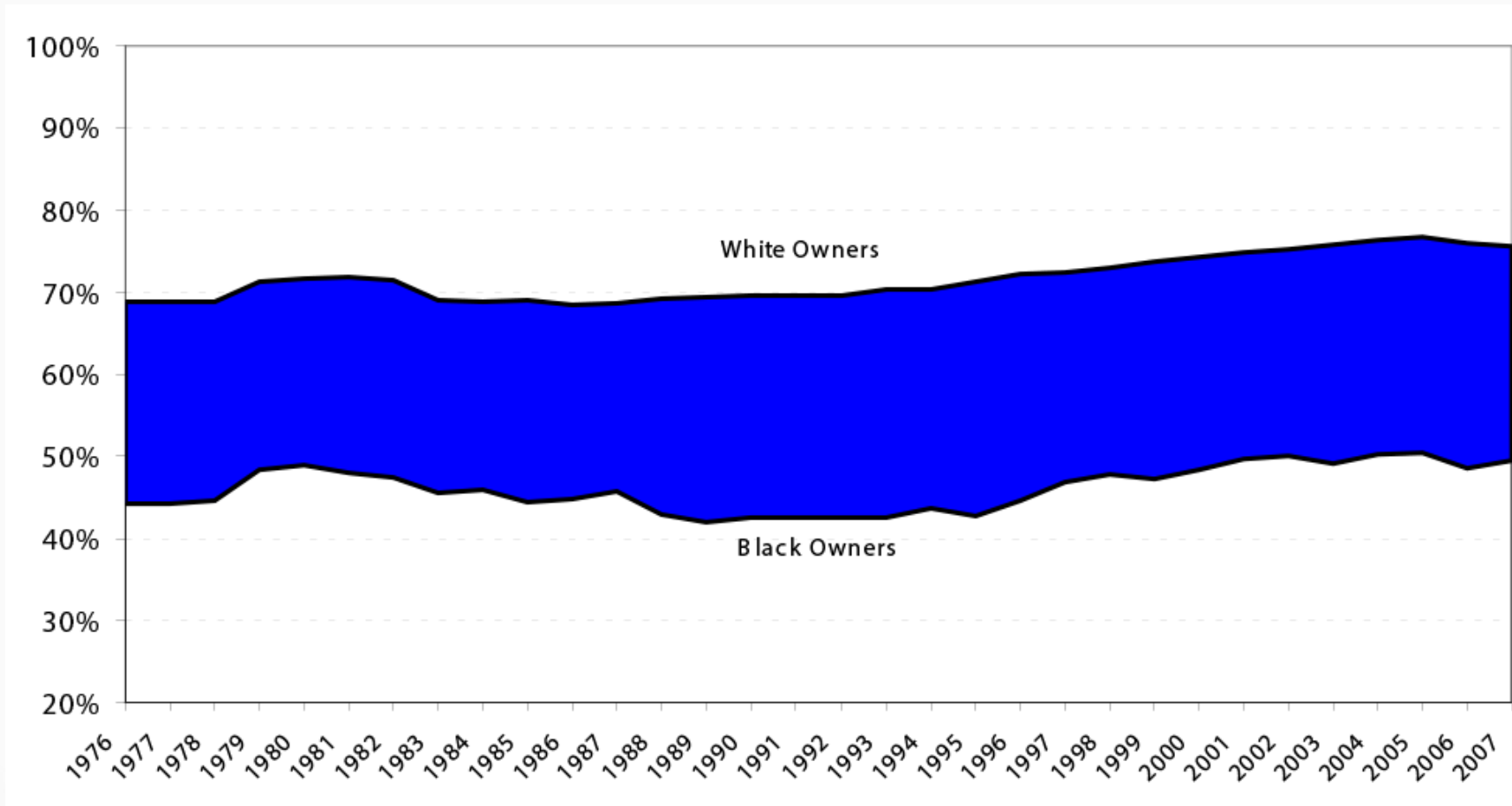
Note: A huge disparity by race; with the gap actually widening.

Median net worth by race

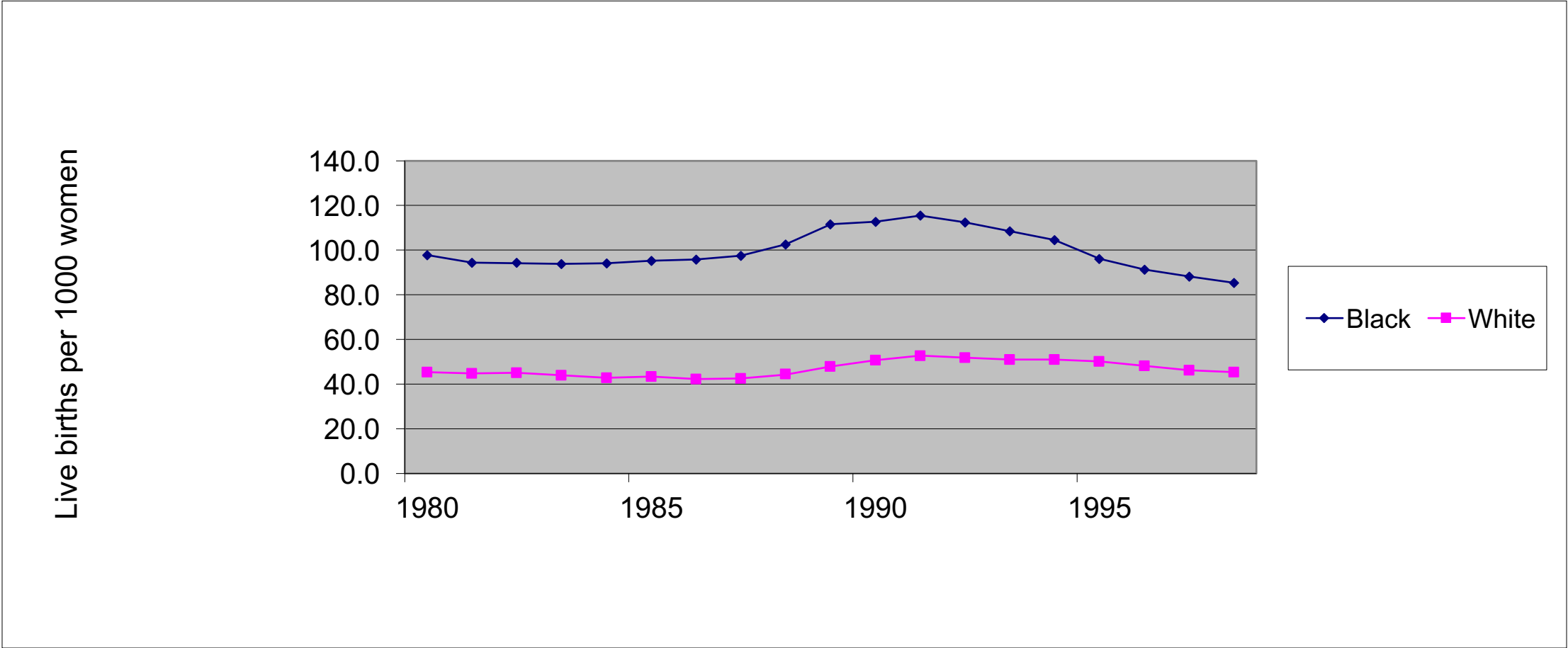


HOME OWNERSHIP

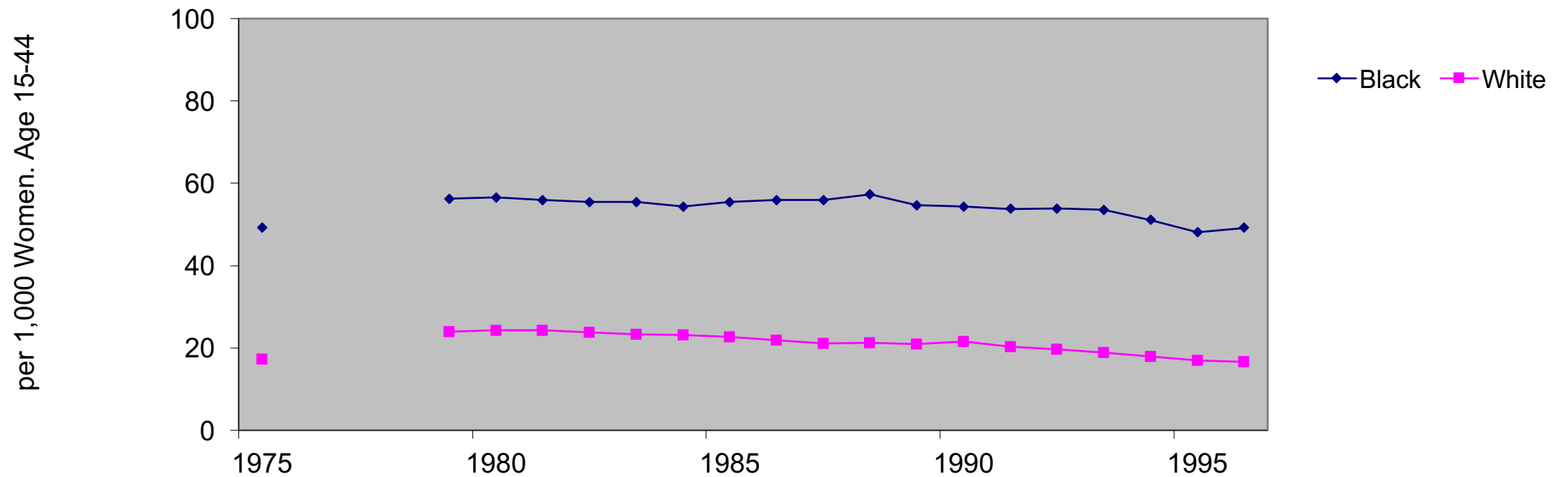
Percent of Native-Born Non-Hispanic Households Owning their Residence



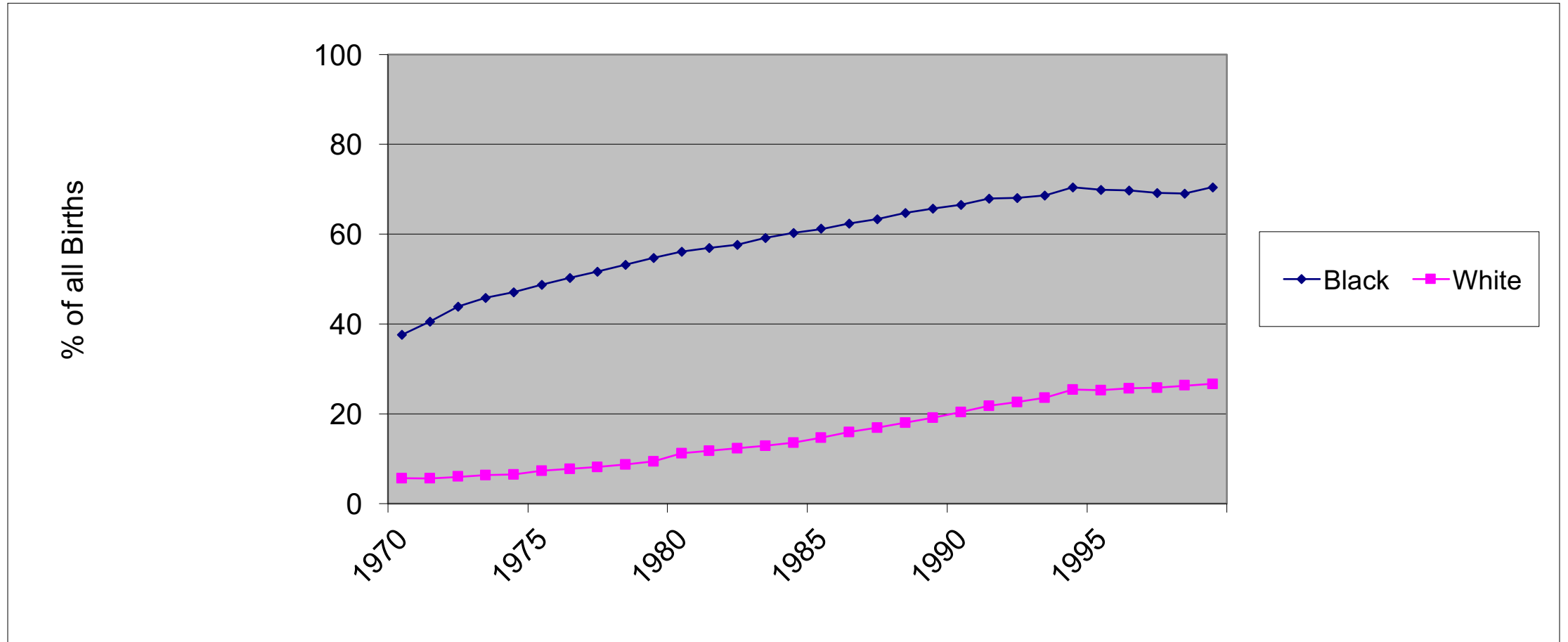
Teenage Birth Rates (Women Ages 15-19)



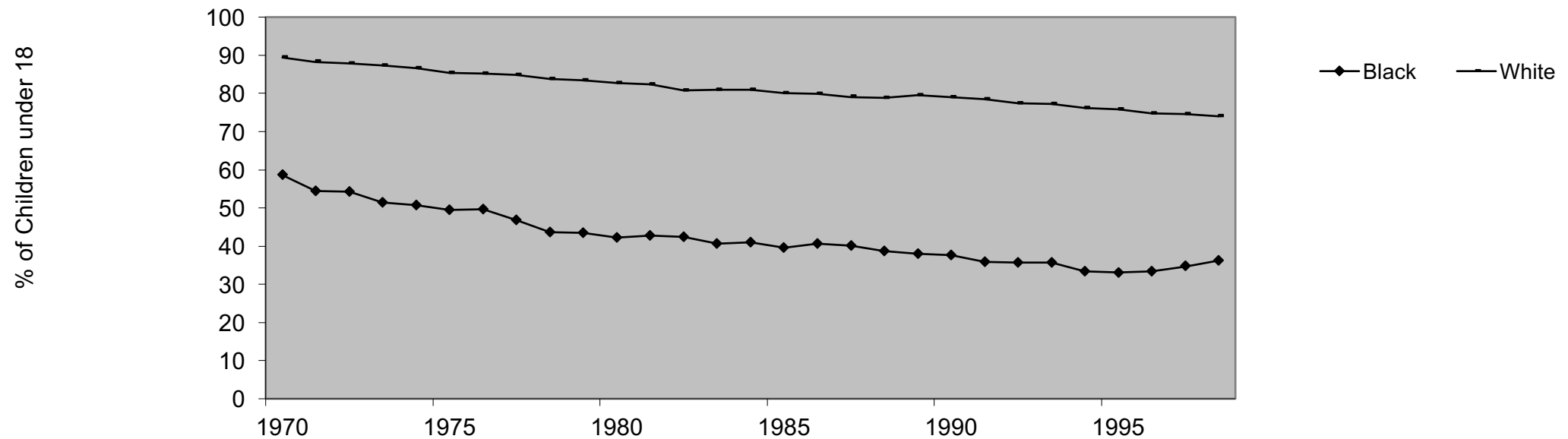
Abortion Rates



Births to Unmarried Mothers



Children Living with Both Parents



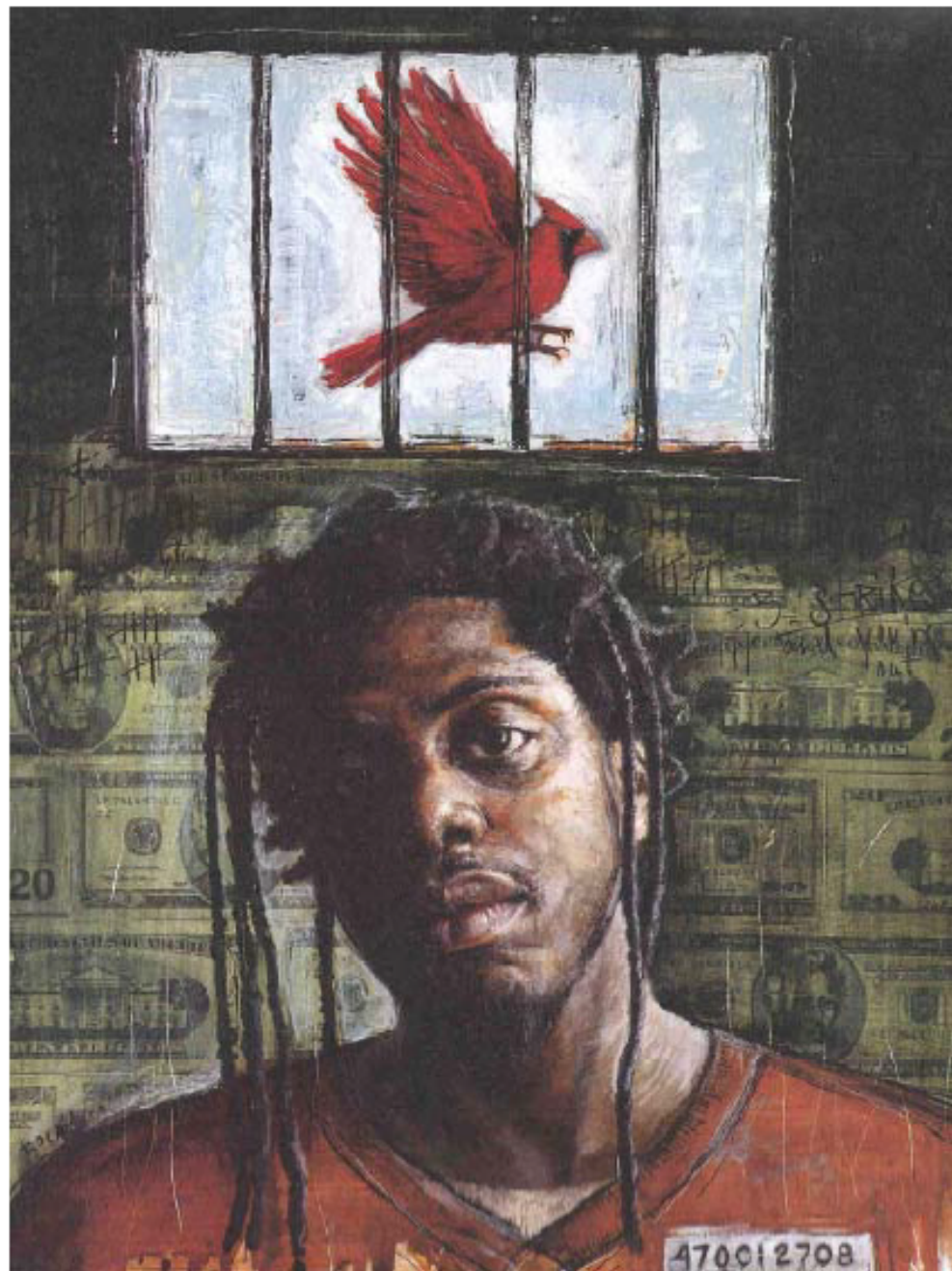
(What are the consequences of this trend for child development, if any?)



An Incarceration Explosion

Both Reflecting and Locking-in Racial Inequality

(I address the moral implications of this massive mobilization of coercive resources in the US in my book, “Race, Incarceration and American Values: The Tanner Lectures,” M.I.T. Press 2008)



There are five key points to note about Imprisonment Trends in the United States 1970-2010:

- 1) US Imprisonment Dwarfs that in other Countries
- 2) Current High Rates Unprecedented in US History
- 3) Incidence Wildly Disparate by Race and Class
- 4) Rise Since 1980 Due Largely to Anti-Drugs “War”
- 5) Imprisonment Now Key Feature of US Social Policy

What can a self-respecting black intellectual do?

In last five years I have promoted two scholarly investigations of the causes and consequences of such high rates of incarceration in the US:

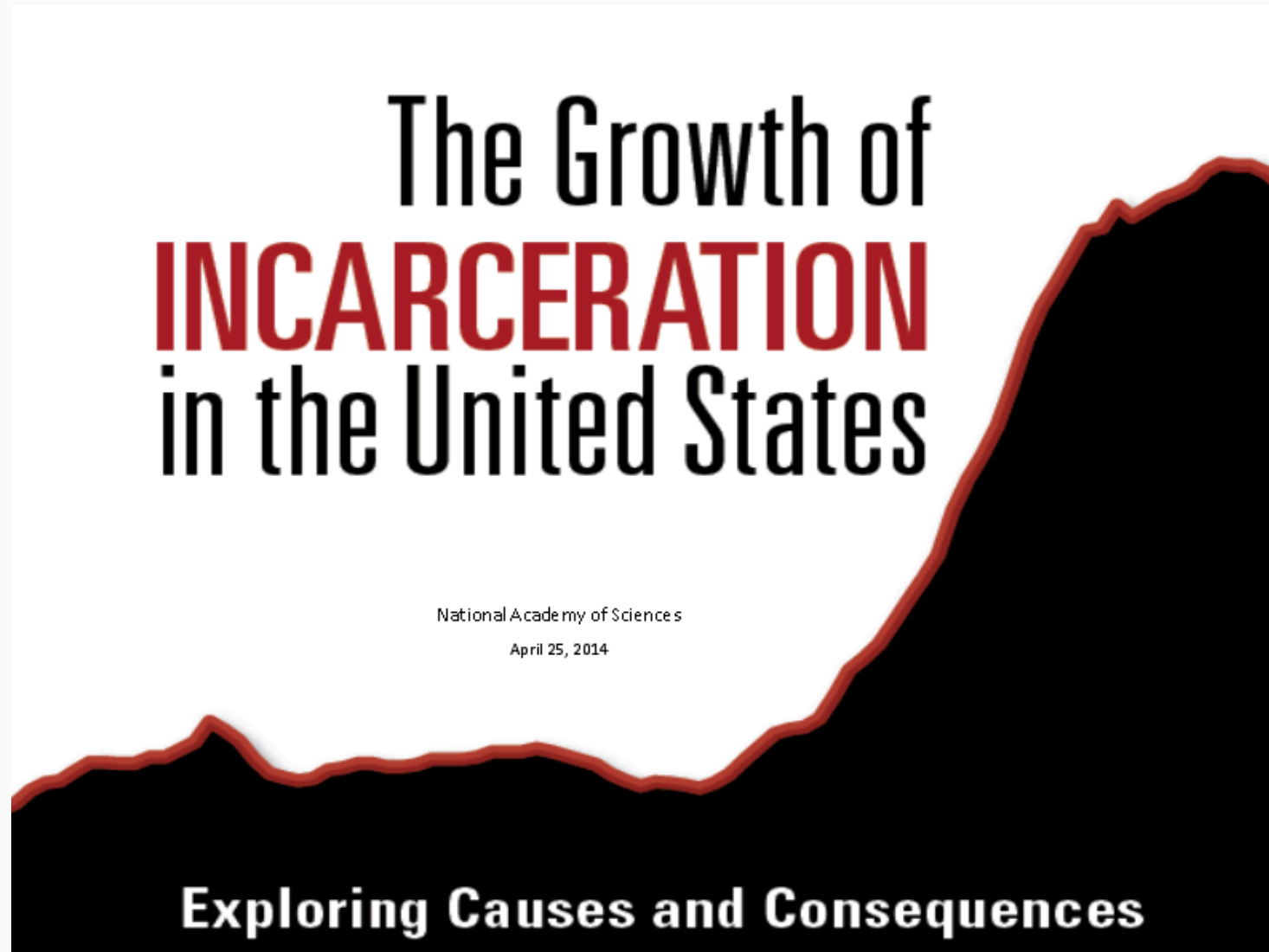
- 1) Study group at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Daedalus (Summer 2010, Bruce Western co-editor)
- 2) Expert panel reporting under auspices of the National Academy of Sciences (2014)

Daedalus 2010



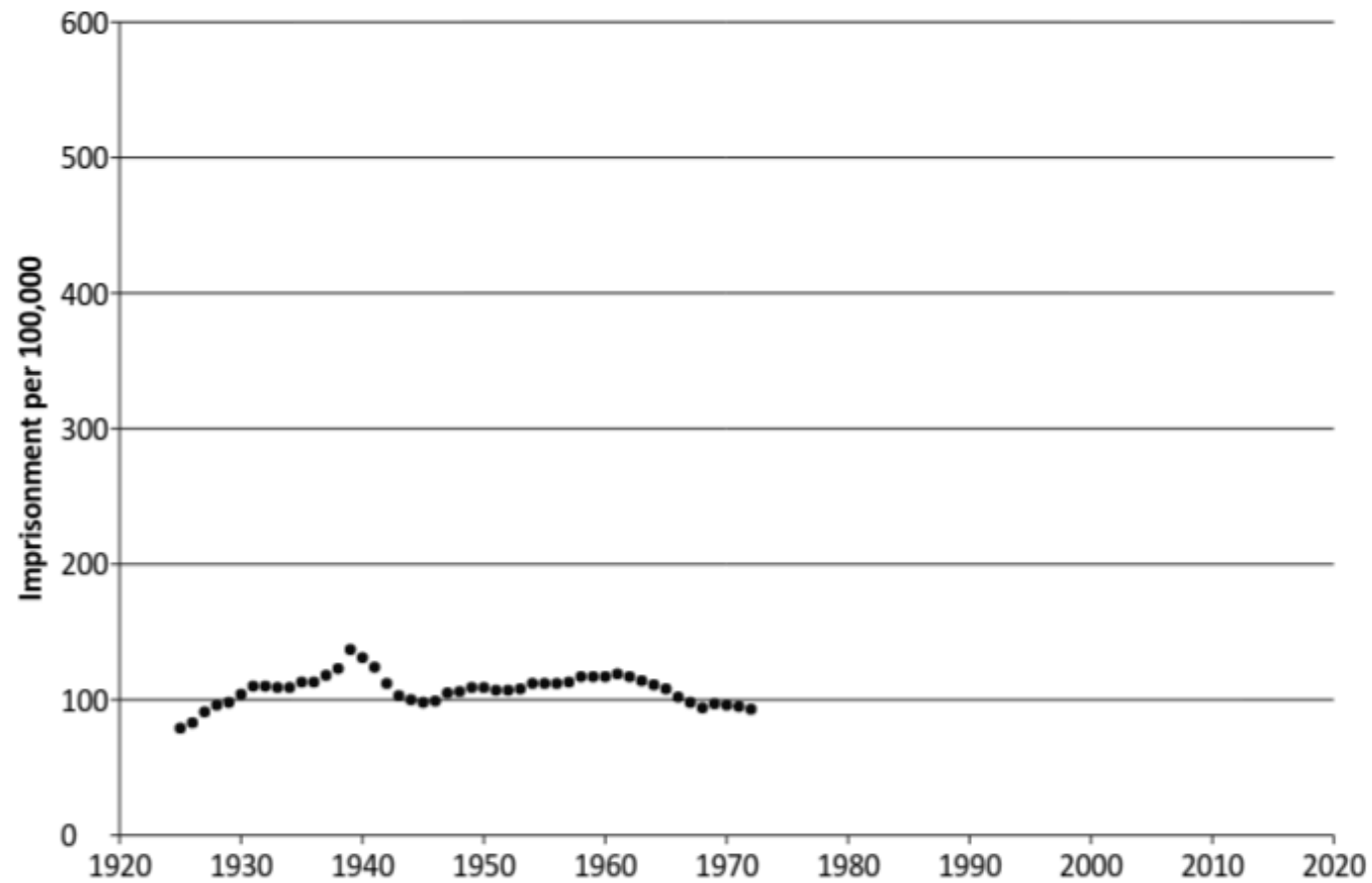
The growth of incarceration in the united states

October 2015 Brown University



U.s. Incarceration rate 1925 - 1972

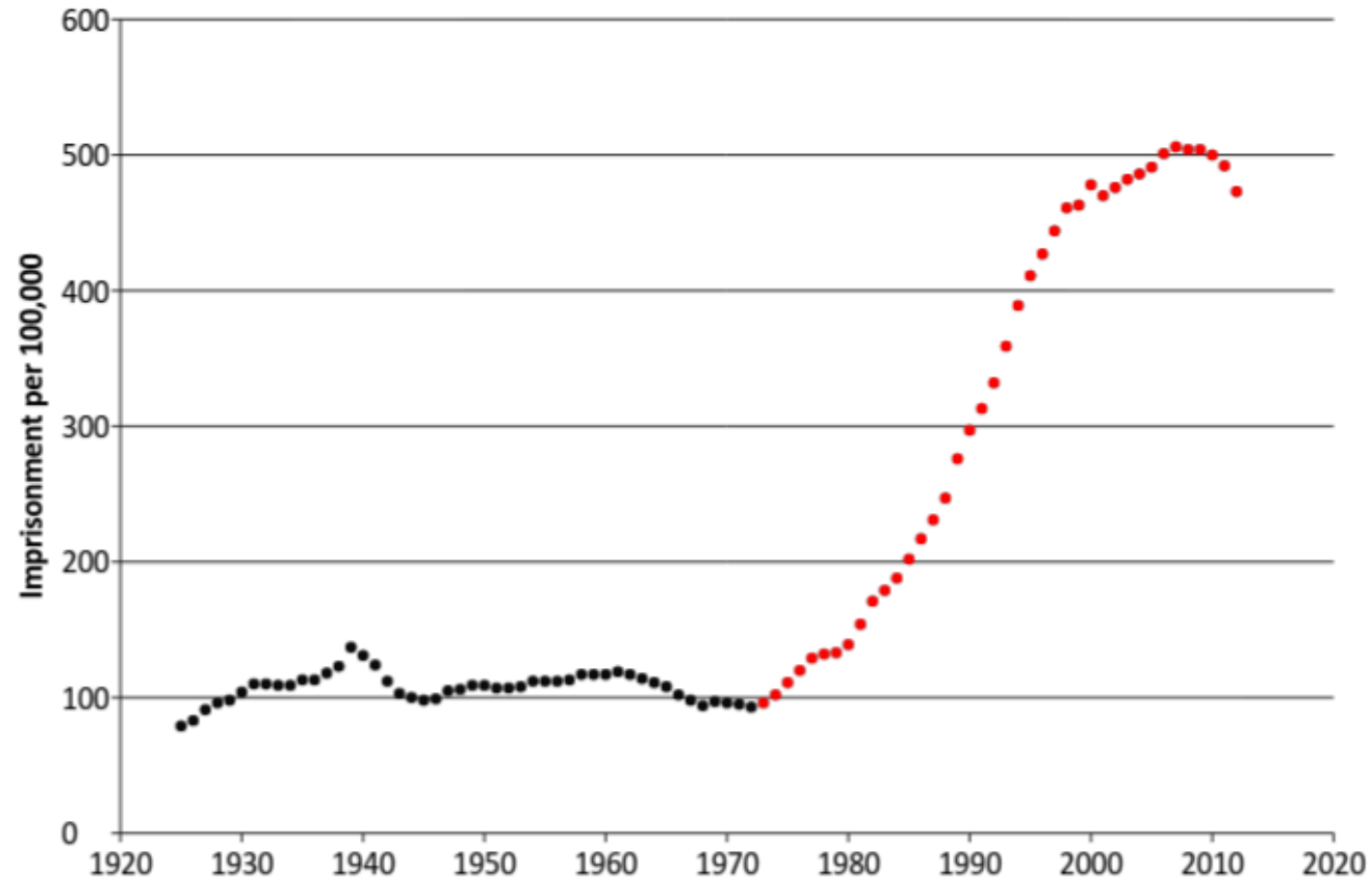
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Note: Incarceration rate is state and federal prison population per 100,000

U.s. Incarceration rate 1925 - 2012

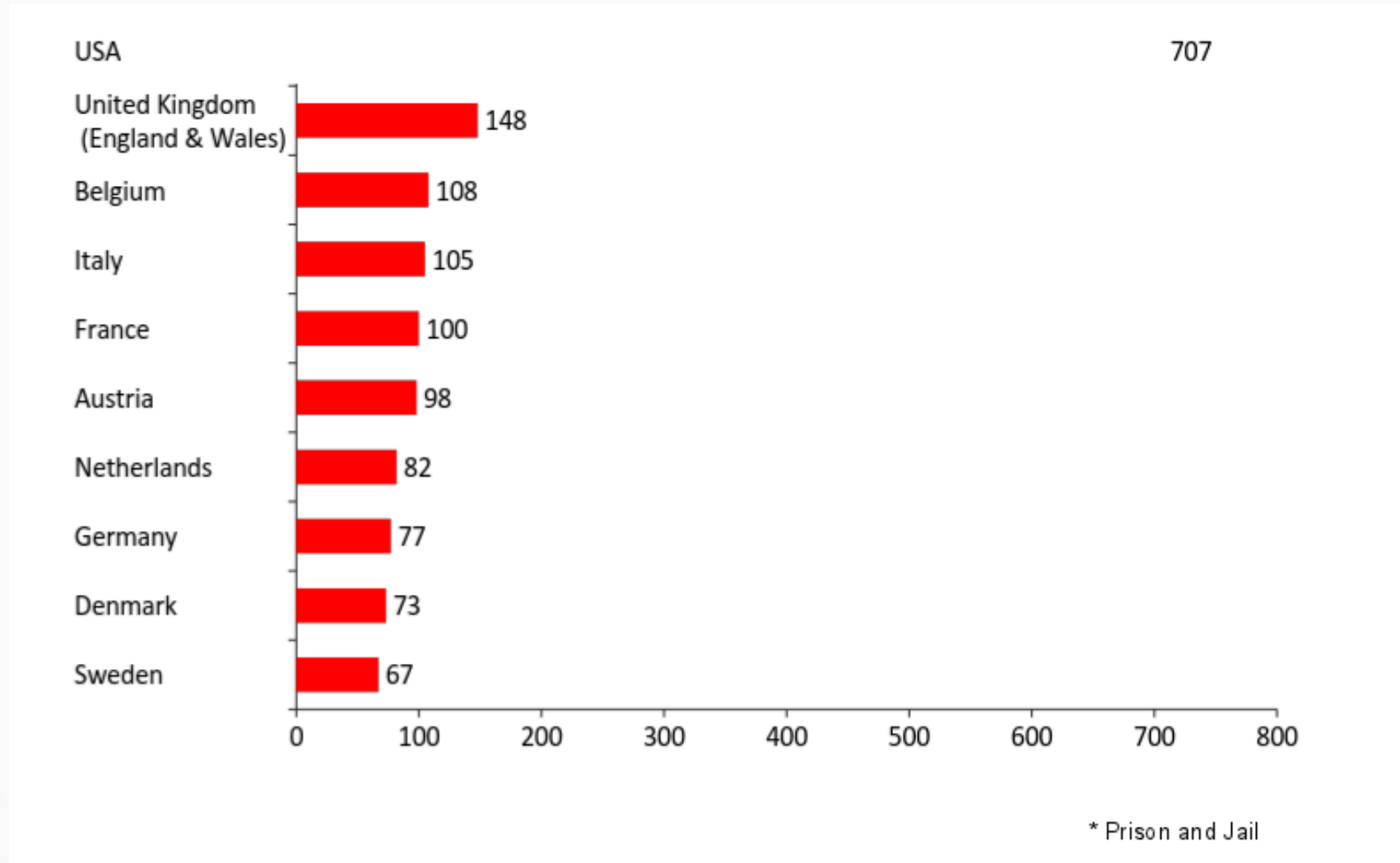
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Note: Incarceration rate is state and federal prison population per 100,000

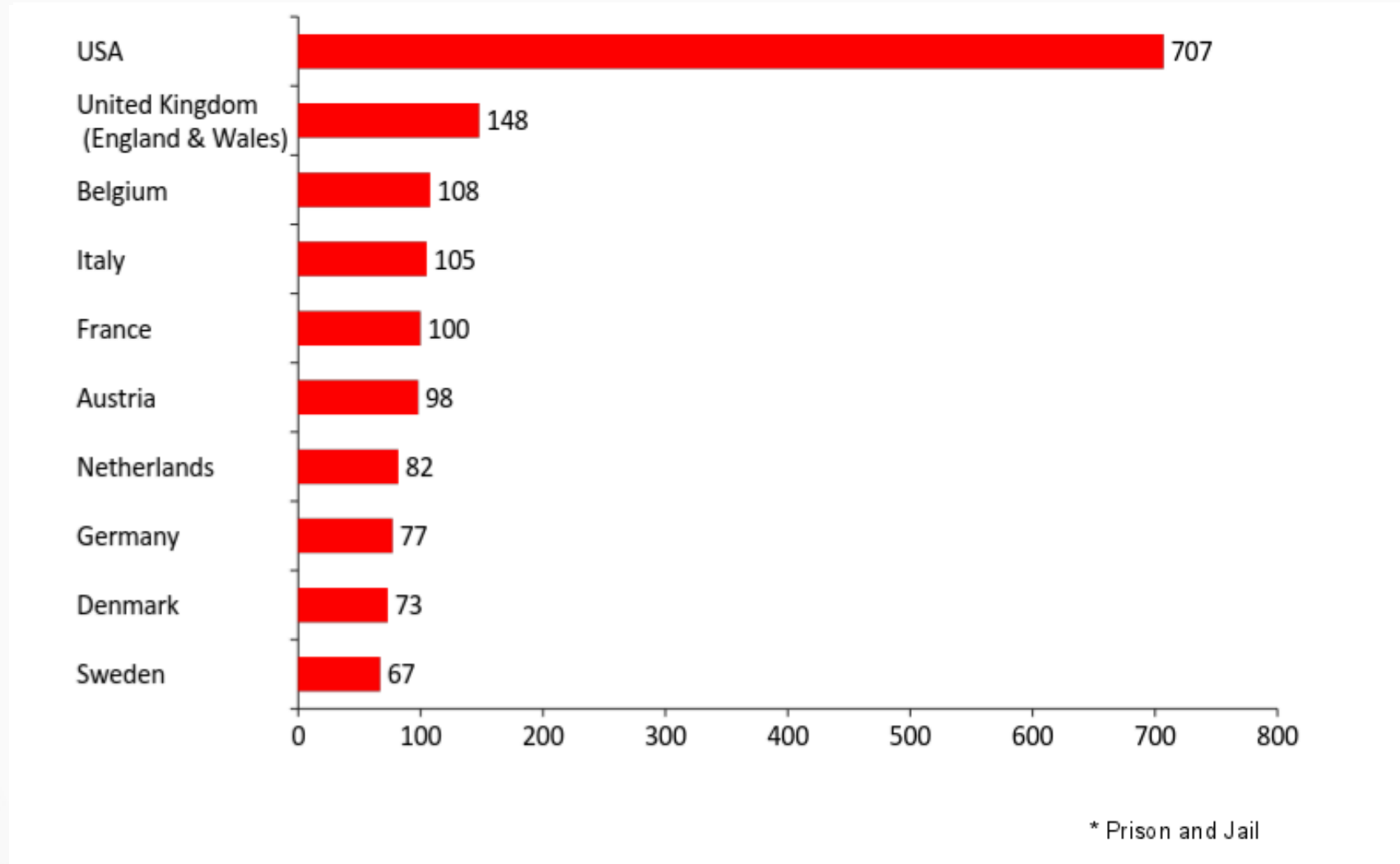
Incarceration in the u.s. and europe 2012 – 2013

Per 100.000 population

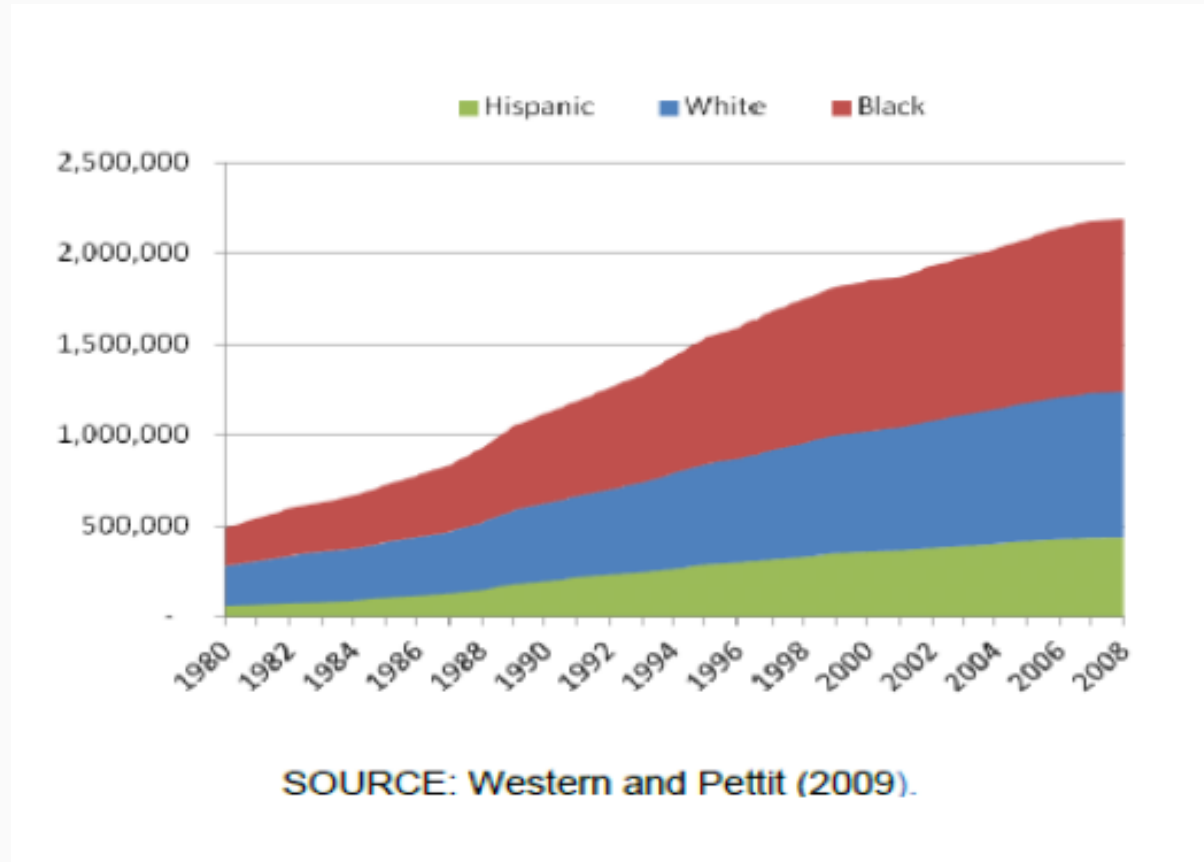


Incarceration in the u.s. and europe 2012 – 2013

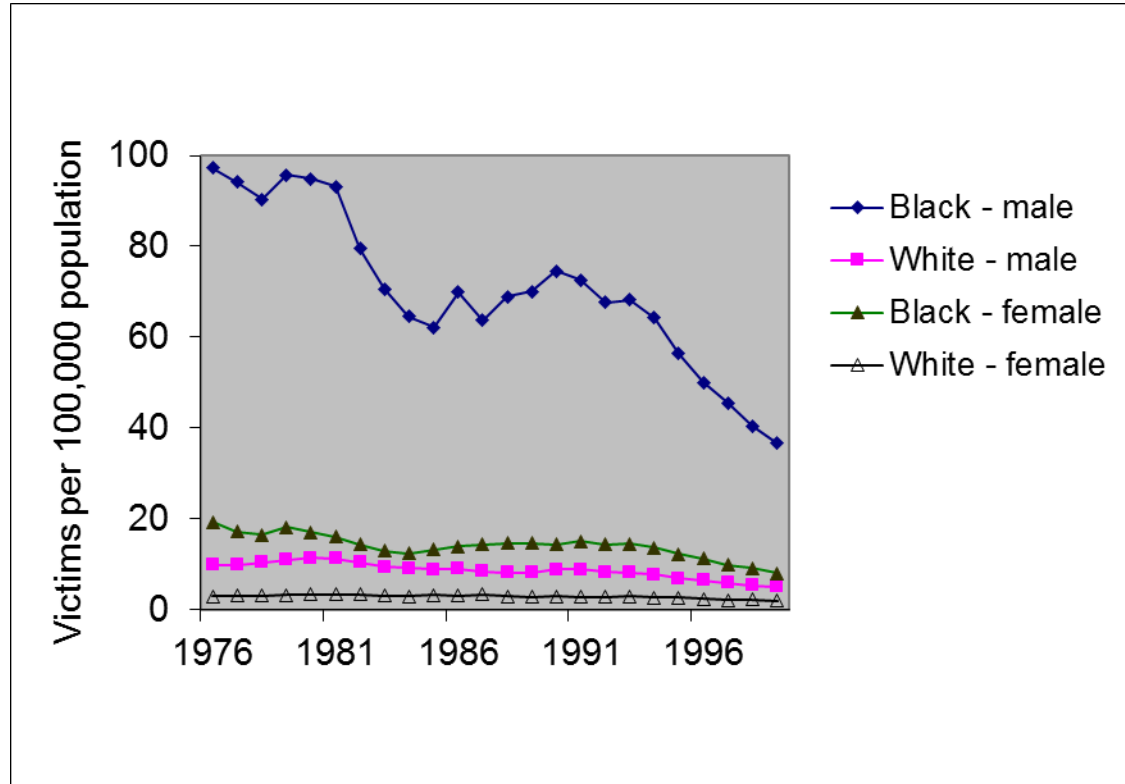
Per 100.000 population



Numbers Incarcerated in US by Race: 1980-2008



Homicide Victimization (Ages 25 and Older)



Violent Crime Way Down. But race/gender disparities remain huge.

Side Note: Recently there has been a dramatic increase in imprisonment of white women!

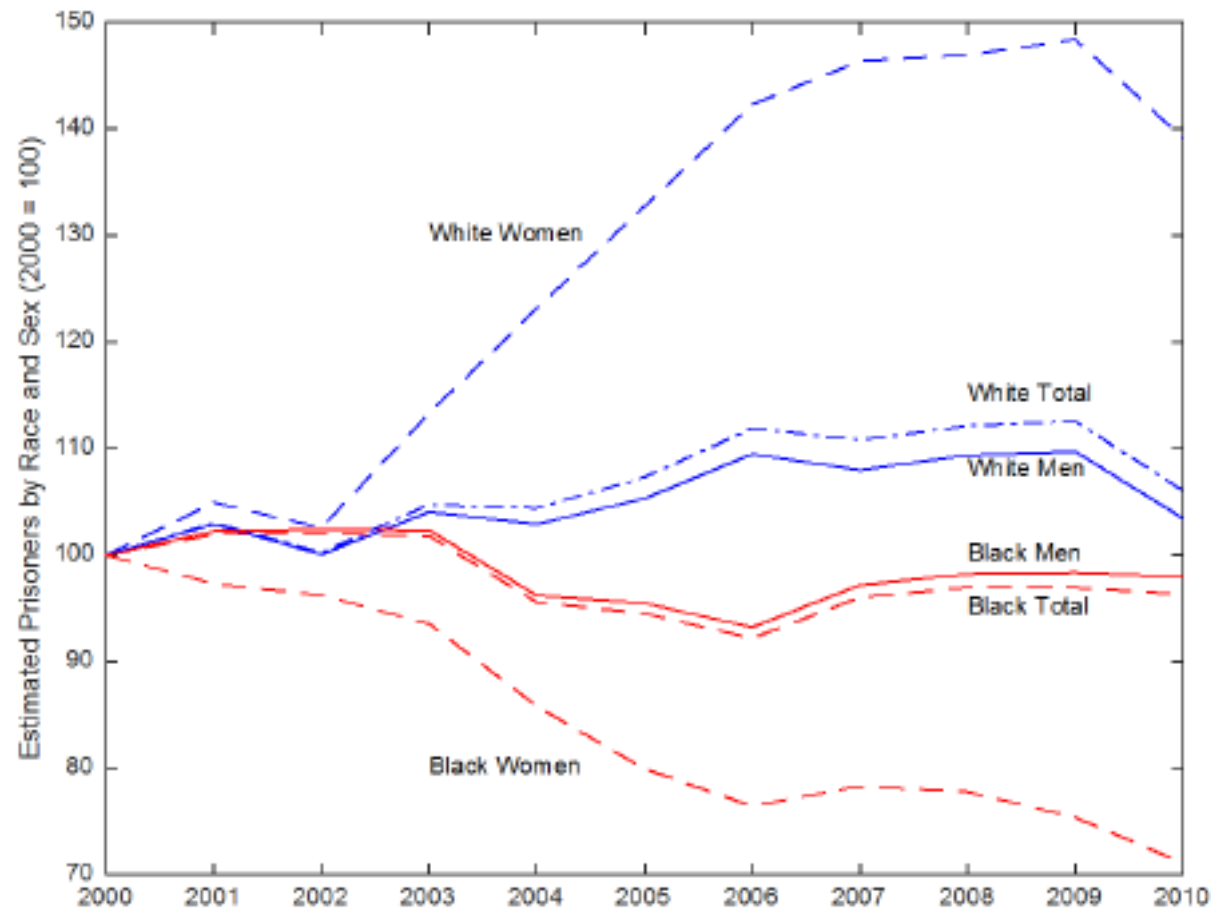
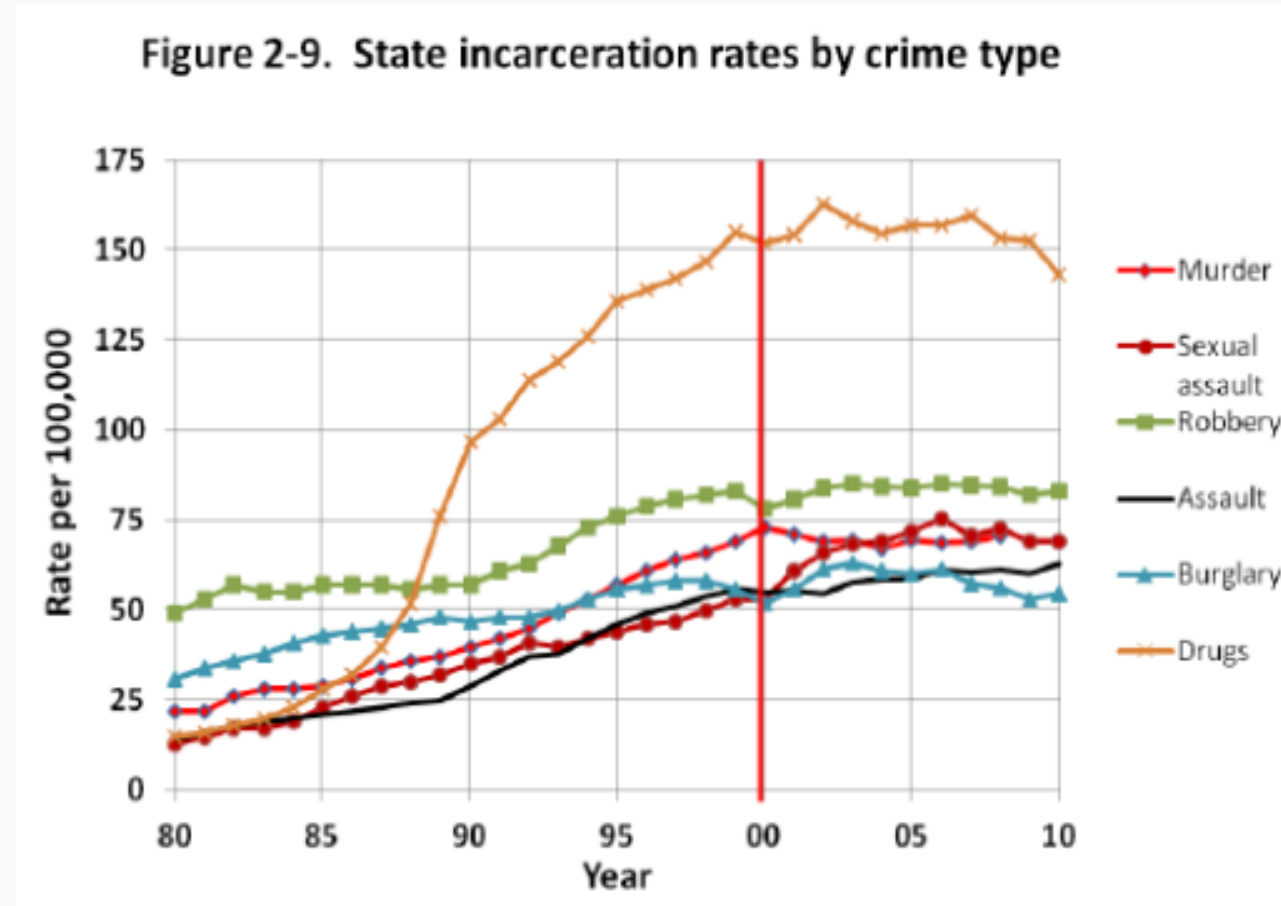


Figure 3. Trends in imprisonment by race and sex, 2000-2010, scaled to equal 100 initially in all categories.

Increased Imprisonment for Drug Offenses Is a Leading Factor in the Growth of US Incarceration since 1980



Question: “But wasn’t rise in (black) punishment
a reasonable response to increases in (black) crime?”

answer: “No , not really..!” Crime has fallen consistently since the
early 1990s, while incarceration continued its steady rise

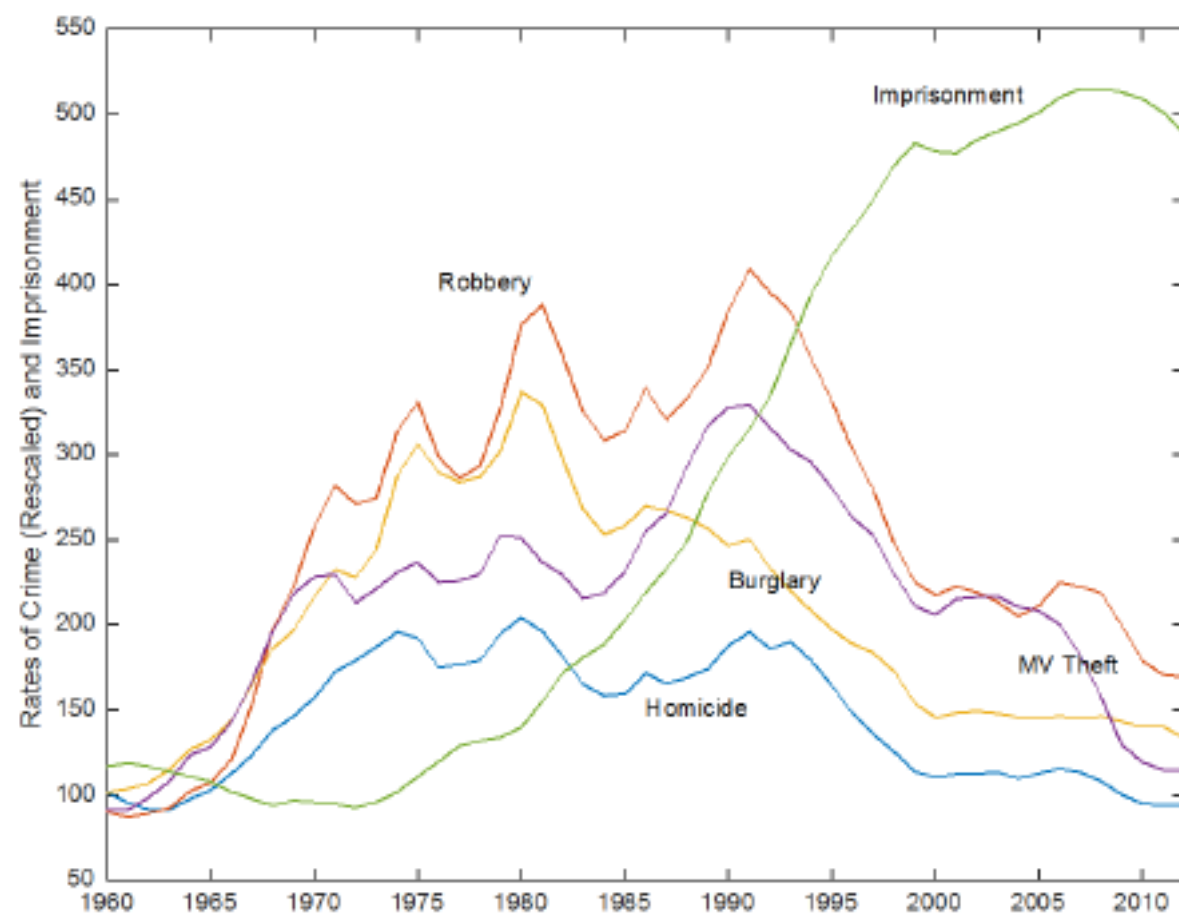


Figure 1. Trends in Crime and Imprisonment, 1960-2012. Crime rates have been rescaled as follows: Homicide (x20), Robbery (x1.5), Motor Vehicle Theft (x0.5) and Burglary (x0.2) as in Travis and Western (2014). The imprisonment rate refers to those in state and federal prisons (but not local jails) with sentences of a year or more.

We're Punishing the Poor: Characteristics of State/Federal Prisoners in 2004

	State Prisoners	Federal Prisoners
Proportion of prison population	0.904	0.096
Proportion Male	0.932	0.929
Education attainment prior to admissions		
Elementary school	0.029	0.040
Middle school	0.165	0.143
Some high school, no degree	0.472	0.374
High school graduate	0.195	0.214
More than high school	0.139	0.227
Proportion Hispanic	0.182	0.251
Race		
White	0.487	0.433
Black	0.430	0.460
Other	0.083	0.107

Punishing the Poor: Characteristics of State and Federal Prisoners in 2004

Age Distribution		
25 th percentile	27	29
50 th percentile	34	35
75 th percentile	42	44
Age at first arrest		
25 th percentile	15	16
50 th percentile	17	18
75 th percentile	21	23
Age first engaged in criminal activity		
25 th percentile	12	12
50 th percentile	14	14
75 th percentile	16	16
Health Conditions		
Diabetes	0.047	0.061
Heart problems	0.093	0.086
Kidney problems	0.061	0.057
Asthma	0.144	0.115
Hepatitis	0.095	0.076

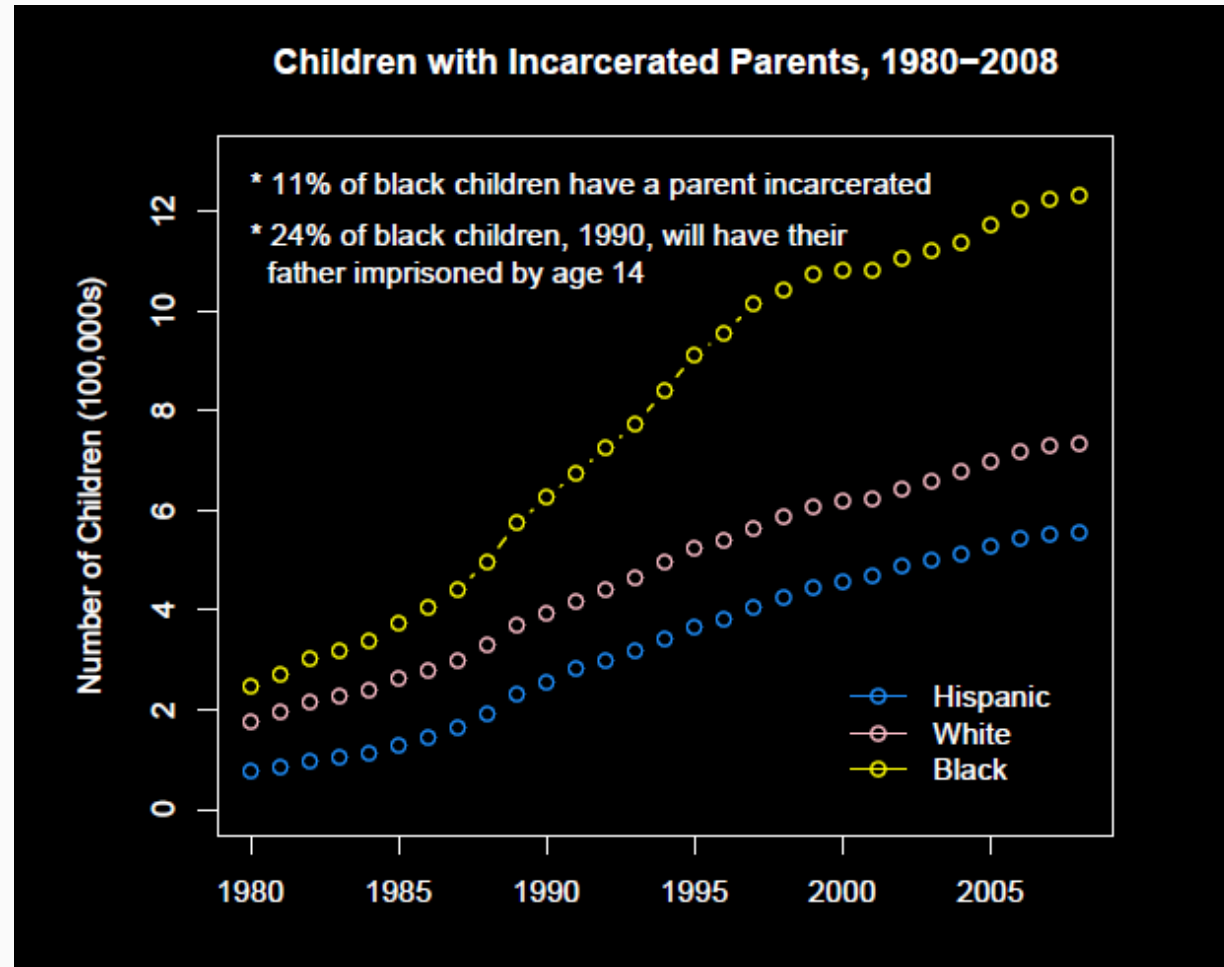
Punishing the Poor: Characteristics of State and Federal Prisoners in 2004

	State Prisoners	Federal Prisoners
Indicators of mental health/substance abuse		
Participated in alcohol/drug treatment program	0.605	0.649
Manic depression, bipolar	0.097	0.041
Schizophrenia	0.046	0.019
Post-traumatic-stress	0.057	0.031
Anxiety disorder	0.071	0.046
Personality disorder	0.059	0.032
Other mental health problem	0.019	0.008
Any diagnosed mental health problem	0.248	0.144
Ever attempted suicide	0.129	0.059
Program participation while incarcerated		
Vocational education/ job Training	0.273	0.314
Education program	0.312	0.454
Religious studies	0.302	0.312

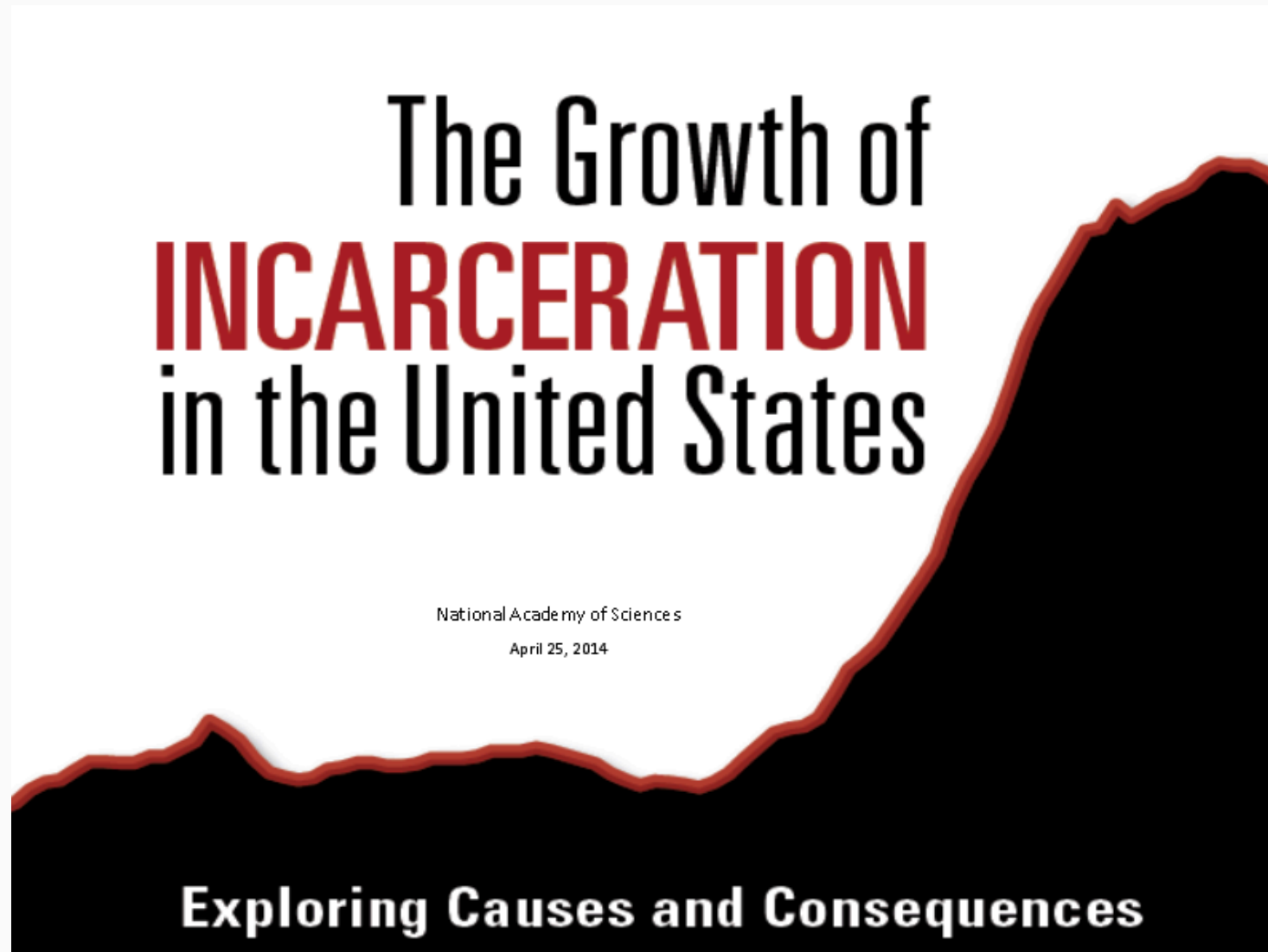
What does this say about the quality of American Democracy?

- Prison/Jail Primary Venue for Government Engagement with African American Men. More important than schools, unions, military, or social service agencies. (Is this rightly seen as a problem of “bias”?)
- There are six times as many whites as blacks in the US, but there are twice as many black as white children with an incarcerated parent. (With what implications for “development” of these children?)

The prison intersects with families and communities. (Note incarceration's huge impact of black children. Source: Pettit and Western)



Findings and Recommendations from NRC Study on Growth of Incarceration



Direct Causes:

Changes in Sentencing and Law Enforcement

- In the 1980s states and the federal government adopted and expanded **mandatory prison sentences**
- **Drug arrest** rates increased significantly and drug crimes were sentenced more harshly
- In the 1990s **longer sentences** were set particularly for violent crimes and repeat offenders (e.g., three-strikes, truth-in- sentencing)

Tough Sentencing Increased Incarceration and Contributed to Racial Disparity

- Growth of state prison populations, 1980 – 2010, is **explained in roughly equal proportion** by
 - (a) increased rate of incarceration given an arrest and
 - (b) longer sentences
- Although incarceration rates increased across the population, racial disparities in offending yielded high rates of imprisonment among Hispanics and extremely high rates among blacks

(Note: Despite widespread belief to the contrary, racial bias in sentencing for same offenses does NOT seem to account for much of the disparities in imprisonment rates by race.)

Underlying Causes of Growth in Incarceration: Crime, Social Change, and Politics

- ***Crime rates increased*** significantly from the early 1960s to the early 1980s (e.g., murder rate doubled from 1960 to 1980) Increased reliance on incarceration was partly a reaction to rising crime rates.
- ***Decline in urban manufacturing***, problems of drugs and violence concentrated in poor and racially segregated inner city neighborhoods led to greater social disorder there
- ***Backlash***: Rising crime combined with civil rights activism, urban disorder, led to heightened public concern and more tough-on-crime rhetoric from political leaders

NAS/NRC Committee's findings on impact of incarceration on crime:

- Increased incarceration may have reduced crime but most studies indicate a small effect.
- Either through incapacitation or deterrence, the incremental effect of increasing lengthy sentences is modest at best. The **Certainty** and the **Celerity** of punishment more important for deterrence than its **Severity**

NAS/NRC Committee's findings on Social and Economic Effects of Incarceration

- Prisons became more overcrowded and offered fewer programs, but lethal violence in prison declined.
- Men and women released from prison experience loss of wages and high unemployment (causality less clear)
- Incarceration is associated with the instability of families and adverse developmental outcomes for the children involved (causality less clear)
- Incarceration concentrated in poor, high-crime neighborhoods (feedbacks)

NAS/NRC Committee's Main conclusion

“The U.S. has gone past the point where the numbers of people in prison can be justified by any potential benefits.”

According to the best available evidence:

- The social and human consequences may have been far-reaching
- The crime reduction effect is highly uncertain

NRC Committee Policy recommendations:

“The United States should take steps to reduce incarceration rates”

This requires:

- **Sentencing Policy:** Reexamining policies for mandatory sentences, long sentences
- **Prison Policy:** Improving the conditions of incarceration, reducing the harm to the families and communities
- **Social Policy:** Assessing community needs for housing, treatment, and employment that may increase with declining incarceration

But what about this counter-argument?

- 1) “Racial differences in punishment are not really ‘inequality’ since people can always choose not to “do the crime,” in which case they needn’t “do the time.”
- 2) Besides, huge differences by race in rates of criminal offending reflect aspects of “black culture” – like unwed motherhood, paternal abandonment and a proclivity to violence. Such cultural deficiencies are a problem over which public policies can exert little beneficial effect...

Remainder of this lecture can be understood as my effort to provide a response to this counter-argument

Answering the counter-argument (1)

But “culture” among poor is not a fixed thing independent of social structure and policies.

The question is, are we observing “endemic” or “systemic” effects here?

Poverty and social exclusion exert powerful effects on “choices” (criminal and other) of the poor.

“Biased Social Cognition” (Loury 2002) is the tendency to attribute what are *systemic* racial inequalities to racially *endemic* causes.

Answering the counter-argument (2)

In my own work over four decades I have developed an alternative social-scientific framework for understanding the transition problem in the U.S.

Persistent Racial Inequality Stems from Combined Effects of Racial Stigma and of Social and Geographic Segregation by Race and Class?

Social capital: its origins and Applications in Modern society

Alejandro Portes

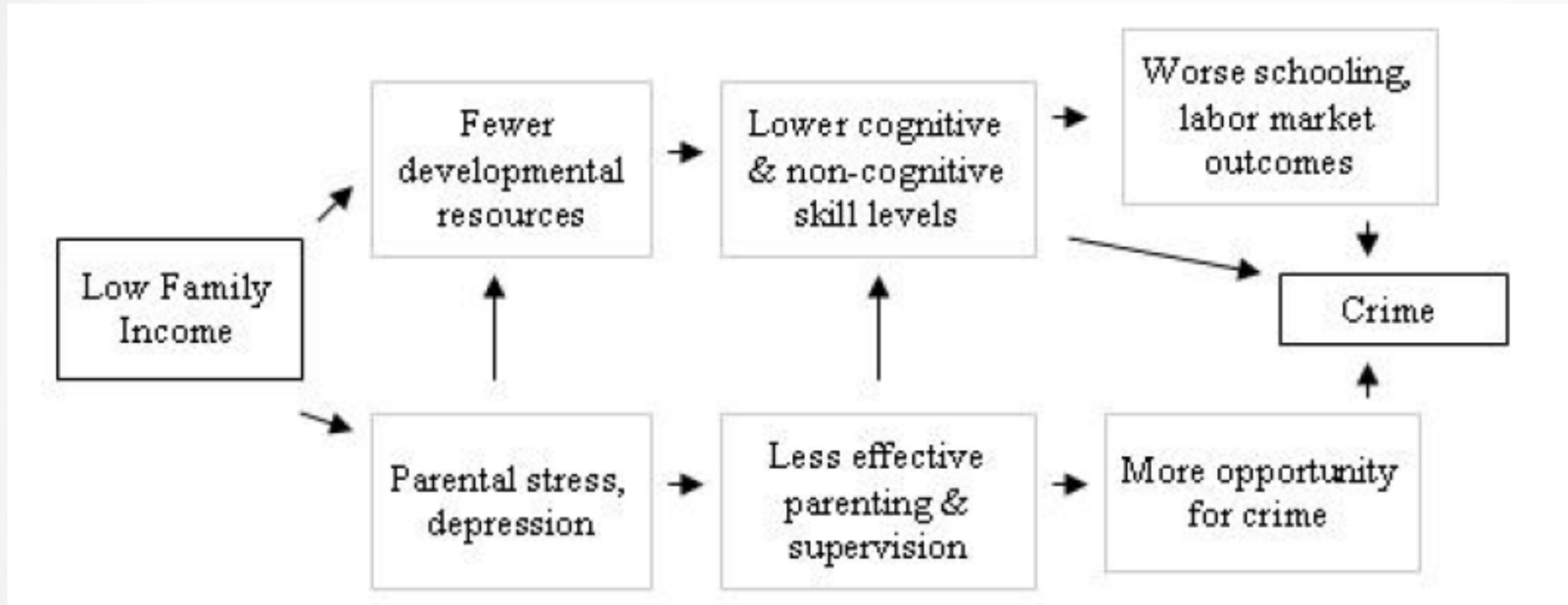
Department of Sociology, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08540

KEY WORDS: social control, family support, networks, sociability

ABSTRACT

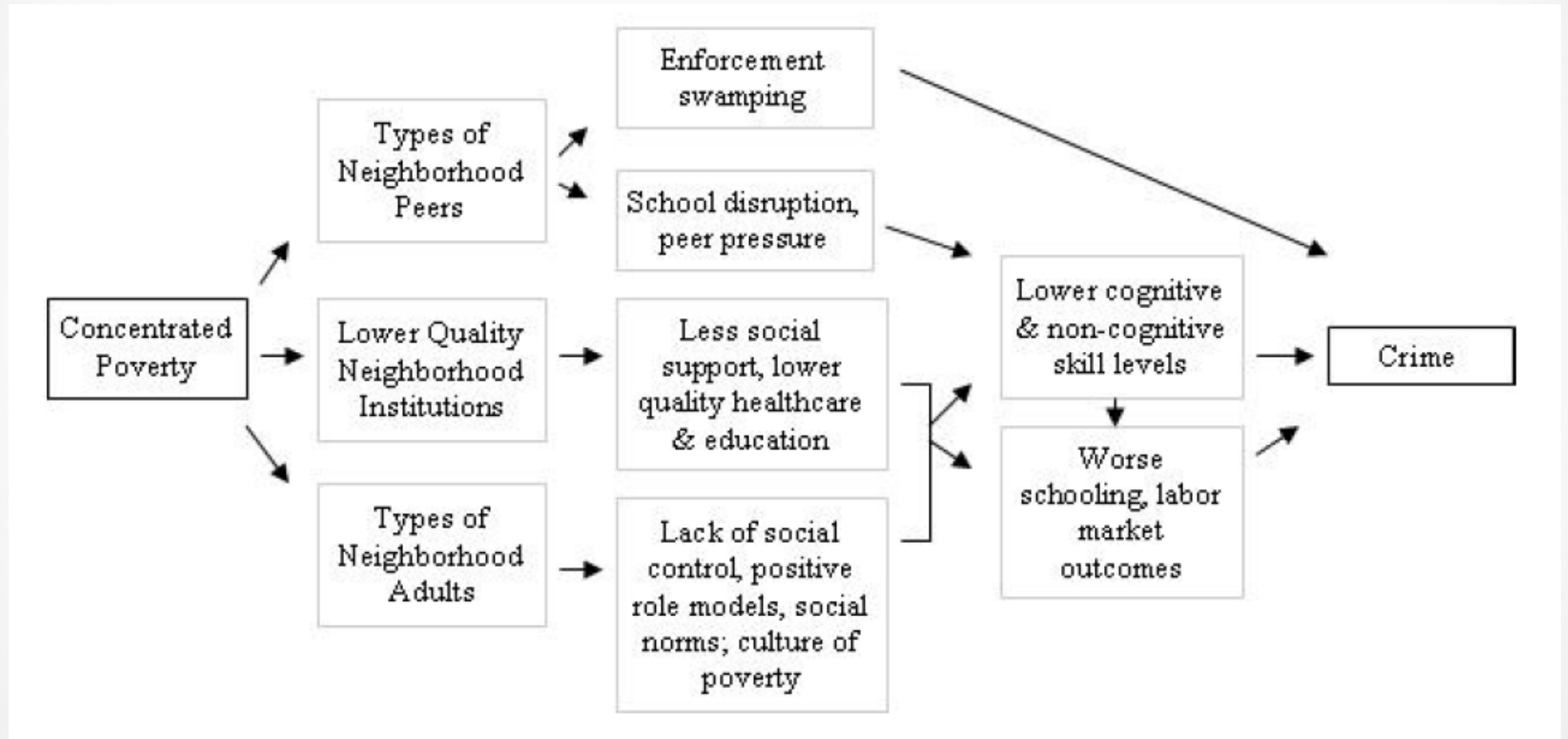
This paper reviews the origins and definitions of social capital in the writings of Bourdieu, Loury, and Coleman, among other authors. It distinguishes four sources of social capital and examines their dynamics. Applications of the concept in the sociological literature emphasize its role in social control, in family support, and in benefits mediated by extrafamilial networks. I provide examples of each of these positive functions. Negative consequences of the same processes also deserve attention for a balanced picture of the forces at play. I review four such consequences and illustrate them with relevant examples. Recent writings on social capital have extended the concept from an individual asset to a feature of communities and even nations. The final sections describe this conceptual stretch and examine its limitations. I argue that, as shorthand for the positive consequences of sociability, social capital has a definite place in sociological theory. However, excessive extensions of the concept may jeopardize its heuristic value.

Poverty's potential effect on crime through developmental pathway



Source: Heller, Jacob and Ludwig, "Family Income, Neighborhood Poverty and Crime," Chp. 9 in *Controlling Crime: Strategies and Tradeoffs*, Univ. Chicago Press 2011

Concentrated Poverty's potential effect on crime



Race and class-based spatial segregation is a persistent feature of the structure of American cities.

This fact has significant consequences for social outcomes affecting the members of different racial groups.

Distinguish discrimination in *contact* from discrimination in *contract*
(*Thus, Loury's Mantra: "Relations before Transactions"*)

Now, Let's Get Personal
(Some fruit from my year of
living reflexively)
Consider this Imaginary, Playful but
Suggestive Dialogue...

