

# An Analysis of the Success of the Civil Rights Movement

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## Abstract

Between 1964 and 1968, at least four major civil rights acts were passed: the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the 1968 Housing Act. Each piece of legislation sought to address racial problems during the time. Taken together, these acts advanced the major goals of civil rights leaders of the time: improvement of black economic opportunity, voting rights for African Americans, and desegregation. Civil rights activities and demonstrations between 1954 and 1968 undoubtedly led to the passage of these acts. But the ultimate effectiveness of the legislation is one of a matter of degree. To what extent was the civil rights movement successful in achieving its goals?

Did the 1964 Civil Rights Act improve economic conditions for African Americans? I will address that question by examining trends in unemployment, poverty, and wages and income of African Americans. Did the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act provide African Americans with an undeterred vote? I will answer that question using participation and registration rates and data on black congressional representation. Finally, did the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 1968 Housing Act establish desegregation? I will evaluate this question by examining the extent of segregation in schools, public places, and housing. While African American civil rights leaders defined these three goals through their speeches and interviews, they sought to improve black Americans' conditions, not just in absolute terms but also relative to whites. Therefore, I will compare data on African Americans in these three areas to the data on whites.

Ultimately, I draw varying conclusions about the extent to which the major civil rights acts, inspired by the efforts of the civil rights movement, were successful in gaining equality between whites and blacks and improving for blacks in terms of economic opportunity, voting,

and desegregation. I will first establish that these three goals were central for the civil rights movement, drawing upon primary sources from major civil rights leaders. I will then analyze the progress made in each goal as the result of civil rights legislation using time series data and bivariate analyses in the short term, long term, and in comparison to whites. Finally, I will offer an interpretation as to the degree and level of advancements and success the movement has had. African Americans have seen drastic improvements in public place desegregation and voting registration and participation. But they still lag far behind their white counterpart in terms of economic conditions. While African Americans have seen some areas of improvement within all three of these goals, with some far greater than others, African Americans overall are still in an inferior position to whites and still need to see significant improvements in many notable areas.

The four civil rights acts passed provided opportunities for African Americans. They opened the door to potential improvements. The lack of complete success in these areas cannot be fully attributed to the failures of the legislation itself. Rather it is the result of the persistent effects of segregation and discrimination, as well as a variety of outside factors. The future for African Americans after the civil rights acts was inevitably shaped by the long history of discrimination and disadvantage that preceded the legislation's enactment.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	8
Chapter 2: The Leaders and Goals of the Civil Rights Movement.....	15
Chapter 3: Economic Conditions.....	30
Chapter 4: Voting .....	53
Chapter 5: Desegregation .....	76
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	102
Works Cited .....	111

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Non-White Unemployment Rate, Selected Years, 1950-2015.....	32
Figure 3.2: Unemployment Rate White and Non-White, 1950-2015, Selected Years.....	34
Figure 3.3: Unemployment Ratio Non-White to White, 1950-2015, Selected Years.....	36
Figure 3.4: Black Median Family Income, 1947- 2010.....	40
Figure 3.5: Median Family Income by Race, 1947-2010.....	41
Figure 3.6: Black Median Family Income, as a Share of White Median Family Income, 1947– 2013.....	43
Figure 3.7: Black and White Wages (Weekly Earning) Accounting for Nonemployment, Males 25-55, 1940-1990, Selected Years.....	44
Figure 3.8: Estimate of the Racial Wage Gap Ratio, Males 25-55, 1940-1990, Selected Years..	45
Figure 3.9: Black Poverty Status, 1959 to 2014, Selected Years.....	47
Figure 3.10: Poverty Status by Race, 1959 to 2014, Selected Years.....	50
Figure 3.11: Poverty Ratio Black to White, 1959-2014, Selected Years.....	51
Figure 4.1: Black Voter Registration in Southern States, 1940-1970, Selected Years.....	56
Figure 4.2: Black Voter Registration in Selected Southern States, Pre and Post Voting Rights Act .....	58
Figure 4.3: Black Voter Registration in Selected Southern States, Pre 1965 Voting Rights Act and Post, and 1971-1972 Estimate.....	60
Figure 4.4: African American Voting Rates, Presidential Elections, 1964 to 2012.....	61
Figure 4.5: African American Voting Rates, Congressional Elections, 1966 to 2014.....	62
Figure 4.6: Black-White Voter Registration Gap, Pre and Post Voting Rights Act.....	64
Figure 4.7: Estimated Gap in Voter Registration Between Blacks and Whites in Selected Southern States, Pre Voting Rights Act, Post and 1971-1972 Estimate.....	65
Figure 4.8: Gains in Ratio of Registered Voters to Eligible Voters by Race Before and After the Voting Rights Act of 1965.....	67

Figure 4.9: Voting Rates by Race, Presidential Elections, 1964 to 2012.....	68
Figure 4.10: Voting Rates by Race, Congressional Elections, 1966 to 2014.....	68
Figure 4.11: Number of African American Members in Congress, 76th-112th Congress, (1939-2013) .....	71
Figure 4.12: Black Legislators as a Percentage of All State Legislators in the South, 1965-1985, Selected Years.....	72
Figure 5.1: Percent of Black Children in Elementary and Secondary School with Whites in the South, 1954-1972, Selected Years .....	80
Figure 5.2: Federal Funds (in Millions) for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Selected Southern States, 1963-1972, Selected Years.....	82
Table 5.1: Percentage of Black Enrollment at Southern, Formerly All-White, Public Colleges and Universities, by State, 1970 and 1978 .....	84
Figure 5.3: Percent of Black Students in Majority White Schools in the South, 1954-2011, Selected Years.....	86
Table 5.2: Percentage of White Students in School of Typical Black, 1980-2005, Selected Years .....	86
Table 5.3: Indices of Black-White Segregation, 1900 to 1940.....	94
Table 5.4: Indices of Black-White Segregation, 1950 to 1990.....	96
Figure 5.4: 1980, 1990, 2000 Dissimilarity Index, Isolation Index, & Delta Index.....	97

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The effects of slavery and the subjugation of African Americans persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century through acts of segregation and discrimination. The eradication of slavery did not stop the underlying hateful sentiment of whites towards African Americans and did not put to rest the oppression of African Americans in the United States. Instead, segregation and discrimination resulted in African Americans being treated unlike American citizens. Blacks were constantly faced with violence, demeaning racial epithet, and poor societal treatment, unlike that of their white counterparts. The civil rights movement was a combination of peaceful, mostly nonviolent protests, activities, and demonstrations directed at achieving black civil rights. These demonstrations included sit-ins, freedom rides, and marches. The movement aimed to bring awareness to the injustices and to produce change. No longer would the discrimination and oppression of African Americans be accepted.

Civil rights leaders and supporters of the movement knew it was time to put an end to the unequal treatment that they had faced. On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court handed down the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Rothstein 2014 1). In this landmark ruling, the court, led by Chief Justice Earl Warren, declared that state sponsored segregation in public schools was unconstitutional (Rothstein 2014 1). Overruling *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the court held that separate educational facilities for African Americans were “inherently unequal” (Rothstein 2014 1). However, the ruling that called for the desegregation of public schools ultimately did not have the effect it was designed to have. A lack of federal enforcement kept public educational facilities segregated. This major court ruling marks for what I establish as the beginning of the African American civil rights movement. From that point on, constant protest and activism was directed at achieving civil rights for blacks.



While the fight for civil rights began years earlier, the civil rights movement of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century marks the main arena for the desire from African Americans to earn rights comparable to white citizens. According to the *New York Times* and as quoted by Gerald Rosenberg in his book *Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change*, from 1940 to 1953 the number of civil rights demonstrations totaled 134 (Rosenberg 2008). In the year 1956 alone, civil rights demonstrations amassed to 173 (Rosenberg 2008). But by 1963, a time of incredible hostility, civil rights demonstrations totaled 685 (Rosenberg 2008). As highlighted in United States Congressman John Lewis' memoir *Walking with the Wind*, factors during this time enabled the civil rights movement to gain momentum. During the economic prosperity of the post-World War II era, some African Americans obtained middle-class jobs, allowing them to progress into the middle class (Lewis 1999). Sources of voting in the northern states had begun to take place (Lewis 1999). Economic power gave the black community leverage to press for change, as many businesses relied upon black customers (Lewis 1999). But most importantly, religious institutions and ideological shifts occurred that spurred the movement to action. The black church provided money, places to organize, leadership, structure, community, and camaraderie, acting as the backbone of the movement (Lewis 1999). While only amounting to 521,832 black church members in 1948, by 1965, the number of members had reached over 1 million (Agnone, Jacobs, Jenkins 298). An actual organizational structure began to take form backed by a great number of youth and their feeling of invulnerability and determination.

The media, too, galvanized the movement with their coverage of events such as the death of Emmitt Till, the March on Selma in 1965, freedom rides, and lunch counter sit-ins. With the rise of television, the national coverage and national attention of the civil rights movement came into focus. Magazine coverage began to increase and the press alone focused more of their time,

articles, and news to the fight that African Americans were making for their civil rights. The press coverage from 1940 to 1953 was around an average of 100 entries concerning civil rights per year (Rosenberg 2008). In 1954, the number of entries increased to 154 and topped out at 489 entries in 1963 (Rosenberg 2008). “The Montgomery bus boycott in 1955–56 demonstrated that thousands of supporters could be mobilized for over a year, and the sit-in campaign in 1959–62 showed that hundreds of committed activists could dismantle Jim Crow laws” (Agnone, Jacobs, Jenkins 287). This modern movement that started in the 1950s had longevity and an ability to demonstrate how support and nonviolent resistance could generate change in America. What was the ultimate success of the movement? This thesis will examine the extent of the changes wrought by the major laws passed in response to the civil rights movement.

Within this paper, I evaluate the overall success of the modern civil rights movement. I will be exploring the movement and examining whether or not the movement as a whole has produced lasting change for African Americans, as seen in today’s society. The conditions for African Americans for the past centuries have been deplorable. Their treatment and their rights had been unequal to that of whites and unequal as American citizens. I will begin this thesis by providing primary sources including speeches and interviews from major civil rights leaders in order to establish that the civil rights movement had three major goals: (1) an improvement of African American economic conditions, (2) voting rights, and (3) desegregation. In each of these areas civil rights leaders wanted to improve African American conditions in absolute terms, as well as to close the gaps with whites so as to achieve racial equality. I will use these sources in order to show that civil rights leaders of the time did in fact fight for these goals and for equality in general.

I will then divide the thesis into three subsections based on these three principal goals. The first will be an analysis of African American economic conditions. Civil rights leaders sought out an improvement of African American economic conditions in terms of unemployment, poverty, and income and wages. I will analyze whether or not economic conditions have improved for blacks in both the short run and long run. From there, I will then analyze the extent to which voting rights have been achieved, as well as the level of black representation within Congress. Finally, I will analyze whether desegregation has been achieved in schools, public places, and housing. I will end this thesis by taking into account all three major goals and their degrees of success in order to conclude to what degree the movement as a whole has been successful.

The civil rights movement prompted various pieces of landmark legislation. The movement helped to produce the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act. It is then the result of these four acts that are responsible for the change in African American civil rights. This paper analyzes the success of the civil rights movement but analyzes the effects of these pieces of legislation as well. The movement was impactful but impactful in producing these acts. It is then these acts that create societal change as a result of federal enforcement, funding, and legal status. The 1964 Civil Rights Act directly outlawed discrimination and segregation in schools, the workplace, and the public place on the basis of race (Burstein 1979 157). The 1965 Voting Rights Act directly outlawed the prohibiting of voting based on race. In addition, it allowed direct federal intervention within the voting process (Coleman 2015). The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided funding for desegregated schools and restricted funding for

schools that were resistant to desegregation (Hollow Hope 2008). Finally, the 1968 Fair Housing Act provided equal housing opportunities on the basis of race (History 2010).

President John F. Kennedy initially introduced the Civil Rights Act of 1964 a year earlier. He addressed the nation on television seeking that "all Americans (have) the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public—hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, and similar establishments" (Kennedy 1963). He also believed that African Americans should be ensured a "greater protection for the right to vote" (Kennedy 1963). After Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson further pushed Kennedy's ideal society in which all individuals were equal. Such a bill has so many political repercussions and individual moral partitions that the success and full allotment of civil rights is one of haste and of controversy. But the progress made in not only the 1964 Civil Rights Act but also the other acts described and as well for these acts even to be brought into consideration in the first place was a result of the grassroots, ground level movement.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a crucial piece of civil rights legislation. It called for the end of segregation. Ultimately though, the act lacked the significant federal enforcement it needed to be greatly effective in terms of economic change. It merely represented a signpost and an indication of what African American rights should be. It helped to create change in public place segregation but cannot be attributed to economic change. As the movement endured further hardship, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 signified a great victory in the civil rights movement. Calling for the end of unfair voter requirements and federal enforcement, the act greatly helped to provide African Americans with the ability to register and participate in elections. The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, while not characterized as major civil rights legislation, had an initial positive impact on school desegregation but failed to sustain

this positive change in the long run today. Finally, the 1968 Fair Housing Act failed to notably eliminate housing segregation today.

I will be analyzing these acts and the three major goals through the use of various data sources. A substantial portion of the data comes from the United States Census and *Statistical Abstract of the United States* in which I created bivariate analyses in order to analyze these conditions over designated periods of time. I examine this data and the trends before each act's passage, directly after, in the short run, and the long term today. This provides a more thorough picture of whether the acts and the movement produced lasting change or merely had a quick but ultimately short effect. I analyze the data in an isolated way to see if conditions for African Americans have improved. I also interpret it in a method that provides a view of if the improvements or lack thereof improvements, were equal to, greater than, or less than that of whites over these periods of time in order to not only highlight African American isolated change, but change to that of their white counterparts too.

Race relations have been a source of great controversy and scrutiny throughout much of American history. African Americans were undoubtedly subjugated to far poorer conditions and treatment than that of whites. In a current period of continued police brutality and continued anxiety about the state of race relations today, I felt that this topic needed to be analyzed. I wanted to examine the extent to which the oppressive conditions of the pre-civil rights era have been improved. The goal of writing this paper was to shed light on a topic that still persists today and then to provide how these issues have or have not been addressed. This topic is of great importance to America and society in general. The fact of the matter is that while African American oppression is not of that of earlier eras, the progress that people have thought has been made is limited. Blacks are still in an inferior position to that of whites in society despite areas of

improvement. The civil rights movement cannot be characterized as a complete success. Instead, there is still a constant battle between improvements and deeply rooted disadvantages that create a problem in assessing the success of the movement. We see great signs of change as a society but still a gap persists between races.

## **Chapter 2: The Leaders and Goals of the Civil Rights Movement**

The civil rights movement was led by African Americans seeking to obtain rights that they believed they deserved as citizens of the United States. Most importantly, the leaders of the movement included individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney Young, and John Lewis. These leaders fought for an improvement of African American economic conditions, the right to fairly vote and to be represented within the American political system, and the end of segregation and racial discrimination. As I argue, the activities, actions, and advocacy of these leaders are the embodiment of a historical social movement that would forever have an impact on the lives of African Americans and the state of America as a whole. In the following section, I will provide and use primary sources including speeches and interviews delivered by prominent and influential civil rights leaders in order to establish that the main goals of the movement were in fact the ones I identified and the ones Martin Luther King Jr. described- economic improvement, voting rights, and desegregation.

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Martin Luther King Jr. used techniques and strategies rooted in nonviolent civil disobedience in order to try to end the persecution of African American individuals. King, the unquestioned leader of the movement in many realms, was an American Baptist minister. He led the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and helped establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization aimed at obtaining African American civil rights (The King Center 2016). In 1964, King, because of the nonviolent strategies he used in his fight for civil rights, received the Nobel Peace Prize (The King Center 2016).

At a freedom rally in St. Louis, Missouri, King delivered a speech that highlighted, as of 1957, the progress African Americans and the United States had made in race relations. He noted

the improvements, but he argued for the necessity of further advancements. While only 1957, King understood the changes that needed to occur in society and for African Americans. In the speech titled, “A Realistic Look at the Question of Progress in the Area of Race Relations,” King highlighted three goals of the civil rights movement. These three goals articulated by King in his speech are the three goals that I use throughout this thesis in order to evaluate the degree to which the movement was ultimately successful.

King first addressed the need for heightened black economic development and the discrepancy in economic conditions of whites and blacks. In his speech King said, “The poverty of the Negro is still appalling... we must face the fact that forty three percent of the Negro families of America still make less than two thousand dollars a year. Compare that with the fact that just seventeen percent of the white families make less than two thousand dollars a year” (King 1957). King noted the poverty of African Americans and their plight. He recognized the progress made but did not hesitate to say the distance needed to go. He said, “We’ve come a long, long way, but we have a long, long way to go in economic equality” (King 1957). Economic equality had been far from achieved in 1957 and it would be years for much greater progress to be made.

King continued by mentioning the desire for African Americans to have the right and ability to vote. This would be a vote that would provide African Americans with opportunities more than anything else. It would have to be a vote that was not threatened. In the speech King said, “Get the ballot and through gaining the ballot you gain political power. And you can call the politicians and tell them that certain things will have to be done because you helped put them in office” (King 1957). King believed that the vote would provide African Americans with



leverage. It would provide them with a political capacity that could elevate not only their status but also their freedoms.

Finally, King commented on the state of segregation in America at the time. Three years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), a landmark case in which *Plessy v. Ferguson's* (1896) “separate but equal” was deemed unconstitutional, segregation still persisted. King labeled segregation as a sort of covered up “slavery.” In the roots it had all the intentions and evils that slavery consisted of. King commented by saying, “If democracy is to live segregation must die. Segregation is a tragic cancer, which must be removed before our democratic health can be realized” (King 1957). An end to segregation and an end to discrimination would help to begin to close the enormous racial gap between whites and blacks.

Martin Luther King Jr. throughout this address commented and argued for changes in three key areas- economic conditions, voting, and segregation. King noted the tragedies that African Americans were facing at the time. He mentioned the likes of Emmitt Till as he was “the voice of a little boy, fourteen years old, crying out from the waters of Mississippi” (King 1957). He also expressed the persecution and hatred directed at African Americans. King went on to say, “Men and women are being shot because they merely have a desire to stand up and vote as first class citizens. The homes of ministers and civic leaders are being bombed. More tragic than all of that, the house of God is being bombed” (King 1957). It was tragedies such as these that civil rights leaders at the time hoped the goals of the movement would eradicate. It is these primary goals of the movement that I will first establish drawing on the speeches and interviews of civil rights leaders and then evaluate using time series data and bivariate analyses.

## **I. Economic Conditions**

Despite advancements made in African American economic conditions in a post World War II era, African Americans in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century were still consistently subjected to low wages, poor income, high rates of unemployment, and persistent poverty. Throughout the civil rights movement, leaders aimed at improving black economic conditions in order to advance their race to a fair and more equal part of society. As a result of constant segregation and discrimination, African Americans were unable to prosper in a society driven by white interest and white sentiment. Civil rights leaders took it upon themselves to establish a goal in which the sustainability of African American life in economic terms would grow and allow blacks to earn a suitable and equal standard of living. I will begin by utilizing primary sources from Whitney Young, James Farmer, and John Lewis in order to establish that indeed the improvement of African American economic conditions was a primary goal of the civil rights movement.

Whitney Moore Young Jr. was an African American civil rights leader born in 1921 (Leadership Lessons 2009 1). A prominent figure during the civil rights movement, Young was elected President of the Omaha Chapter of the National Urban League in 1950 (Leadership Lessons 2009 1). From there he became the first dean of social work at Atlanta University in 1954 (Leadership Lessons 2009 2). By 1961, he assumed the role as executive director of the National Urban League (Leadership Lessons 2009 2). Throughout this career, Young helped to provide black workers with jobs usually only handled by white individuals. He greatly expanded the National Urban League, which was designed as a nonpartisan organization that promoted civil rights in the employment sector and the elimination of racial discrimination in jobs and in society, in general.

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1964, during the heart of the civil rights movement, Young partook in an interview with Robert Penn Warren, a Pulitzer Prize winner for both his work in the category of

fiction and in poems (Young 1964). The interview began with a general discussion of the National Urban League that as previously discussed, Young had such a direct involvement with. The interview evolved to a discussion of race and class and how within the civil rights movement, these two facets had begun to intersect. As Young believed there was becoming a separation between the African American upper class and the general African American masses.

But Young most notably argued for equality in terms of employment. Midway through the interview, Young was quoted saying, “We think there ought to be equal opportunity in unemployment as well as in employment, that we resent very much” (Young 1964). It was beliefs like this that formed the basis for a fight for African American improved economic conditions. He continued to say, “You know that we’re 25 percent or 15 percent of the unemployed, and whites are five or—to six, and we think that this situation ought to be changed” (Young 1964). Young, like so many other civil rights leaders did not stand for this drastic gap in unemployment between whites and blacks. He concluded this thought by saying, “I’m not buying the saying that well, the problem of unemployed of Negroes will be solved only when there’s full employment for all Americans, because I know there won’t be full employment for all Americans in the foreseeable future and in the meanwhile I don’t think that we can continue to have this large number of Negroes unemployed” (Young 1964). The problem of African American unemployment was one that needed to be addressed. As Young believed, African American unemployment could decline even if America as a whole did not.

A few months later, James Farmer Jr., another extremely influential civil rights leader, conducted an interview of similar regards with Warren. James Farmer Jr., while not a man centered only on improvement of African American economic conditions, he too believed that the status of such must change. James Farmer Jr. was the founder of the Congress of Racial

Equality (CORE) (Severo 1999). Farmer and CORE pursued principles throughout the civil rights movement that rejected segregation and discrimination while using nonviolent means. In the early 1960s, while working for the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP) and subsequently elected as executive director of CORE, Farmer helped organized the Freedom Rides, aimed at desegregating public transportation (Severo 1999).

On June 11, 1964, Farmer took many similar stances as Young in terms of the high rates of unemployment for African Americans in the United States. Young recognized the devastating rates of employment and the flat out discrimination despite federal law recently passed requiring equal opportunity and hiring in the workplace (Farmer 1964). African Americans began boycotting certain products, specifically in Mississippi in order to bring attention to this issue of poor African American economic standards. Farmer during the interview noted that he personally was taking action by sending letters to hundreds of major businesses in Mississippi in order to point out the atrocities that were occurring. He says, I am “pointing out their responsibility as financial leaders of the state to do something about it, and asking them specifically what steps they are taking and have taken or plan to take in the following fields-employment of Negroes at all levels in their company, securing them effective, equal and responsible law enforcement in the community in which they operate, a state climate of acceptance of the mandates of the United States Constitution, and we are asking to hear from them on that” (Farmer 1964). While simple, it was actions like these that brought to the forefront issues such as the discrepancy in racial economic conditions.

Farmer was also in favor of quotas for employment in order to ensure that African Americans were as equally involved as whites (Farmer 1964). Farmer said, “I am in favor of such a quota in employment—for tactical and practical reason, we do not call for quotas now in

employment- we call for numbers instead, in order to see faces—the black faces there” (Farmer 1964). Farmer simply wanted an increase in the number African Americans with a position of employment. He wanted to see more African Americans with the right to work and hired fairly and in a non-discriminatory manner. But there were areas other than employment that black civil rights leaders sought economic improvement in. Extremely prominent and widely recognized was the speech delivered by a young John Lewis on the March on Washington on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1963 in Washington, D.C.

John Lewis, now a United States African American Congressional Representative, epitomized the youth excitement during the civil rights movement. Partaking in sit-ins, freedom rides, and marches, Lewis ultimately became one of the founding members and chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (Lewis 1999). He too recognized the drastic need for economic change for African Americans. In one of the historic events during the civil rights movement, John Lewis at the March on Washington delivered a speech in front of hundreds of thousands of people. While previously edited for its aggressive tone, Lewis touched upon the various changes he believed African Americans needed.

Lewis addressed the low wages of African Americans and the high rates of poverty that they endured as a result. Lewis early on said, “We march today for jobs and freedom, but we have nothing to be proud of, for hundreds and thousands of our brothers are not here, for they are receiving starvation wages or no wages at all” (Lewis 1963). The extremely low wages of African Americans and the gap between African Americans and whites in wages was a grave concern of Lewis and of other leaders at the time. In the South, with agriculture such a prominent industry, black workers were subjected to tireless hours and were provided nothing in return. “While we stand here, there are sharecroppers in the Delta of Mississippi who are out in the

fields working for less than three dollars per day, 12 hours a day” (Lewis 1963). Lewis, among others wanted legislation that would ensure higher wages and equal wages for blacks as compared to whites. Lewis said, “We must have legislation that will protect the Mississippi sharecroppers...we need a bill that will provide for the homeless and starving people of this nation. We need a bill that will ensure the equality of a maid who earns five dollars a week in the home of a family whose total income is 100,000 dollars a year” (Lewis 1963). At the forefront for Lewis and all other leaders was a desire for legislation that would ensure equal economic opportunity for African Americans.

Through the speeches and interviews provided, it is clear that changes in employment, wages, poverty, and income were all essential parts of a more general African American economic improvement, established by civil rights leaders from 1954 to 1968. Black civil rights leaders wanted not only isolated improvement but also an improvement in terms of the gap and equality to whites. The words and actions of leaders such as James Farmer Jr., John Lewis, and Whitney Young were all clear as they highlighted what they as leaders of the movement wanted for the African American people as a whole. Next, I will provide the commentary from two of the most influential civil rights figures, Martin Luther King Jr. and Fannie Lou Hamer, in order to establish the African American desire for the right to an unobstructed vote.

## **II. Voting**

In order to truly change the status of blacks in America, the ability to freely vote was greatly desired by African Americans throughout the civil rights movement. Voting would allow African Americans a viable means to properly change the racial intolerance that flooded American streets. It would provide an effective, legal, and potent opportunity for blacks all across the nation to vote for individuals who would benefit their cause. When actually trying to

exercise the legal right to vote, blacks were often threatened and intimidated from actually casting a ballot. Therefore, African American leaders of the movement sought out an unendangered and unjeopardized ability to vote in congressional and presidential elections.

More vocal than all in this regards was once again, Martin Luther King Jr. As previously discussed, Martin Luther King was the backbone of the civil rights movement. Using nonviolent means, King was able to get the message of the African Americans across to the masses and to people in political positions and positions of power. In 1957, Martin Luther King delivered an address at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in Washington, D.C.. The title of the speech was none other than “Give Us the Ballot.” Despite such simple words, the words resonated across the black community. They embodied the fight for civil rights and the fight for equality between whites and blacks.

Martin Luther King Jr. began the speech by describing how African Americans were brutally and illegally subjected to ways that would prevent them from voting. King said, “All types of conniving methods are still being used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters” (King 1957). The lack of the ability to register in a state courthouse or in a local town blocked a path to equality for African Americans. Poll taxes, KKK influence, and literacy tests all prevented any able voters from actually voting. King continued to say that “the denial of this sacred right is a tragic betrayal of the highest mandates of our democratic tradition. And so our most urgent request to the President of the United States and every member of Congress is to give us the right to vote” (King 1957). The right to vote and with it the ability to “write the law on the statute books of the South and bring an end to the dastardly acts of the hooded perpetrators of violence” (King 1957). With a right to vote and the ability to cast a ballot, King argued that “we will fill our legislative halls with men of goodwill and send to the sacred halls of

Congress men who will not sign a ‘Southern Manifesto’ because of their devotion to the manifesto of justice” (King 1957). Martin Luther King believed that with the power to vote, the African American people could place just and fair judges on the benches of Southern States and place governors who would advance black equality and black interests.

Aside from Martin Luther King, Fannie Lou Hamer was directly involved with the oppression that African Americans faced in this regard. Fannie Lou Hamer was born in 1917 in the Deep South, Montgomery County, Mississippi (History 2009). As a young girl she worked in the fields as a sharecropper. By 1962, after facing white discrimination and oppression, Hamer became involved in civil rights activism. As one in a small group of African Americans, Hamer attempted to register to vote. Upon attempt, Hamer was forcefully rejected. She soon became involved in the SNCC and in 1964 helped found the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party, aimed at helping African Americans earn the protected right to vote (History 2009).

Hamer’s direct involvement with the civil rights goal of voting is undeniable. Her actions at the 1964 Democratic National Convention showed no different. Her speeches used a resounding voice; no longer would racial discrimination waiver blacks ability to exercise their constitutional right. In 1964 in Harlem, New York, with fellow, more extreme civil rights activist, Malcolm X, Hamer delivered one of her famous speeches titled “I’m Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired.” In the speech, Hamer described her experiences when she traveled to attempt to register to vote. But she described not only the desire to vote but also the persecution faced at the current status of voting. Hamer said in the speech, “Now how can a man be in Washington, elected by the people, when 95 percent of the people cannot vote in Mississippi? Just taking a chance on trying to register to vote, you can be fired. Not only fired, you can be killed...and any person that's working down there to change the system can be counted just as



another nigger” (Hamer 1964). There was a desire not only to create political change through the right to vote but also the desire to end the subjugation and violence towards blacks when trying to exercise this civil right.

Earlier that year, Hamer, an extremely religious woman, delivered a speech before a mass meeting held at the Negro Baptist School in Indianola, Mississippi. Hamer, in the speech said, “Eighteen hundred and seventy, the Fifteenth Amendment was added on to the Constitution of the United States that gave every man a chance to vote for what he think to be the right way. And now this is ’64 and they still trying to keep us away from the ballot. But we are determined today, we are determined that one-day we’ll have the power of the ballot. And the sooner you go to the courthouse, the sooner we’ll have it” (Hamer 1964). Hamer encouraged more black individuals to go out to vote. Despite the violence that would occur, with more attempting, more attention would be brought. This would hopefully provide for more of a chance of legislation against the persecution.

The ability for African Americans to vote and to vote fairly was one that civil rights leaders greatly desired. It would allow African Americans the ability to harness political power and hopefully change a system that for years had oppressed them. The Fifteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution provided African Americans with the constitutional and legal right to vote. But as a result of disenfranchisement, this right was essentially stripped from many African Americans. An improvement of economic conditions and the right to vote has been seen as a main goal of leaders at the time. These goals are clearly articulated within influential leaders’ speeches. The final goal of the civil rights movement that I will analyze in terms of its success is that of desegregation in schools, housing and the public place.

### **III. Desegregation**

While voting might have been the means to achieve future change, the persistent effects of discrimination and segregation needed to be eliminated. Not only were blacks separated from whites, but they were not divided on an equal basis. Blacks were subjected to much poorer public facilities, such as restaurants and restrooms. African American schools were barely given funds that would provide for any educational opportunity similar to whites. Segregation was the manifestation of racial discrimination. To abolish the separation of whites and blacks would be a first step in abolishing the hatred that had divided the races. I will provide primary sources from Roy Wilkins, James Meredith, John Lewis, and Martin Luther King Jr. in order to establish that desegregation was one of the main goals civil rights leaders had for the movement.

Roy Wilkins is most notably known for his role in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Chosen in 1955 to be executive secretary and later executive director of the NAACP, Wilkins became a highly recognized and highly praised spokesperson for the association (NAACP 2009). The NAACP, founded in the early 1900s, was established by early African American civil rights pioneers such as W. E.B. Dubois and Ida B. Wells (NAACP 2009). The association particularly used the role of courts in attempts to overturn segregation and racial discrimination against blacks. As a spokesperson, Wilkins went beyond the courts and proceeded to use all legislative means. He began testifying before Congress and would routinely confer with United States Presidents, particularly John F. Kennedy, all the way through Jimmy Carter.

In 1957, a group of nine African Americans enrolled in the racially segregated Little Rock High School in Arkansas (Wilkins 1957). While seeking entrance, the group of students were met with resistance. The governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, called upon the Arkansas National Guard in order to keep the students out. In response, President Dwight D. Eisenhower

sent in federal troops in order to protect them (Wilkins 1957). In response to the “crisis,” Roy Wilkins addressed the Commonwealth Club of California on November 1, 1957. In a speech titled, “The Clock Will Not Be Turned Back,” Wilkins highlighted the troubles facing not only black America but also America as a whole. Wilkins, in the speech said, “The world cannot understand nor long respect a nation in which a governor calls out troops to bar little children from school in defiance of the Supreme Court of the land, a nation in which mobs beat and kick and stone and spit upon those who happen not to be white” (Wilkins 1957). Wilkins, among with all other leaders believed that the segregation African Americans faced was not only pitiful but needed immediate eradication.

In another case of school segregation, James Meredith met first hand the white resistance to desegregated facilities. Meredith is best known for becoming the first African American student to be admitted to the then segregated, University of Mississippi, in 1962 (History 2010). On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1963, Meredith spoke of his experience and the steps needed in order for African Americans to earn their equal share in society. Titled “I Can’t Fight Alone,” Meredith identified the problem of racism and the effects it had on African Americans. Meredith said, “It is essential that America solve her racial problem because, in the first place, human society, civilization itself, must advance. Elimination of oppression and prejudice, of restriction on human rights and development—these are essential to the advance of civilization. If America is to hold her rightful place as leader of the world, the democratic world, we must come nearer to our ideal of human equality and justice” (Meredith 1963). The goal of racial desegregation in all realms of society was one held above all. For racial segregation subjected African Americans to the near plight of slavery. It prevented African Americans from being equal to whites and being afforded the same opportunities and accommodations white people had. Meredith commented on segregations

effect on black education by saying, “The real question we are facing is whether Negroes, including Negroes in Mississippi, are able to obtain the education that their states offer.”

Segregation disrupted the flow of black society and prevented African Americans from hopes of a successful future.

As previously mentioned, John Lewis delivered a powerful speech upon Washington in 1963. In the speech he not only mentioned the African American desire to vote and the African American desire for improved economic conditions but he also addressed the desire for a racially desegregated country. Lewis forcefully at the end of his speech said, “By the forces of our demands, our determination and our numbers, we shall send a desegregated South into a thousand pieces, put them together in the image of God and Democracy” (Lewis 1963).

Desegregation was an embodiment of all the injustices and racial oppression African Americans faced in the mid twentieth century.

Alongside John Lewis that day was Martin Luther King Jr. In what has become known as the most famous speech delivered during the civil rights movement, King spoke of the dream he had for America and its people. He highlighted that despite the legislative freedom of African Americans, they are yet free. He said, “But one hundred years later (emancipation proclamation), the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination” (King 1963). It is this goal of desegregation that had the furthest implications for African American people. While the ballot would provide political opportunity, an end to segregation and an end to discrimination, if it could be achieved, would mean progress at racial equality. King believed it could be achieved and he knew that segregation was at the root of all evil. King emphatically highlighted his desire for desegregation by saying, “I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious

racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of ‘interposition’ and ‘nullification -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers” (King 1963).

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Throughout this chapter I have provided primary sources including interviews and speeches in order to establish that civil rights leaders had three main goals for the movement: an improvement of African American economic conditions, an unthreatened right to vote, and racial desegregation. The individuals highlighted in this chapter were among the most influential African American civil rights leaders of the time. Their credibility as leaders was undoubted. In their speeches and interviews, each leader addressed a goal mentioned above and clearly articulated the desire for change in that area.

With the goals of the movement now established, I will proceed to analyze the extent to which these goals were achieved by the movement. I will evaluate whether the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 1968 Housing Act, the result of the activities and demonstrations from the civil rights movement, were successful in producing an improvement in African American economic conditions, voting rights, and desegregation.

### **Chapter 3: Economic Conditions**

The plight of African Americans in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of poverty and desperation. African Americans severely lacked employment and when they were employed, they obtained unfair wages that resulted in poor income and high rates of poverty. Therefore, as illustrated in the previous chapter, civil rights leaders argued for wide-ranging reforms as necessary to improve African American economic conditions. The movement was designed in order to help African Americans obtain jobs in a fair process, rise out of poverty, earn equal wages to their white counterparts, and produce a steady household income that would provide support for African American families.

In this chapter, I will divide the following material into three subsections: unemployment, poverty, and income with a brief discussion of wages. Within each, I will provide a statistical analysis of the level of progress made within each of these categories. Beginning pre-movement and ultimately up until the current time period, I will assess the level of success that the civil rights movement attained in seeking better economic conditions for African Americans. I will first identify the low levels of economic success and value that African Americans had in order to establish their position in society at the time. From there I will then use various data sets and trends in order to highlight the changes in unemployment, poverty, income and wages. African American leaders also desired economic equality. Therefore, I will provide a statistical comparison to that of white American citizens. Ultimately, I will conclude with an assessment of the extent to which the 1964 Civil Rights Act was successful in obtaining not only better economic conditions for African Americans but a narrowing of the gap in economic equality between blacks and whites.

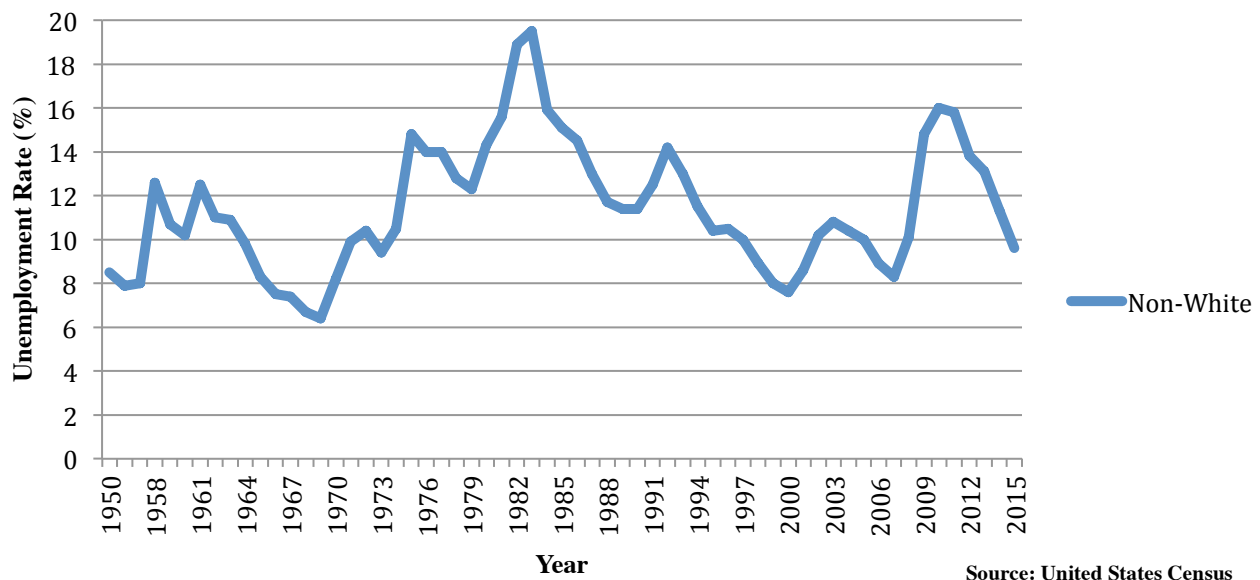
#### **I. Unemployment**

Due to constant discrimination and segregation before and during the civil rights movement, African Americans were subjected to high rates of unemployment. The few African Americans who were able to hold jobs in the Deep South were provided with no power and in dirty and hazardous positions (Jones 2000). In the North, unemployment was less severe but still the level of job availability provided for African Americans was limited. In a dominant white society, whites held the more desirable jobs and suffered from low rates of unemployment. As I will show, African American unemployment rates varied throughout the past 65 years. There are distinct periods in which African Americans exhibited growth in employment, while at others, the trend of black joblessness seemed to perpetuate once again. But what has not changed is the persistent inequality between races in employment. The unemployment gap between African Americans and whites has hardly budged. Throughout all years analyzed, whites have held consistently higher rates of employment than blacks. A postwar period of economic boom failed to decrease the unemployment gap between whites and blacks (Fairlie, Sundstrom 1999 252). The ratio of unemployment between blacks and whites has not reduced despite legislation that enforced equal opportunities in job markets.

Through the use of the United States Census data, I created a bivariate analysis of unemployment rates over 65 years. The figure below shows the unemployment rate for non-white individuals from 1950 to 2015. From 1950 to 1966, the data consists of non-white individuals ages 14 years and over. From 1967 to 2015, the data consists of non-white individuals 16 years and over. This change reflects the youth's ability to work and norms of society. Despite being marked as "non-white," the unemployment figure provided significantly represents African Americans and is not greatly affected by other minorities. Therefore, it is an accurate representation of the black unemployment rate from 1950 to 2015.

Figure 3.1

## Non-White Unemployment Rate, Selected Years, 1950-2015



From the figure provided above, the non-white unemployment rate paints a somewhat unclear picture of the economic conditions of African Americans in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, aimed at ending job discrimination across the U.S., African American unemployment rates did begin to notably decline. In 1958, blacks faced an unemployment rate of 12.6%. While this figure represents the peak of the unemployment rate, solely during the civil rights movement, significant civil rights legislation did not begin until 1964. In 1964, the year of the Civil Rights Act, non-white unemployment was at 9.8%. In the immediate following year, the non-white unemployment rate for individuals 14 years and over dropped to 8.3%. By 1966, the unemployment rate for non-whites dropped even further to 7.5%. Non-white unemployment in a mere two years experienced a 2.3 percentage point drop. In just eight years, it had dropped 5.1 percentage points.

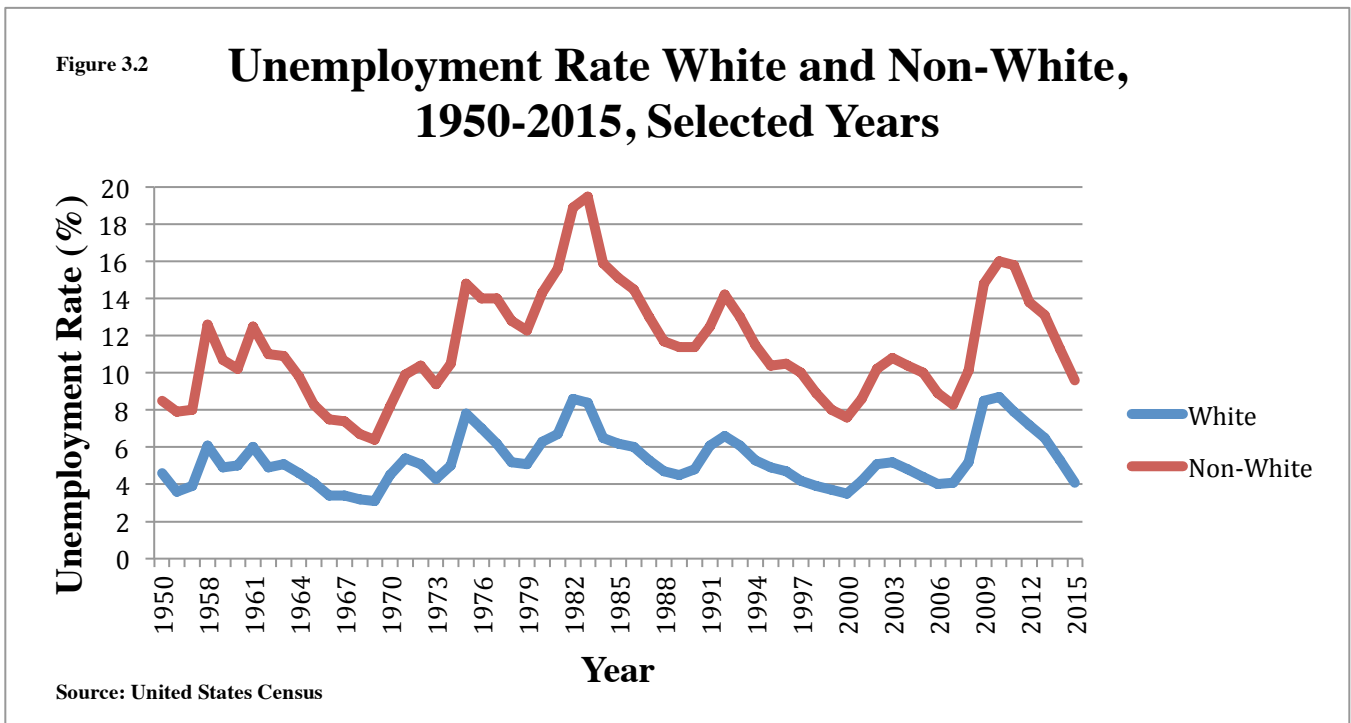


It is quite obvious that in the years directly following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination in the workplace, non-white, particularly African American unemployment had declined. “The courts also interpreted the law in a manner likely to stimulate demand for black workers, pressing employers to hire members of minority groups and disallowing many employment tests that tended to exclude minorities” (Freeman 1973 99). Changes such as these, a result of the Civil Rights Act, enabled African Americans to find more job availability in America. Blacks were beginning to be considered for positions that they were previously banned from. As well, where the economic gains in terms of employment were being made, it occurred primarily in the South because of the extremely low rates of employment that they began with. “Most of the economic gains from the Civil Rights Act occurred in the South... it also reflects the relatively low economic starting point for black southerners in 1964, and the more readily targeted explicit segregation systems that characterized workplaces in the South” (Wright 2015 760). African Americans hoped that equal employment would continue to prosper as it had been in the several years after the implementation of the legislative initiative to ban discrimination.

But the long-term picture of black unemployment is far different than the progress made in the few years after the 1964 Civil Rights Act. What I have considered the end of the modern civil rights movement, 1968, also marks the end of the decline of black unemployment. Between 1950 and 2015, the non-white unemployment reached an all time low in 1969 at 6.4%. But from 1969 to 1983, African American unemployment began to increase at an exponential rate, reaching an astounding 19.5% in 1983. But this constant increase in unemployment cannot be characterized as solely the subjugation of African Americans. Instead, the increase in

unemployment in the 1970s and early 1980s represents a resounding economic recession that took a toll on unemployment across the country.

Aside from economic recessions that caused notable surges and declines in unemployment, African American unemployment has never reached the low figure it did in 1969. Instead, it continued to improve and decline every couple of years. There have been no periods of low unemployment for blacks. There are years in which it significantly improves but for the most part blacks experience an unemployment rate that is far from the vision of significant African American employment that black civil rights leaders had hoped for. Sixty-five years later, black unemployment is higher than it was in the segregated, discriminated nation of 1950. In 1950, after a booming post-War economy, African American unemployment was 8.5%. In 2015, it was 9.6%. The immediate improvement in unemployment after civil rights legislation represents the quick effect that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the movement had on enhancing black economic conditions in terms of employment.



But the fact of the matter is that the unemployment rate in the long term has ceased to appreciably change the economic status of black Americans in terms of job opportunities. As I will show next, the little overall change in unemployment for blacks since the civil rights movement merely represents blacks in an isolated data system. When comparing their rates to the rates of white individuals, it is clear that the equality between races, fought for by civil rights leaders, has not emerged.

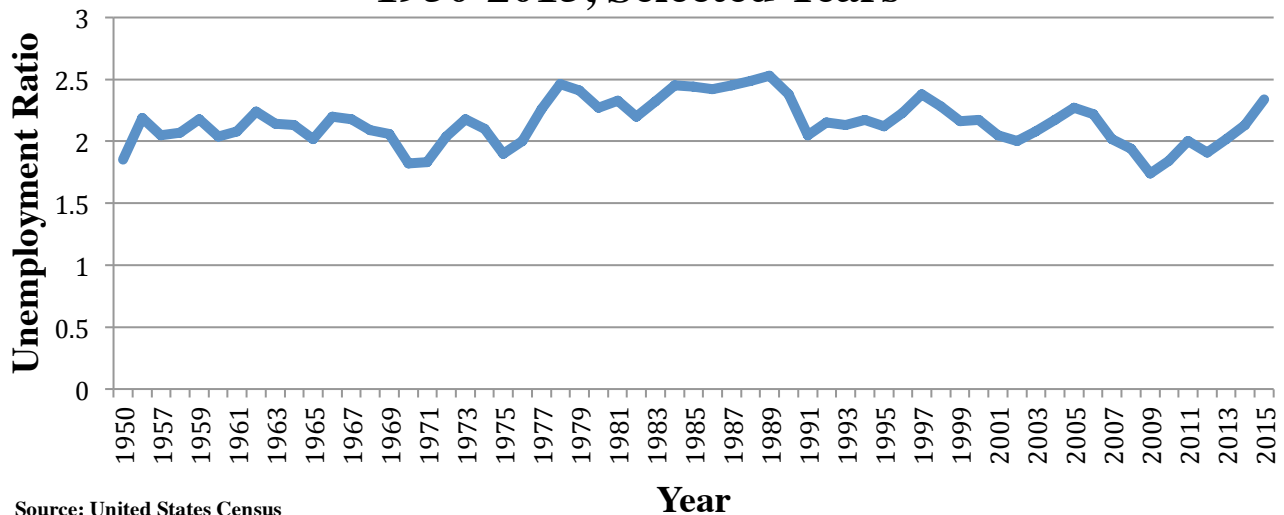
The graph displayed on the previous page not only shows the non-white unemployment rate from 1950 to 2015 but also the white unemployment rate from 1950 to 2015. The white unemployment rate seems to embody a pattern similar to that of African Americans. But there is a clear and stark divide between the two rates. While African Americans experienced a great range of more than 13 percentage points between the highs and lows, whites keep a lower and more stable rate of unemployment. They reach a minimum rate of unemployment in 1969 with 3.1% while only reaching a maximum of 8.6% in 1982. The recession that greatly affected African American unemployment did play a role in white unemployment but had a far less severe and significant impact. The range of low and high unemployment for white Americans between 1950 and 2015 was only 5.5%. Again, whites experience periods of high unemployment and periods of decline but the general consistency of white unemployment and the small range indicate much more stable employment patterns. Whites were never subjugated to the discrimination and intimidation in the workplace that African Americans endured prior to and even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Therefore, such a less fluctuated and more unwavering unemployment path makes sense.

I previously argued that the civil rights movement was critical in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that ended discrimination in the workplace. The end of this discrimination

ultimately had a quick effect in terms of black unemployment. In the immediate years after the 1964 act, unemployment improved for African Americans. But as time went on, black unemployment resorted to similar pre-civil rights African American economic conditions. An improvement in unemployment in the long term for blacks cannot be justified by the data presented. Furthermore and just as clearly, equality between whites and blacks is still far from realization. Whites experienced a much smaller range of unemployment and more secure job opportunities. But more importantly, throughout the entire data set of 1950 to 2015, blacks in not one year experienced a better level of employment than whites. Whites each and every year have boasted lower levels of unemployment than their black counterparts. Even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, whites improved in unemployment in an almost identical fashion to blacks. Whites experienced higher levels of unemployment during the recession of the early 1980s but not enough of a decline to exceed African Americans.

Figure 3.3

### Unemployment Ratio of Non-White to White 1950-2015, Selected Years



Source: United States Census

The figure on the previous page shows the ratio of unemployment between whites and nonwhites from 1950 to 2015. The ratio reaches a low in 2009 at 1.74 and a high in 1989 at 2.53. This exhibits the persistent higher levels of unemployment that African Americans faced over whites. There has never been a point in which African Americans and whites encounter the same level of unemployment. African Americans throughout this whole time period have continuously and always undergone joblessness at a rate that is more than 1.5 times their white counterpart. It is quite conclusive that equality in economic conditions as displayed by unemployment figures between whites and African Americans has not been achieved. While it would be ignorant and dumbfounded to say that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 should have completely eradicated the gap in unemployment between the two races, it should have at least provided some improvement. Ultimately it is the combination of a variety of factors that have led to the persistence of high levels of unemployment for blacks and lower levels for whites. But it should have laid groundwork for years to come and not just a few years after its passage. It should have had the ability to lower the ratio of unemployment between the two races to far lower than 1.74. Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the effects of discrimination previously, were never eradicated in the years after its elimination.

In a 2013 Gallup Poll, 60% percent of American citizens believed whites had better chances than blacks to get jobs for which they are qualified (Jones 2013). On the contrary, only 39% of blacks believed whites and blacks have equal opportunities (Jones 2013). While this is an improvement from a 1963 poll in which 74% of blacks thought whites had better chances at jobs, it nonetheless highlights the continued deprivation that African Americans feel in terms of their economic conditions (Jones 2013). 40% of blacks thought discrimination created this gap in job equality (Jones 2013). While this is merely public opinion, it still highlights the lack of progress

made in this country. It would be blind to say that full equality can be achieved in only a 50-year period. But the progress made, displayed by the data provided and the current status of public opinion, shows that we have not come as far as civil rights leaders imagined. “We should be concerned that labor-market inactivity rates for black men are high and rising and that the discrepancy between black and white men is growing” (Welch 1990 S55). The improved rates of job opportunity and the equality of obtaining those jobs that civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis fought for and articulated within their speeches did not have as far and wide reaching of an impact that they believed could be achieved.

The 1964 Civil Rights Act did have critical implications as we will see but in the area of black unemployment, the act was unable to overcome years of discrimination and a variety of other societal factors. Black unemployment had notable improvements, immediately post implementation of the act, but the act failed in the long term to consistently improve black unemployment rates. African American unemployment today and pre-civil rights act do not look much different. “What the Civil Rights Act did not do is create a post-racial society” (Wright 2015 778). Whites are still at an advantage when it comes to job employment. But unemployment is not the only economic condition that African American civil rights leaders hoped to change. As I will argue next, improvements in black income are much more notable than unemployment. These changes are in part attributable to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. But still today, whites’ higher income rates mar the progress toward equality.

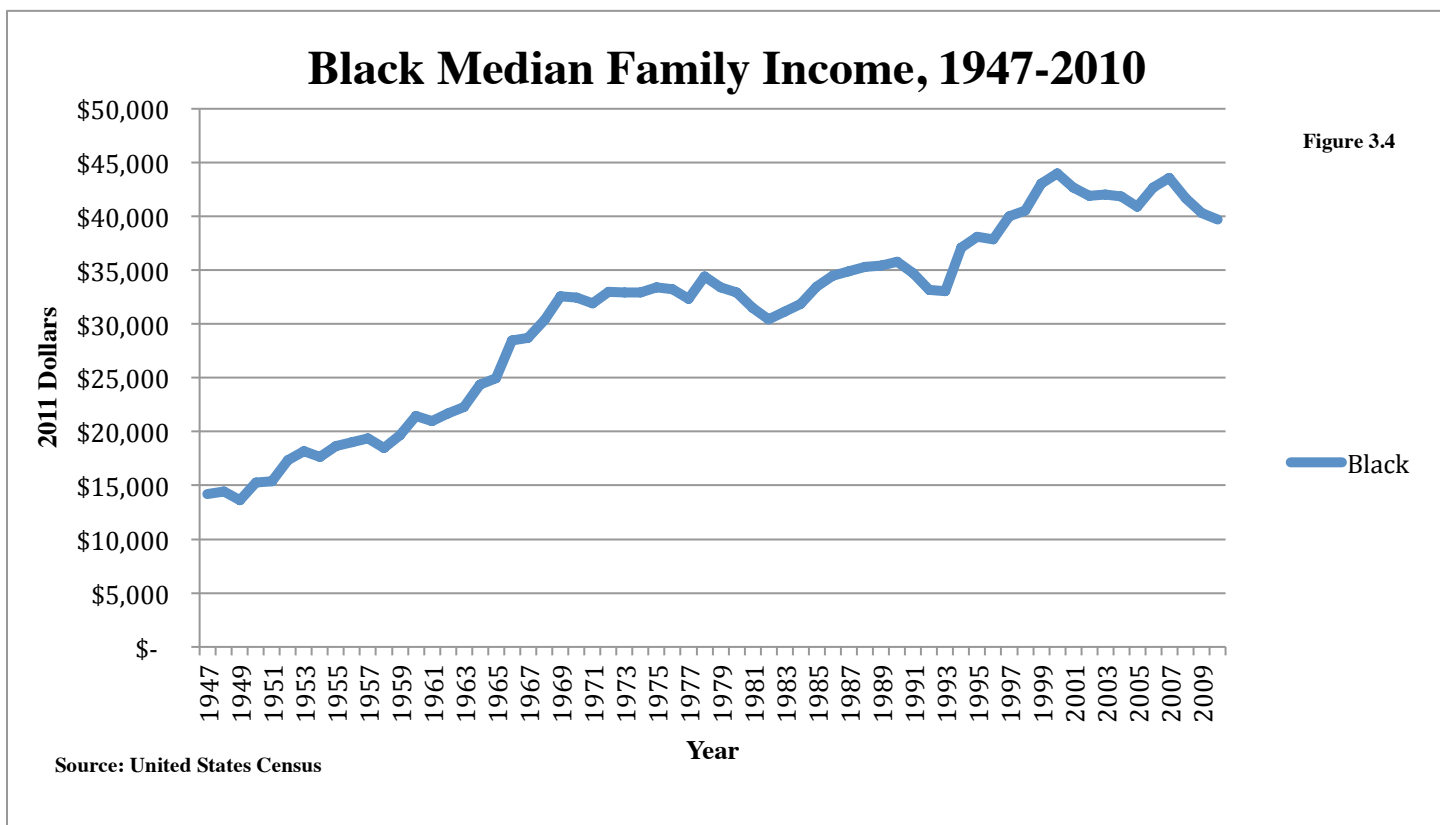
## **II. Income**

Not only were African Americans at a significantly lesser chance of being employed and still are, but when employed, African Americans went home with a significantly lower income. Wages were not equal to that of whites. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a racial income gap

between the two races persisted. Eliminating this inequality constituted one of the main goals of civil rights leaders. No longer would lower wages and income for the same work be accepted. As well, the persistent unemployment of African Americans led whites to hold positions of higher net worth. In more white-collar jobs dominated by white individuals, income was higher and African Americans were kept out of the benefits. Using periodical data assembled from the United States Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics, I will display how the civil rights movement had an impact on African American income. Despite a drastic increase in black household income, African Americans are still in an inferior position to whites today. The gap in earnings between African Americans and whites has declined but has declined so insignificantly that to qualify it as an overall success would be inaccurate. The imagined improvements in income did in fact emerge but hopes for equality between whites have all but been shattered.

The graph on the next page displays the median family income of African Americans from 1947 until 2010, adjusted for inflation, as represented in 2011 dollars. This data, based off of the United States Census, will be used as the main indicator of African American income and earnings. Individual African American income is not being utilized because of an absence of pre Civil Rights Act data. In 1954, what I argue to be the start of the modern civil rights movement, black median family income was \$17,655. By 1964, the year of the passage of the Civil Rights Act, African American median family income had increased to \$24,322. But despite this already increasing rate of black income, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 possibly had a short-term impact on the income of African American families. In 1966, a year and a half after the act was signed, black median family income had increased more than \$4,000 to \$28,483. By 1969, black family income had reached \$32,537. From 1954 to 1964, a ten year span, African American median income had increased by a little under \$7,000. But in only a five-year span, it

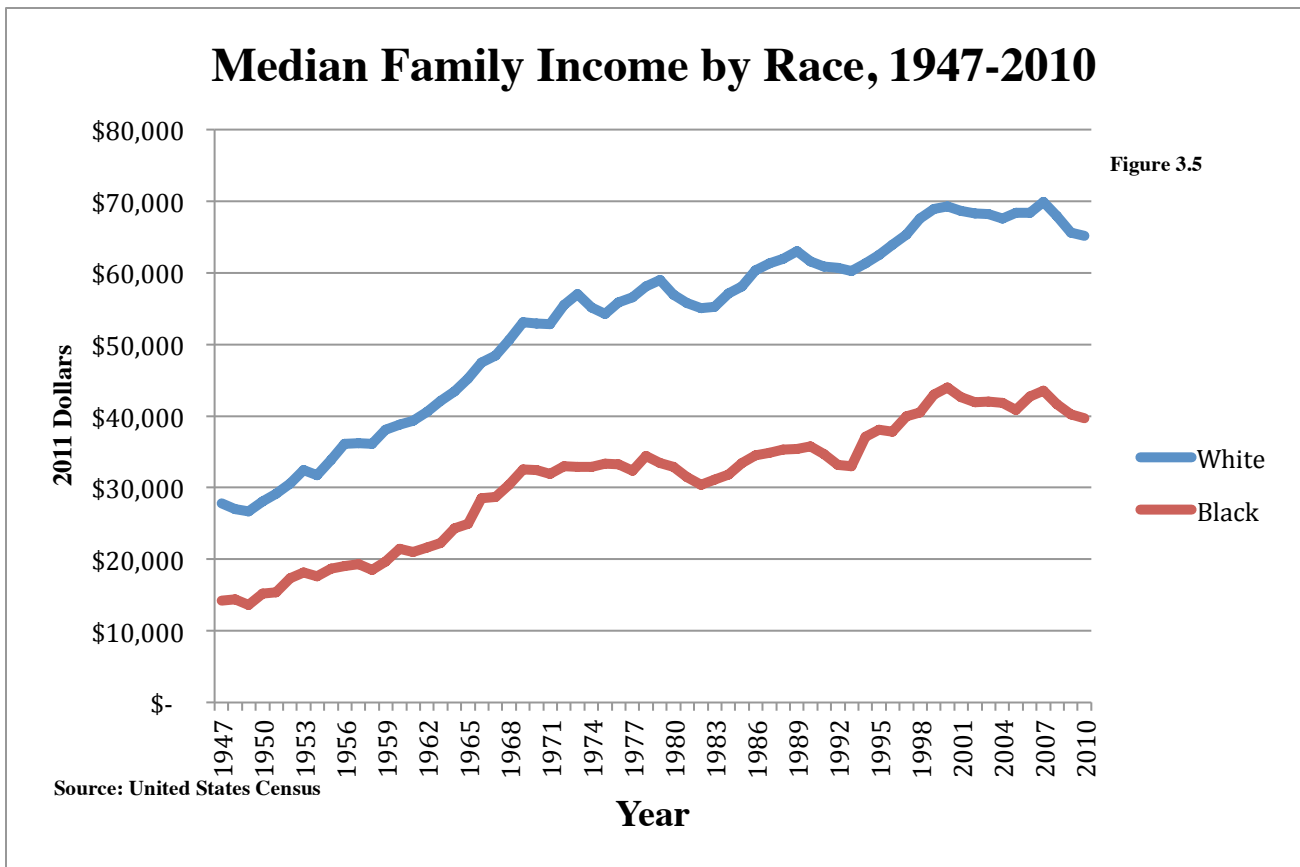
had increased more than \$8,000. Clearly, the impact of the terms and enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, played a role in the short term improvements made in the family income of African Americans. Job opportunities opened up in the immediate aftermath providing doors for greater income benefits.



But these benefits that were endured immediately after the act and in the short run by African Americans have also been seen in the long run. African American income has experienced a steady increase through the years. It reached the \$35,000 mark in 1988 and broke \$40,000 in 1998. The peak black family median income occurred two years later in 2000, at \$43,983. A steady and positive increase such as this is the result of a variety factors. But it is very clear that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 opened up greater opportunities for African Americans that had a positive effect on their overall income. The rise in income cannot be argued as the result of booming economies or inflation or wartime benefits, but rather it is the



result of systematic changes to society that provided individuals who at one point were restricted from earning greater income, to now be afforded the ability to do so. But just as I have argued in the previous sections, an increase in African American income is not the only goal leaders had for the movement. I will next display white income from the same time period in order to evaluate the extent to which the equality between blacks and whites economically, in terms of



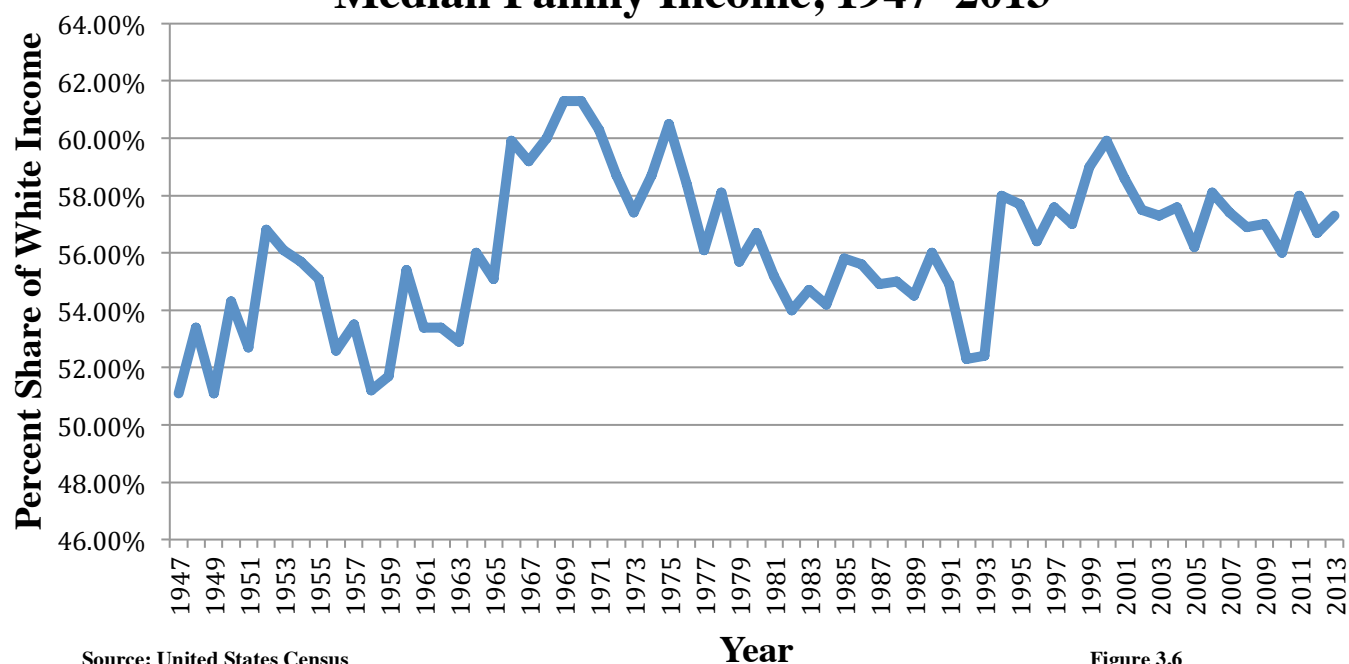
family income, have improved.

Above is a graph similar to the one previously displayed. Instead, provided is a graph of median family income from 1947 to 2010, but with both the income of African Americans and of whites. From a quick look, it can be seen that whites, just as blacks, experienced a steady income growth during this time period. In 1954, whites had a median income of \$31,700. By 1969, their income had increased to \$53,120. Blacks were not alone in the short run increase of family

income as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Nor were they alone in the long run impact as well. By 1986, white family income had reached over \$60,000 and by 2007, white median family income reached the peak at \$69,886. Despite African Americans improving in a 60 year time period, whites at every point held a far greater income total than their black counterpart. Both races saw steady improvement in income. While the improvements in income for African Americans can be partly attributed to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, both white and blacks were affected by broader economic factors, such as a healthy economy. Taken alone, the improvement in black income constitutes some success toward achieving the goals of civil rights reformers. But the same improvement by whites raises questions about how much of the improvement can be chalked up to civil rights legislation.

In 1954, blacks held a 55.7% share of white median family income. The data on the next page is a graph of African American median family income, as a share of the white family income from 1947 until 2013. Despite what I argued to be consistent increases in income for both races, there was actually a narrowing of an income gap. But the narrowing of the gap is insignificant in that the gap's decline is too small to close racial gap in economic conditions in terms of income. Notwithstanding various spikes and declines of this share, for the most part, blacks have held a 56% share of white family income. In 2013, the black median family income as a share of the white was 57.30%, less than 2 percentage points greater than it was in 1954, a time of astounding oppression and discrimination. African Americans had the lowest share of white income in 1958 at 51.2% and the highest share in 1969 and 1970 at 61.3%. This gap did decline in the years after the 1964 Civil Rights Act but the minimal improvement made in the long run from 1954 and 2013 would not satisfy civil rights leaders goals of African American economic equality.

## Black Median Family Income, as a Share of White Median Family Income, 1947–2013



Source: United States Census

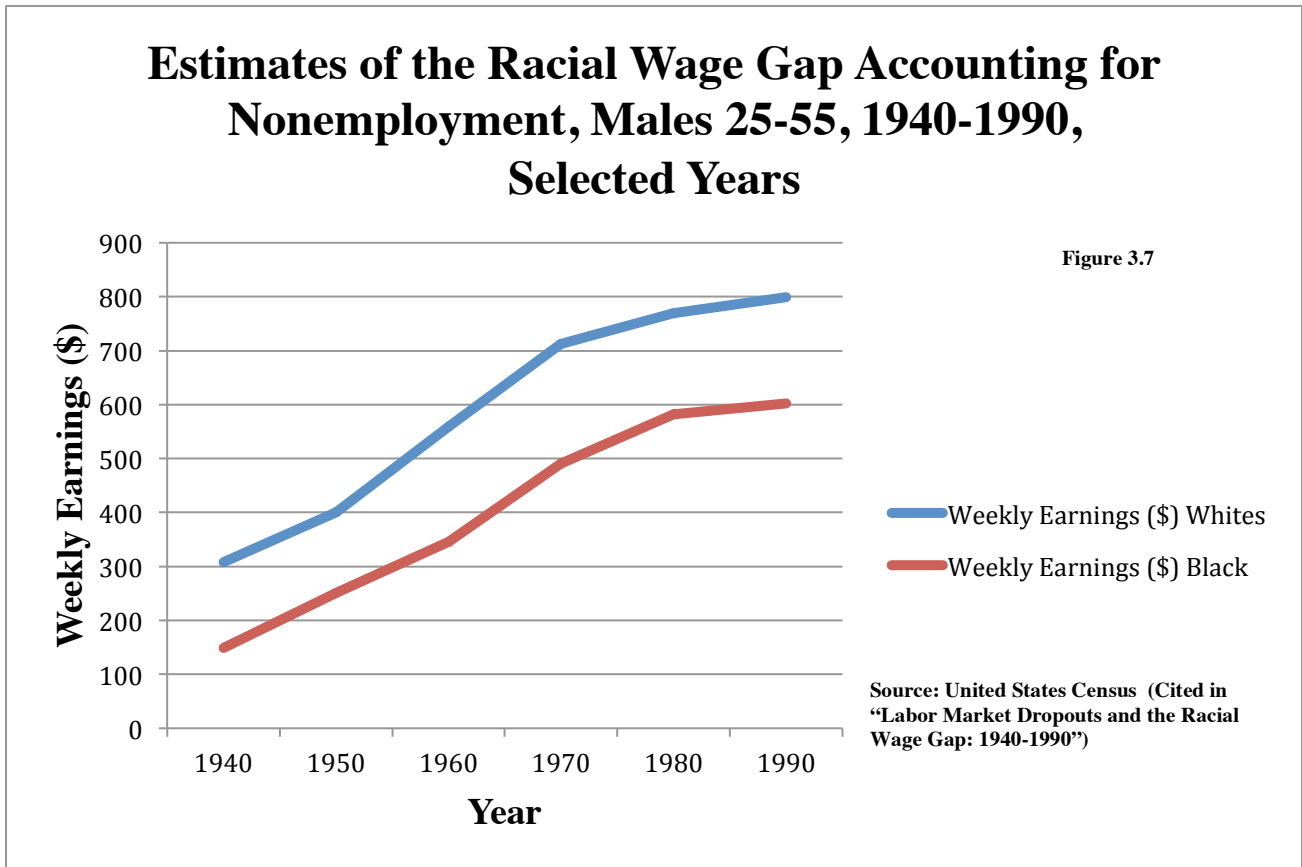
Figure 3.6

The success of the civil rights movement in terms of economic conditions is ambiguous because of divergent results within each specific economic area. For income, African Americans have seen significant improvements both in the short term, the years after the 1964 Civil Rights Act and in the long run, today. But these improvements were also followed by consistent improvements from whites. African American leaders sought not only black economic advancements but also greater economic equality. While black median family income as a share of white median family income did improve, it only improved slightly. A narrowing of the racial gap in income remains far from realization. The increase in black income is offset by the lack of an ability to close the racial equality gap. The 1964 Civil Rights Act was successful in improving black income but the failures of discrimination and years of oppression have made the act unable to override the persistent inferiority and subjugation in terms of income. I will next provide a

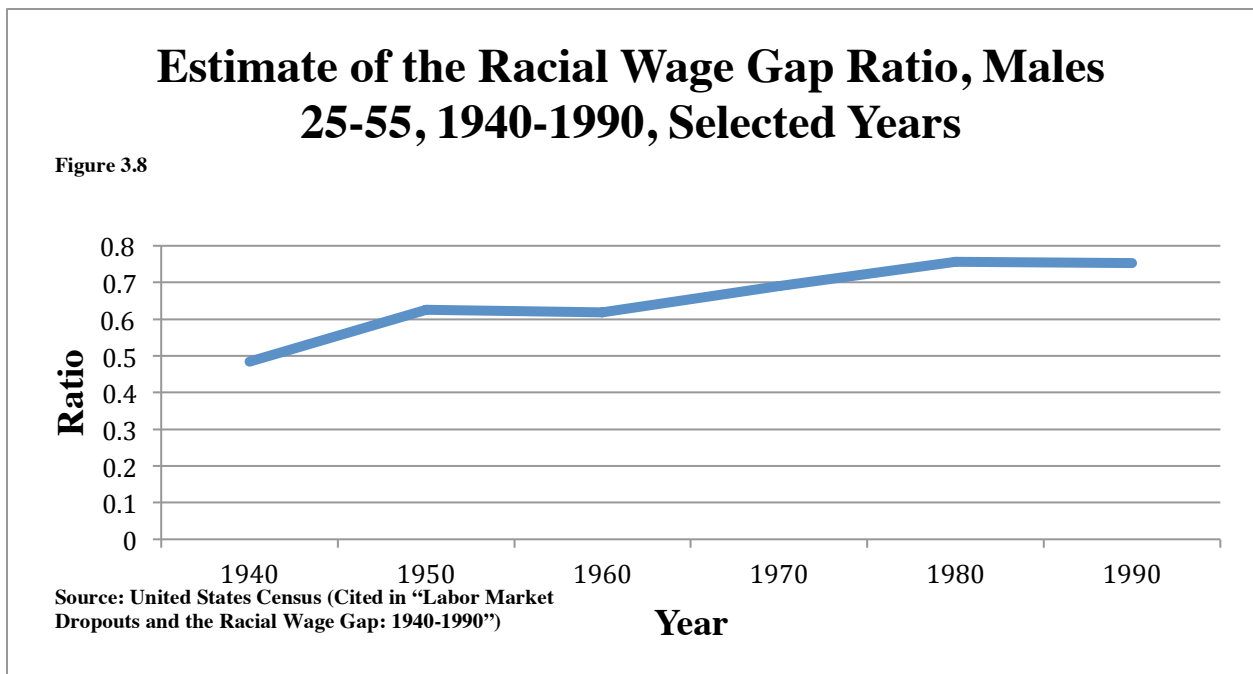
quick discussion and analysis of economic conditions in terms of wages and wages in comparison to whites.

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The low income of African Americans during and before the civil rights movement was a product of discrimination that left African Americans, when employed, in positions of low wages. African Americans were subjected to lower wages than whites, even in the same positions. Low wages as a result produced a low income that left many African Americans impoverished. While this section is a discussion of income, the story of the wages of African Americans deserves attention as well. The data I will present both shows the low start of African American wages, while showing the progress made. But the progress made is still overshadowed by the lack of a significantly decreasing racial and wage gap between African Americans and whites.



The graph on the previous page displays estimates of the racial wage gap, accounting for nonemployment, for males between the ages of 25 and 55 from 1940 to 1990. This data comes from the United States Census and was cited in an *American Economic Review* article “Labor-Market Dropouts and the Racial Wage Gap: 1940-1990” by Amitabh Chandra (2000). Wage data from the pre-civil rights era for African Americans is extremely limited. Therefore, this data will be our primary indicator of wages. While it may not paint the entire picture of wages, it provides a clear and concise estimate over the time period. In 1950, African Americans



were earning \$251 a week, as compared to whites earning \$401 a week. This discrepancy in wages produced a ratio of 0.626 of white earnings to black, as seen above. Twenty years later, six after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, this ratio expanded, despite higher weekly wages for African Americans. In 1970, African Americans improved to \$491 a week. This improvement does mark a rise in wages that as previously discussed with income, does show progress in the economic conditions of African Americans. But the rise of African American wages was

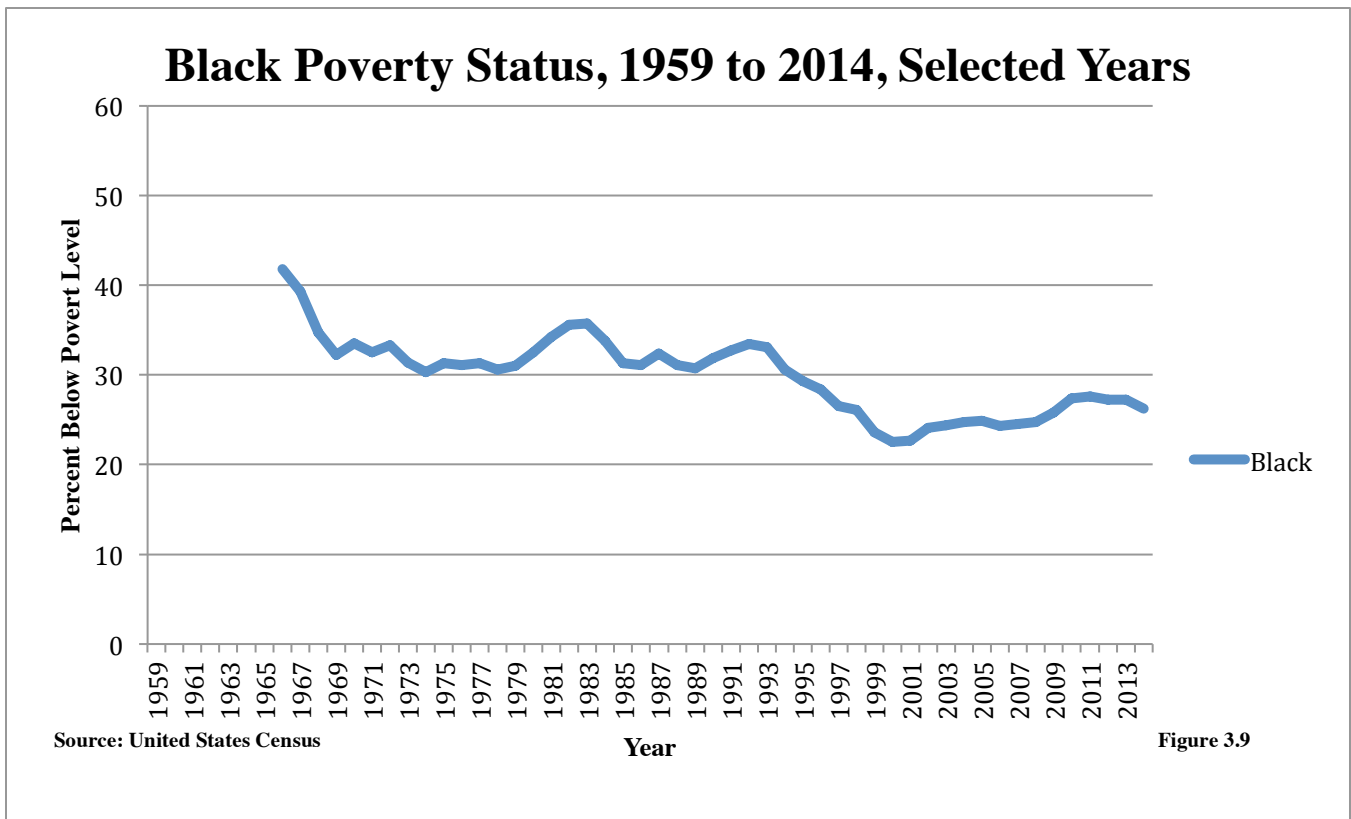
followed by a rise in whites as well. In 1970, whites increased their weekly wages to \$712 a week and the ratio grew larger to 0.69.

In the long run, African American wages grew even more. By 1990, their wages were increasing to \$602 a week. But the same increase in African American wages, occurred for whites as well. In 1990, white males age 25 to 55 were earning an estimated \$799 a week. The ratio of wage divide grew to 0.753. The data presented shows the same story that was seen in income. African Americans did earn higher economic conditions with the rise in weekly wages and total income. But the rise, both in the short run and the long run, was followed by an equal or greater rise by whites in the same areas. With an income gap insignificantly declining and an estimated wage gap increasing, economic equality has not been advanced. I will provide a final analysis of the progress made in African American economic conditions by evaluating the status of African American poverty.

### **III. Poverty**

The combination of unemployment and low income resulted in high rates of poverty among African Americans in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. African Americans were in low positions of society throughout the South and while gaining more economic leverage in the North, they were still disadvantaged. Even though a post World War II economy, poverty was still pervasive African Americans. A main focus of Lyndon B. Johnson's Presidency was the "Great Society" programs aimed at eradicating poverty among individuals and families (Tumulty 2014). Programs such as these and the 1964 Civil Rights Act helped produce change in terms of black poverty. First, I will analyze African American poverty rates in the years leading up to 1964. From there, I will establish African American poverty in the short run and immediately after the

1964 Civil Rights Act. Then I will establish and analyze African American poverty in the long run and its current status today. Finally, I will evaluate the advancements made in the poverty of African Americans by analyzing it in relation to the poverty rates of whites. Using the United States census, I display below, black poverty rates (all people) in the United States from 1959 until 2014. This poverty status is the percentage of people below the poverty level for that individual year. As I will argue, a significant decline in poverty status among all African Americans has occurred, both in the short run and in the long run. This decline in part can be attributed to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.



In 1959, a time in which black oppression was still rampant, African Americans faced a poverty rate of 55.1%. More than one of out every two African Americans was in poverty. African American poverty rates were high in both the North and South. As previously argued, unemployment was rampant because of the lack of the desire for white employers to hire African

American employees. Unable to find work and receive fair wages and income, African American poverty was widespread. But in 1966, only two years after the passing of the Civil Rights Act, African American poverty dropped nearly 14 percentage points, to a rate of 41.8%. Due to an absence of collected data between 1959 and 1966, these two years represent African American poverty pre and immediately post the 1964 Civil Rights Act. But it is clearly seen that after only a few years after the passage of an act, aimed at outlawing discrimination in the workplace against African Americans, the number of African Americans in poverty significantly declined.

It is evident that in the immediate aftermath of the act, the poverty status of African Americans did diminish. But even after the immediate effects, the short run status of African Americans improved as well. From 1966 until 1974, African American poverty status dropped another 11.5 percentage points, from 41.8% to 30.3%. In only 15 years, the percentage of African Americans who fell below the poverty level dropped nearly 25 percentage points. A rate that for years prior to the act had been increasing was now seeing a dramatic weakening. A dramatic decline such as this only occurs when significant factors are in play. Undoubtedly, a significant part of the story was the strong state of the overall economy. But the passage and enforcement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act also played a critical role in at least trying to help African Americans earn their fair share within society.

But to argue that economic conditions for African Americans improved simply because of the short run increase in poverty status would be faulty. Instead what is needed is a long run analysis of the poverty of African Americans. From the low of 30.3% in 1974, African American poverty status did not hit a new low until 1995, more than 20 years later, of 29.3%. But from 1995 until 2001, African American poverty status declined to an all time low of 22.7%. African Americans had seen a near 33 percentage point decline in poverty status over a more than 40-



year period. This significant decline is indicative of positive societal change and advancements in the economic conditions of African Americans. It is undeniable that African Americans, in terms of poverty, significantly improved. Both in the short run, immediately after the act, and in the long run, today, African Americans have seen the improvements that leaders such as James Farmer and Whitney Young hoped to see. The poverty status today floats around 27% but it is far better than the 55% endured in an oppressed, discriminated, pre Civil Rights Act world. But a mere isolated improvement in economic conditions was not all that African American leaders hoped for. As I will show next, an improvement in African American poverty also resulted in an increase in equality between whites and blacks.

The graph provided on the next page not only displays the African American poverty status, the percentage of people below the poverty level for a given year, but it also displays the poverty status of whites from 1959 to 2014. As previously stated, African Americans faced a 55% poverty rate in 1959. Whites on the other hand were 37% percentage points less, at a rate of 18.1%. White poverty status also declined after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Whites in 1965, a year after the act had passed, were at a poverty level of 11.3%. White poverty status had dropped nearly 7 percentage points in 7 years, despite an environment that was suppose to be aimed at helping African Americans. In the short run, whites had declined in poverty status too, just like African Americans. By 1974, whites were at a poverty level of 8.7%. But this 8.7% would be the low percentage of whites in poverty. From 1974 on, white poverty status fluctuated around 10% to 12%. In 2010, whites hit their highest rate of poverty in 45 years, at 13%. As I will argue, although whites always faced significantly lower rates of poverty than that of blacks, the gap in poverty status between African Americans and whites has declined. Although full equality between the two races in this area has not been achieved, the improvements made do

represent a success. A reduction in African American poverty and a smaller gap between the races were both things that civil rights leaders had hoped to achieve.

As previously argued, there was a 37% gap between the poverty status of African Americans and whites in 1959. But this 37% gap did not mark the highest percentage gap between the two races. Instead, it was in 1973, in which the ratio of black poverty status to

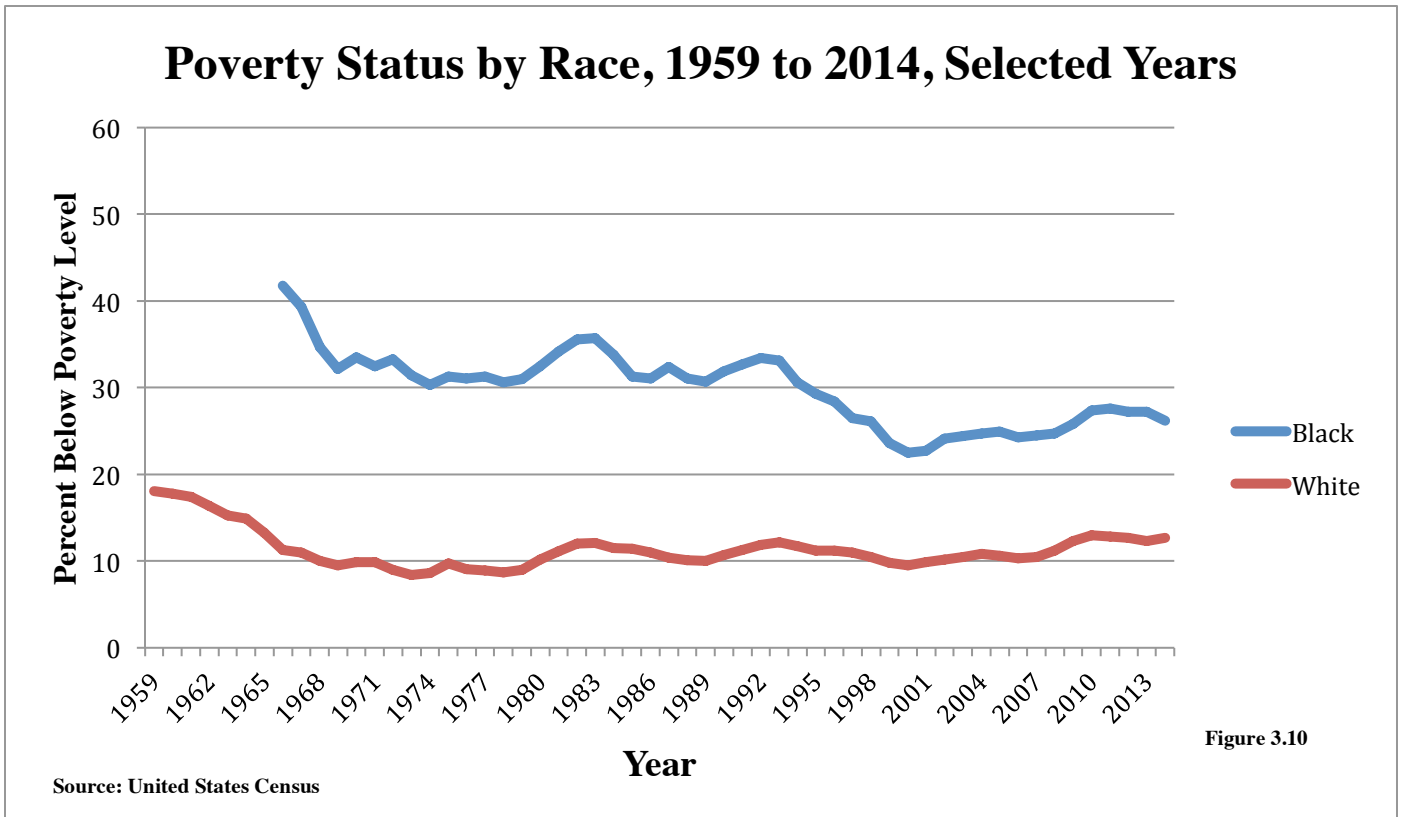
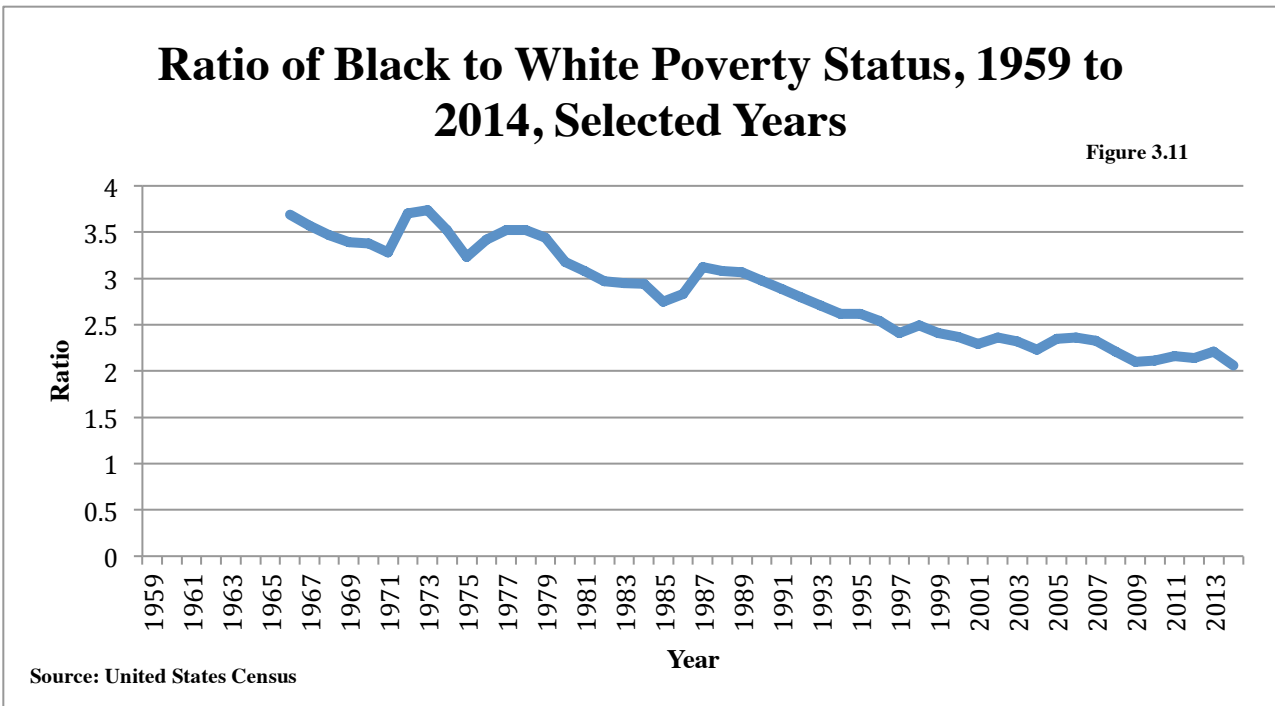


Figure 3.10

whites was 3.74, where African American poverty was at 41.8% and whites were at 11.3%. The next page displays this ratio from 1959 to 2014. As it appears, there is in fact a decline in the ratio. Despite a few peaks, overall from 1959 to 2014, there is a downward trend in the ratio of black poverty status to whites. The peak in 1973, is followed by a general decline in the gap

between African American and white poverty status. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did not create an immediate effect in terms of closing the gap in equality that civil rights leaders so badly wanted. Greater equality between whites and blacks would emerge over the long run. In 2014, the ratio between the two races hit its lowest point of 2.06. This marks a 1.68 drop in the ratio of black poverty status to whites. This narrowing of the gap, while not completely closed,



does show signs of improvement in race relations in America and the equality of the two races in terms of economic conditions.

African American poverty status did decline in both the short run and long run. Poverty rates among blacks fell immediately after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In the long run, African American poverty has declined by nearly 30 percentage points. Civil rights leaders sought out an improvement of African American economic conditions. The condition of poverty was definitely one of its successes. Even though white poverty status declined in this period as well, the gap between the two races in this condition has narrowed. Blacks do still hold a 2 to 1

ratio of poverty over whites but this is far better than the once 3.74 ratio. There is still much work needed to be done. But this significant decline cannot be ignored, as it represents advancements made. Both the goal of isolated improvement in economic conditions and relative improvement in economic conditions has been partially achieved as a result of the progress made in African American poverty in the United States.

....

As established by the primary sources of individual civil rights leaders, an improvement of African American economic conditions and African American economic conditions relative to whites was greatly desired. Within this chapter, I analyzed United States Census data in order to argue African American economic conditions in terms of unemployment, poverty, and income and wages over time. I established these conditions before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in the short term after, and in the long run. Through the data, it is a bit ambiguous as to whether or not civil rights leaders goals were achieved. African American unemployment did not significantly improve and whites consistently hold better positions in the job market. But the poverty status of African Americas has improved and so has the gap between whites and blacks. Finally, African American income and wages have increased but the equality between the two races in these terms has not. Therefore, it is unclear if the goals established by civil rights leaders have been truly achieved in this area. But I can conclude that for the most part, economically, African Americans are in an inferior position to that of whites today, as they were, before and during the civil rights movement. But an improvement in economic conditions was not the only goal of the movement. I will next examine the progress made in voting due to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

## **Chapter 4: Voting**

The right to vote was the most critical and vital goal of the civil rights movement. African Americans in the South faced many obstacles, both legal and extra-legal, to exercising their constitutional right to vote. They were constantly intimidated and threatened to stop them from registering to vote. The presence of the Klu Klux Klan, the implementation of poll taxes and grandfather clauses, and the use of literacy tests all prevented African Americans from voting. In 1961, the United States Commission on Civil Rights stated that “there are many counties in the South where a substantial Negro population not only has no voice in government, but suffers extensive deprivation—legal, economic, educational, and social” (United States Commission: Voting 1961 5). But the extent was beyond many counties. The right to vote was so important in that once it could be achieved and unthreatened, African Americans would have the ability to productively create change. They would have the ability to elect leaders who would further support their cause. Ultimately, “Black voter registration and political participation gradually became the movement’s dominant vehicle for implementation of its legislative agenda” (Guinier 1991 1082). These efforts culminated into one of the major successes of the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement was crucial in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. These acts drastically changed African Americans ability to vote.

In this chapter, I will provide data on the African American electorate including participation and registrations rates in order to show the effect that the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act had on African Americans ability to voice their opinion. I will examine the impact of these acts and the movement on African Americans both in the short run and in the long run. I will also identify to what extent the racial gap in voting equality has changed. Finally, I will provide a discussion of African American congressional and political representation. While

not an explicit goal of the movement, the importance of electing black political leaders to the goal of voting rights is undeniable. Not only was voting the most important goal but it is also the one in which we clearly and undoubtedly see the most progress made and therefore, a dramatic indicator of the degree of the success of the Civil Rights Movement.

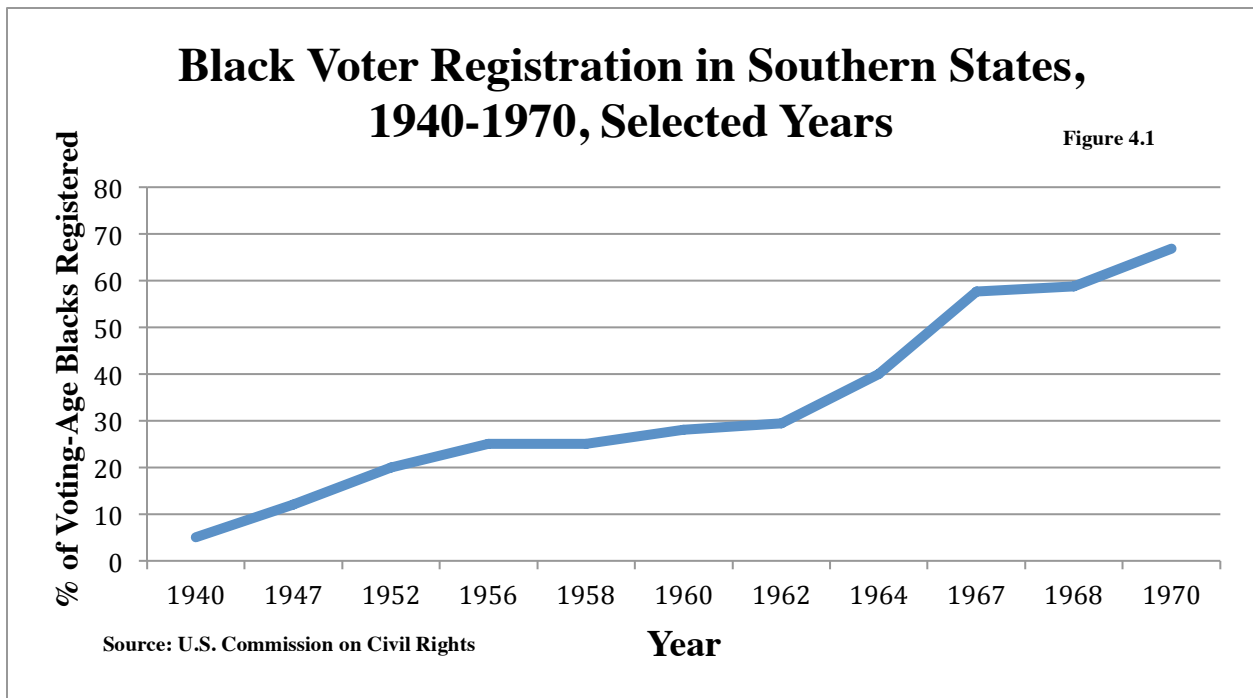
## **I. Registration and Participation**

The Deep South during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was an area of great hostility to African Americans and great discrimination. Aside from the consistent violence and pervasive segregation, the African American right to vote, even to register to vote was greatly restricted. African Americans in the North had begun to vote more, still not matching white participation, but the Deep South remained entirely resistant to the progress of African Americans constitutional right to vote. A right guaranteed by the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments of the United States Constitution was far from enforced. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, as previously examined in relation to African American economic conditions, symbolically provided African Americans with an elimination of discrimination in this area. But its actual effect was far from successful. It was not until the 1965 Voting Rights Act that African Americans in the Deep South would first gain voting rights to vote unfettered by legal obstacles and societal intimidation. The vision of the leaders of the civil rights movement saw a path to black empowerment through basic enfranchisement. The ability to cast a ballot was seen as the foundation for political action that could create effective social change and would lead the advancement of a progressive agenda (Guinier 1991 1081). I will first display pre- Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act voting conditions for African Americans and then argue the changes that have occurred from that point on.

The lack of voter registration and participation for African Americans in the South and in America in general was the result of both public policy and societal discrimination and violence. Based on data from *Black Politics: A Theoretical and Structural Analysis* by Hanes Walton Jr. and as cited in *The Voting Rights Act of 1965: Background and Overview* by Kevin Coleman, the percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote in the South was extremely low. In Alabama in 1956, early on in the movement, only 11% of voting age African Americans were registered to vote (Coleman 2015). Sixteen years earlier, in 1940, in the entire state of Alabama, only 2,000 African Americans were registered to vote (Deskins, Hanes, Puckett 2012). In Mississippi, only 5% were registered (Coleman 2015). Out of eleven southern states, most included within the Deep South, the highest percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote in 1956 was in Texas, with 37% (Coleman 2015). Not even 4 out of 10 African Americans, of legal age, were able to cast a ballot in 1956 in Texas; the high point in the South. This remarkably low voter registration level was due to (1), states' ability to implement voter restriction requirements upon its citizens, specifically black citizens, and (2), white America's relentless determination to prevent African Americans from voting. "In some 100 counties in eight Southern States there is reason to believe that Negro citizens are prevented—by outright discrimination or by fear of physical violence or economic reprisal—from exercising the right to vote" (United States Commission: Voting 1961 5). This statement was an underrepresentation of the obstacles African Americans faced.

Before the passage of the two Civil Rights legislations in 1964 and 1965, African American voter registration was nearly nonexistent in the South. As seen by the figure on the next page, from 1940 until 1962, African American voter registration in selected Southern states, combined and averaged, reached a maximum voter registration level of 29.4% for voting age

African Americans. This data is based on the United States Commission on Civil Rights as cited in Gerald Rosenberg's *Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change*. In 1940 only 5% of voting age African Americans were registered to vote in Southern states. It took 22 years to gain a near 25% increase in voter registration. But from 1964 to 1967, an only three-year span, after both the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, black voter registration surged from 40% to 57.6%. By 1970, African American voter registration in southern states had increased to 66.9%. Black voter registration, in six years, had increased nearly 27 percentage points. While voter registration was beginning to increase before the legislation had been passed, its increase nowhere near matched the drastic rise in the short span it did after the acts were passed. It took 22 years to increase a little over 24 percentage points. But it took only six years after the acts passage to surpass that total. The number of African Americans in the South registered to vote increased more than 1.5 million in that six-year span.



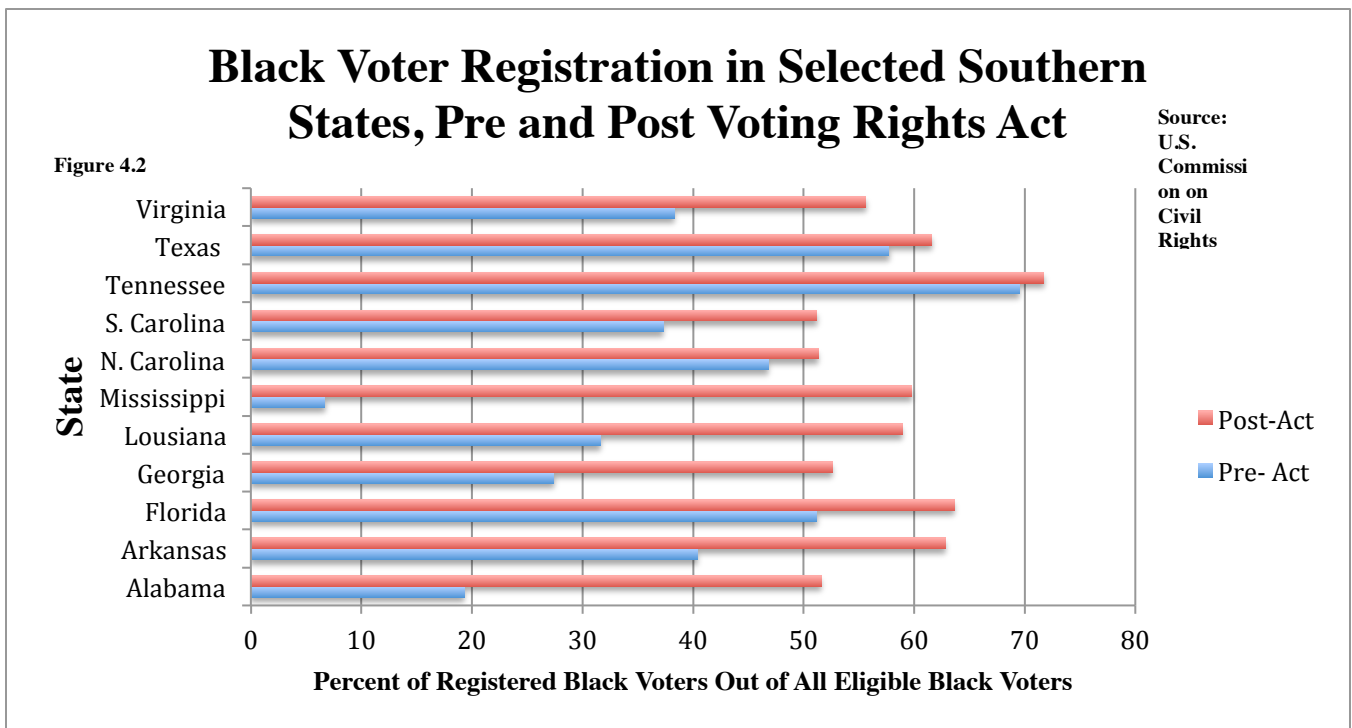


In contrast from the 11% voter registration in Alabama, as previously cited by Walton Jr. and Coleman, in 1966, voter registration had increased to 51.2% (Coleman 2015). In only 10 years, the percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote had increased four-fold. In Mississippi, the previous 5% in 1956 had increased almost seven-fold in 1966 to 32.9% (Coleman 2015). In Tennessee, voter registration reached a peak in 1966 of 71.7% (Coleman 2015). These astounding increases in voter registration occurred in some of the most hostile, segregated, and racist states in America. These changes came after the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act facilitated registration by supplanting the authority of local registrars (Timpone 1995 426). At one point where local registrars could deny African Americans the right to vote through a variety of techniques, the Voting Rights Act aimed at eliminating this injustice. While the Voting Rights Act of 1965 alone cannot be indicated as the sole reason for increased black registration, it is clear that it was a major factor in the surge in black voter registration, specifically in the South.

Before the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act were passed, African Americans were registered to vote at low rates. The combination of the two acts provided African Americans with the legal ability to an unthreatened vote as well as the federal enforcement necessary to deter voter intimidation. In the figure provided on the next page, specific Southern states are shown, highlighting the rates of black voter registration within each state, before the Voting Rights Act and after the Voting Rights Act. There is a clear and stark improvement between the two registration levels. In the figure, pre Voting Rights Act includes 1963 and 1964 voter levels, while the post voting rights act includes registration from 1966 and 1967. These registration levels are determined by the percentage of registered black voters out of all eligible black voters. As the 1956 and 1966 totals from states such as Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee showed

the drastic improvements, this graph directly shows immediate pre and post act changes in order to really narrow in on the cause of the change. For example, in Georgia in December of 1962, there was only a 27.4% registration rate. By the summer of 1966, less than 4 years later, registration increased by more than 20 percentage points to a rate of 52.6%. Such improvements are the result of multiple influences. One was the desire of African Americans to register and exercise their right to vote. As well, the Voting Rights Act provided channels for black people to vote and to vote in an environment conducive to non-violence. The Voting Rights Act provided the opportunity for African Americans to vote, which they then seized.

Years later, the Voting Rights Act would ultimately result in the creation of what are known as “majority-minority districts.” In essence, a majority of the “minority” must be represented within a district (Timpone 1995 425). This in turn resulted in what has been seen as more fair and equal representations of African Americans, affecting not just participation but the outcomes of congressional elections, As well, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided the ability to use federal enforcement in order to override the discrimination that was occurring in a



majority of southern states and towns. With federal enforcement, federal registrars were provided in which specific examination of voting equality was analyzed. It is quite conclusive that as a result of the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, counties and states in which federal enforcement and examination was implemented, voting registration of African Americans increased.

According to the United States Commission on Civil Rights as cited in *The African American Electorate* by Donald Deskins, Sherman Puckett, and Hanes Walton, from August 6, 1965 to September 25, 1965, in the state of Alabama, the counties that were examined recorded 21,445 new African American voting registrations after the Voting Rights Act compared to all other Alabama counties combined totaling only 12,040 new registrations. The new African American registrations in Alabama constituted 64% from the examiner counties compared to only 36% from all other counties. While the case of new African American voter registration might be most clear in Alabama, it still holds in other southern states such as Louisiana and Mississippi. Despite Louisiana and Mississippi having greater registration totals in non-examined counties, the number of non-examined counties is far greater than those examined. As a result, the increase in examiner counties is more impactful than the ones in non-examiner counties.

While the immediate effects of the civil rights legislation are clear, as argued and supported by the data, its legacy goes deeper. I will examine both the short run effect of the two pieces of civil rights legislation and the long run effect, as well. The graph on the next page not only shows pre 1965 Voting Rights Act and post Voting Rights Act data in selected Southern states but it also shows an estimate of 1971-1972 African American voter registration rates. While Georgia experienced a significant increase immediately after the passage of the Voting

Rights Act of 1965, the increase did not stop there. By 1971, Georgia’s African American voting registration estimate was estimated to be around 67.8%. Voting registration rates in Georgia had increased another 15.2% in around 6 years. Voter registration for African Americans did not stop improving in the years after the legislation’s enforcement. Voting registration in the ten years after the Voting Rights Act saw improvements that civil rights leaders hoped would continue to occur. As well, the gap in black and white voting registration improved. But first, I will analyze voting trends for African Americans in the long run and in today’s setting using voting rates in both Presidential and Congressional elections up until 2014.

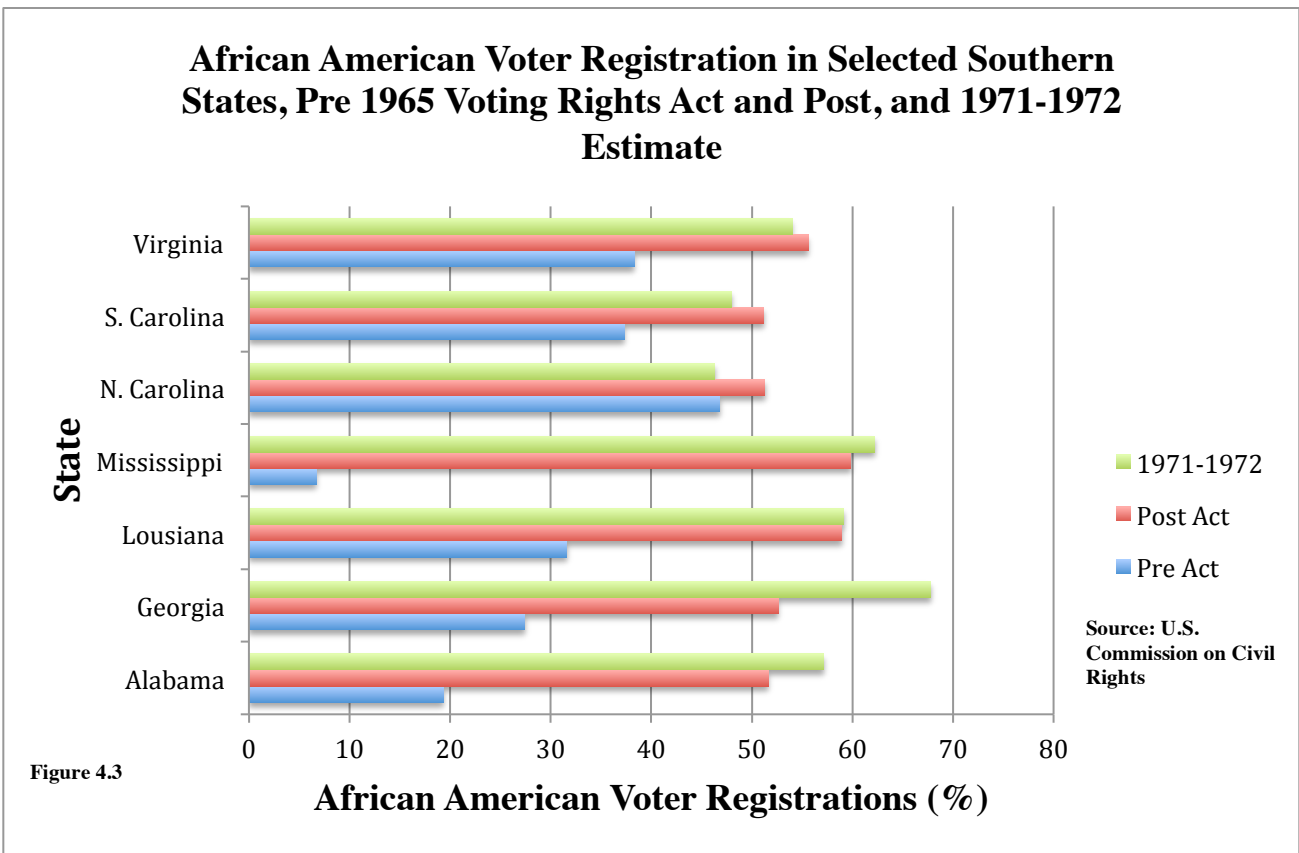
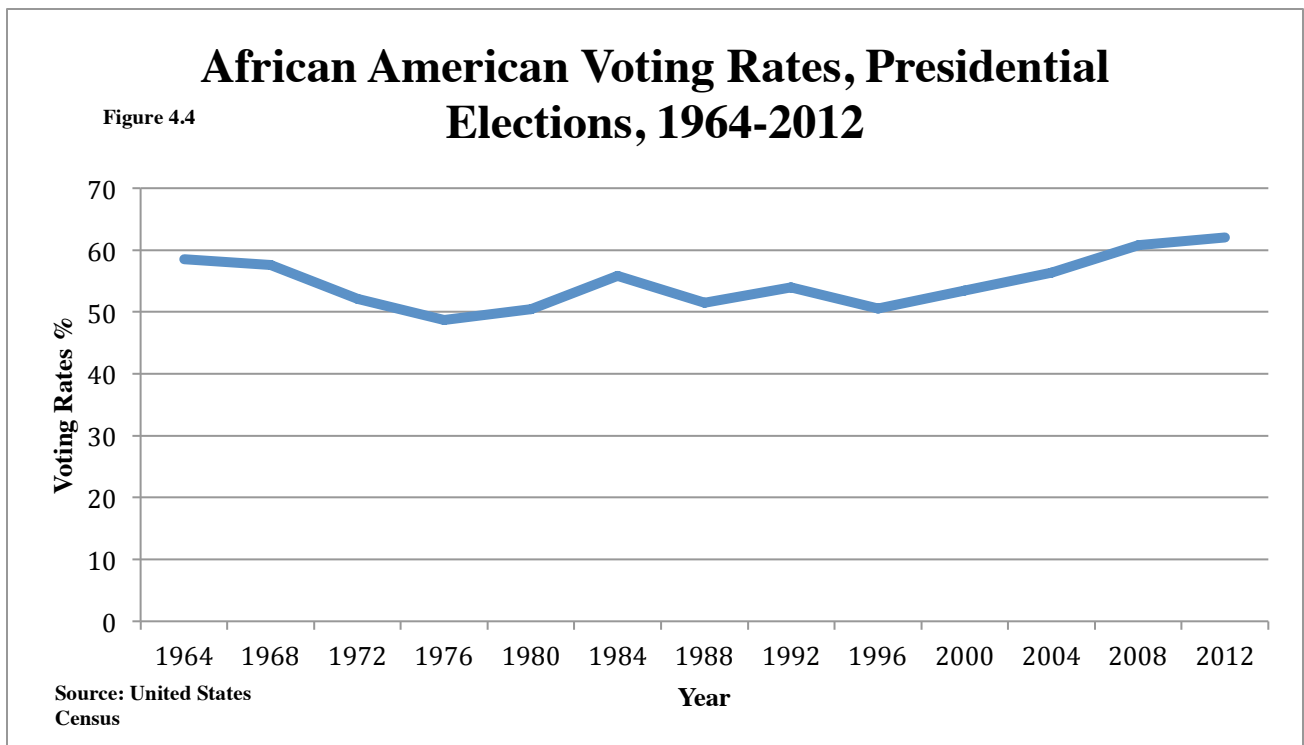


Figure 4.3

The drastic improvements shown in the previous paragraphs merely represent the quick success of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. They display the initial gains and achievements of the acts without capturing the longer historical trends. In order to capture

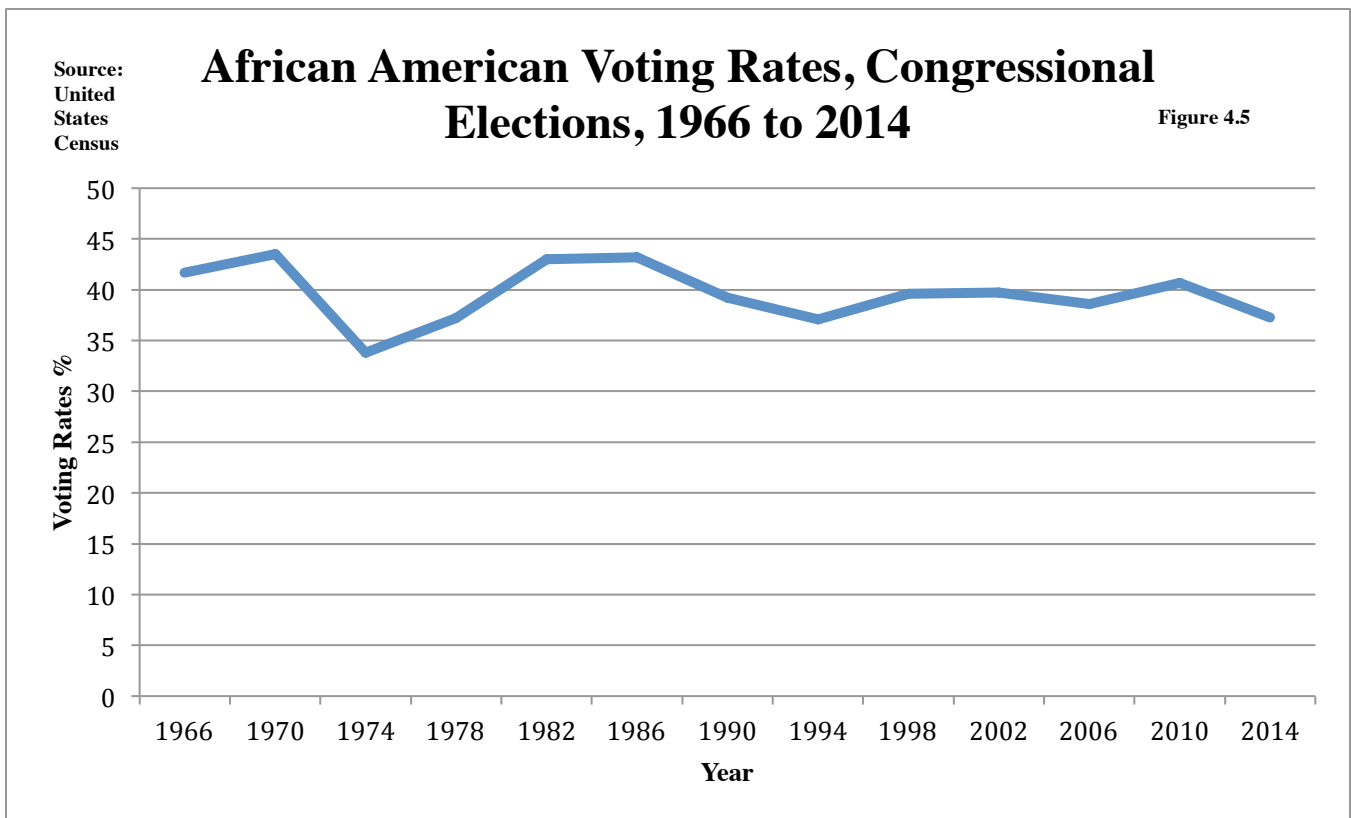
the overall success of the civil rights movement and specifically voting, more recent data is needed in order to assess the long-term changes. Therefore, I will provide changes in voter registration and participation in recent years and over a larger period of time in order to evaluate the effect these acts had and the overall achievements of the movement itself. Provided is a graph of the reported voting rates of African Americans from 1964 to 2012 in presidential elections. Also provided, on the next page, is a graph of African American voting rates from 1966 to 2014 in Congressional elections. This data is not limited to just the South but rather the country as a whole. This data will be our indicator of the long-term improvements made in the field of African American voting rights.



African American reported voting at different rates in presidential and congressional elections but for reasons common to the overall voting population regardless of race. Drastic improvements were made after the passage of civil rights legislation. In 1968, two and three

years after the acts, African American voting rates for the nation as a whole in presidential elections were 57.6%. This rate would be the peak voting rate for African Americans until 2008, in which the first African American, Barack Obama, would be elected President. In 2008, the Presidential African American voting rate was 60.8% and four years later, in President Obama's reelection bid, it increased to 62%. In the 1966 congressional election the African American voting percentage was at 41.7%. By 1974, it had declined to 33.8% and by 2010, it had returned to its consistent rate of 40.7%.

Voting rates are higher in general for presidential elections than for midterm or congressional elections. More people consistently come out to vote for the President rather than



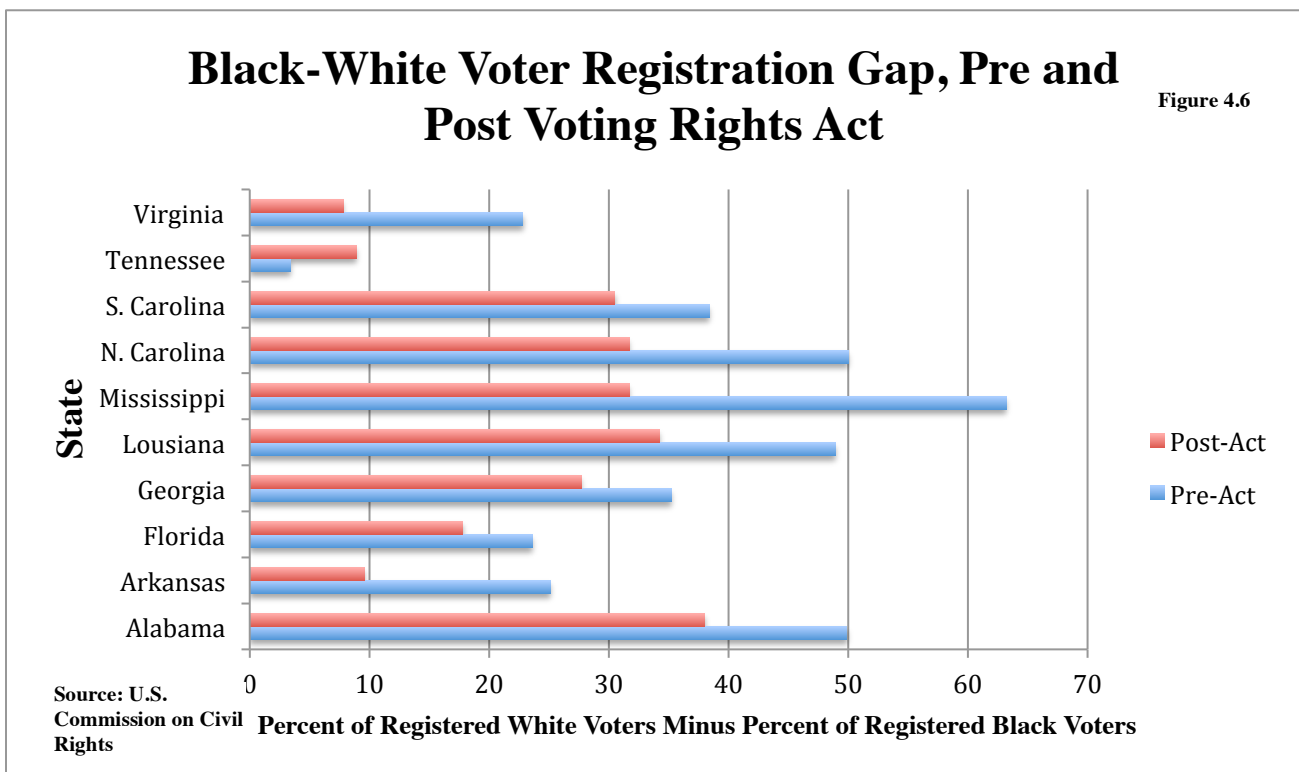
for congressional candidates. As a result, the discrepancy of about 20 percentage points or so, is due to American tendencies to vote more frequently and in higher percentages during presidential years rather than congressional or midterm years. As well, the lack of a substantial

improvement from post act rates to today is not the result of an inability of the legislation and movement to have a long-term effect on African Americans and the United States. Once an unobstructed voting ability was implemented and enforced, African Americans came out to the polls in extremely strong numbers, as seen by the post act data. But once enforced and implemented, the restrictions that once plagued African Americans and the violence that had prevented them from voting were no longer an obstacle. Voting rates immediately after the acts and about 10 years after implementation represent the normal and average expected voting rates for African Americans. The increase in presidential voting rates in 2008 does not mark a decline in voter oppression but rather a response to an African American candidate. A dream that civil rights leaders probably couldn't have even imagined, had now been achieved.

African Americans in isolated terms did not exhibit great changes in the long run in voting rates. But this was not a result of discrimination and oppression. African Americans after these pieces of legislation did not face the harsh oppression that they did before their passage, as seen by the drastic improvements immediately after the acts passage. The consistency of voting rates for African Americans in the long run is merely a representation of an average Americans desire to cast a ballot. While the isolated numbers don't show as stark improvements as did immediate post act data, the gap in white and black voting equality in both the short run and long run provides a more telling story for the overall effects of the legislation, the goal of voting, and the civil rights movement. Both in the short run and today, African American voting equality has been dramatically narrowed, to a point in which African Americans actually exceeded whites in voting rates. This huge decline in voting inequality, immediate post act changes, and significant African American voting rates represents the true success of the civil rights legislation and the civil rights movement. I will first show the gap and ratio of voting inequality before the signing

of the 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Voting Rights Act. I will then analyze the changes immediately after the acts. I will also show how the long run analysis of white and black voting rates displays the achievement of the acts and the movement more than the isolated voting numbers for African Americans in the long run.

Whites obviously did not face the discrimination that African Americans did. They were able to cast a ballot with ease, as should have any American citizen. As a result, their voting rates are based on their desire to go out and elect government officials. This inequality between whites and blacks is clearly expressed in the data below. The graph shown is based off of the previously

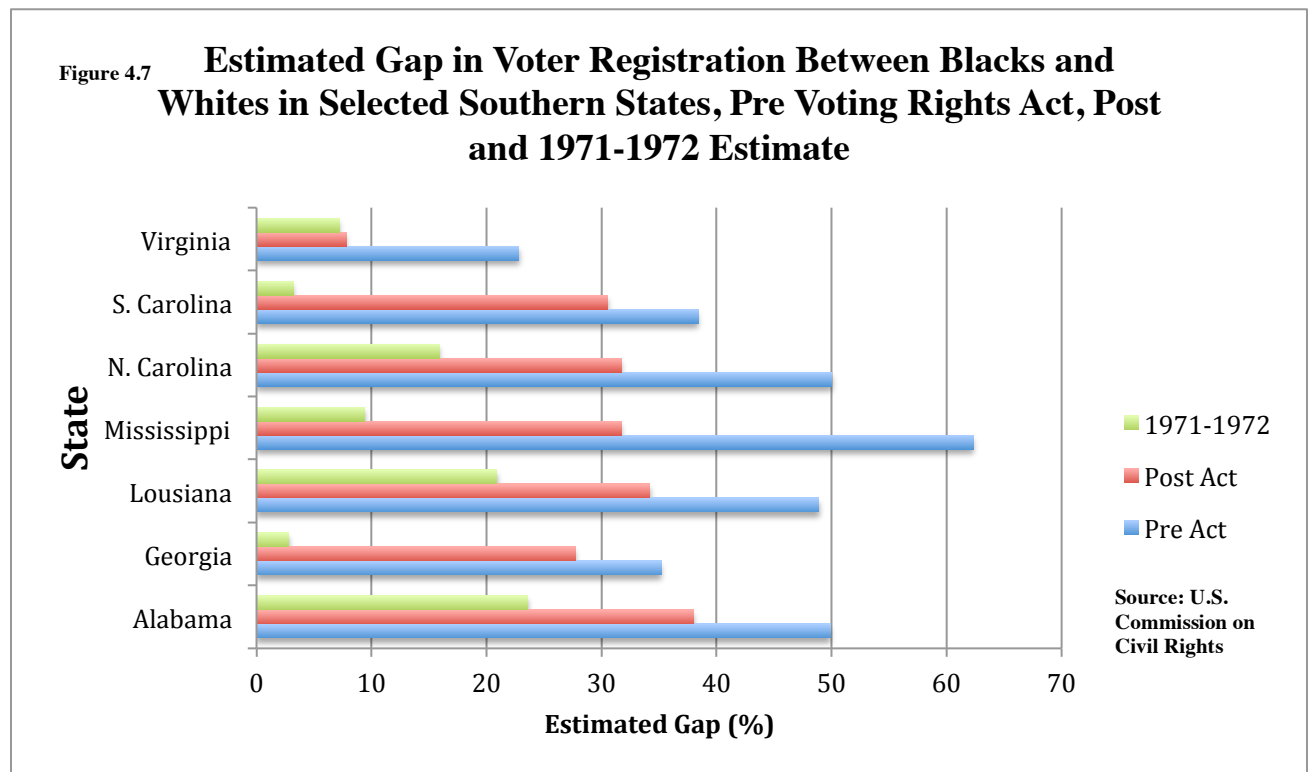


displayed chart “Black Voter Registration in Selected Southern States, Pre and Post Voting Rights Act.” But instead what is shown is the gap in white-black voter registration pre and post Voting Rights Act. This data clearly displays a significant decline in the voter registration inequality between African Americans and whites. As argued before, black voter registration



severely increased after the acts passage. But this data shows how not only the increase affected African Americans alone but how the increase influenced equality between the two races.

In Alabama, there was a 49.9% gap in voter registration, pre Voting Rights Act, between whites and blacks. Following the acts implementation, the gap declined to 38%. In Mississippi a once 63.2% gap declined to 31.7%. These major declines in voting gaps occur in almost every Southern state after the enforcement and signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Louisiana, Arkansas, and Virginia all declined around 15 percentage points and North Carolina declined 18.3 percentage points. These states were some of the most segregated and discriminated against states in the entire country, let alone the Deep South. This is the result of an oppressed race now

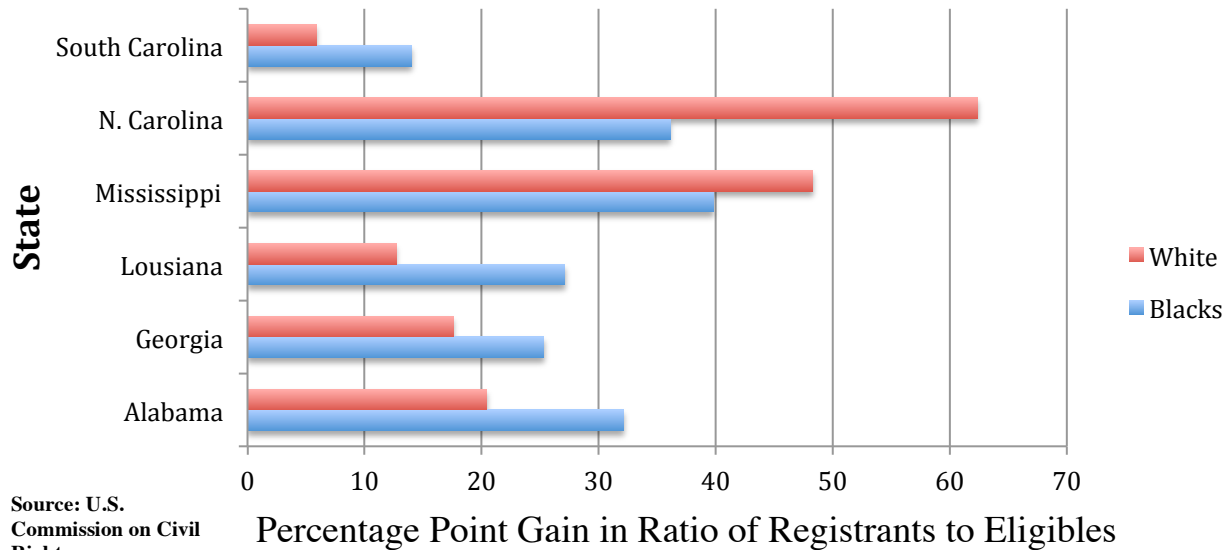


being afforded not only the opportunity but also the constitutionally guaranteed right to exercise their freedom to vote in a safe environment. But even more significant is the decline that occurred later on down the road.

By 1971-1972, it was estimated that Alabama's gap in voter registration between African Americans and whites had dropped from 38%, post act, to 23.6%. Georgia had dropped an astounding 28 percentage points from 27.7% to a mere 2.8% estimate by 1971. South Carolina declined more than 27 percentage points from 30.5% to 3.2%. The drastic improvements in voter registration inequality in the Deep South that were seen immediately after the Voting Rights Act were surpassed several years later. As time progressed, enforcement of the act became more common and more institutionalized. Voting rights became engrained in the American political system for both whites and African Americans. The graph on the next page displays the gains in the ratio of registered voters to eligible voters, both African American and white, before and after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It is significant in that while not only African Americans were registering to vote at a higher rate than before, but also they were registering to vote more than whites. In Alabama, the percentage increase of registered voters to eligible voters from pre act to post act was 32.1 percentage points, while whites only increased 20.4 percentage points. In South Carolina, the increase was 14.9 percentage points for African Americans, compared to only 5.9 percentage points for whites. These changes in both inequality gaps and ratios of registered voters display how throughout the immediate post act and short run era, African Americans not only registered in astounding numbers, but registered in higher rates than whites, attributing to a decline in the racial voting gap. But as I will show next, the long run picture of this voting gap truly displays the progress made in this major goal of civil rights leaders during the 1950s and 1960s.

## Gains in Ratio of Registered Voters to Eligible Voters by Race Before and After the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Figure 4.8



While I previously argued that the long run isolated picture of African American voting rates was not fully conclusive of their progress, the data I will show next displays the elimination of voting inequality. On the next page are graphs of reported voting rates, both white and black, for presidential elections from 1964 to 2012 and congressional elections from 1966 to 2014. In 1968, white presidential election voting rates were 69.1%, while blacks were 57.1%. In 1968, throughout the entire country, there was a 12% gap between African American and white presidential voting rates. In congressional elections in 1966, white voting rates were 57% and African American voting rates were 41.7%, a 15.3% gap. Today, there exists no voter intimidation, no unfair voter restriction requirements, and no negative African American gap in voting. In fact, African Americans in 2008, in the presidential election of Barack Obama, surpassed white voting rates, 60.8% to 59.6%. This increased to 62% and 57.6% in 2012. African Americans overpassing whites in voting rates did not occur in congressional elections as well but the gap has surely declined. In 2010, white voting rates were 43.4%, while African

Figure 4.9

### Reported Voting Rates by Race, Presidential Elections, 1964-2012

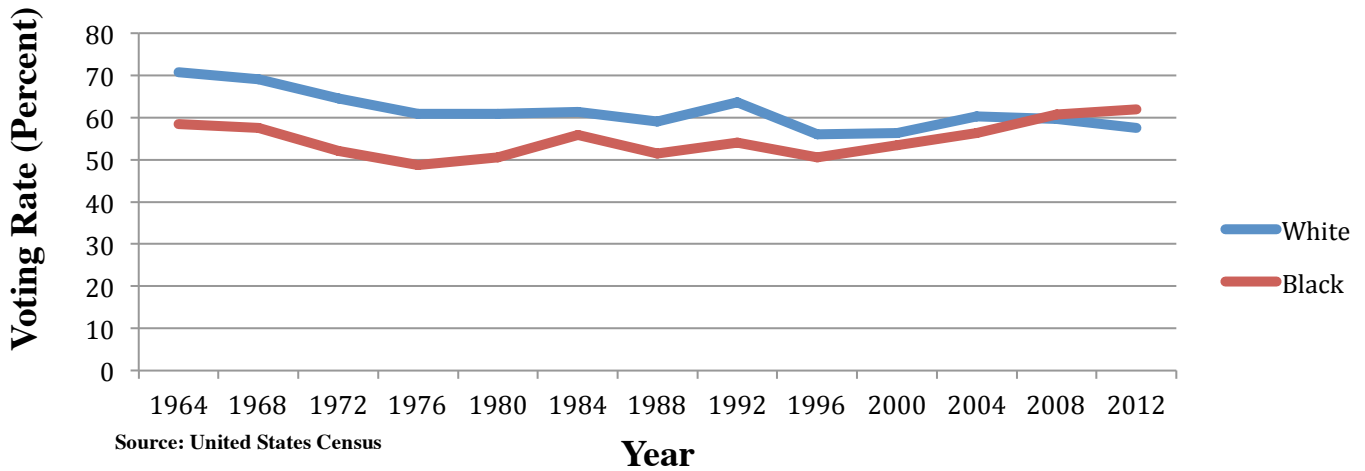
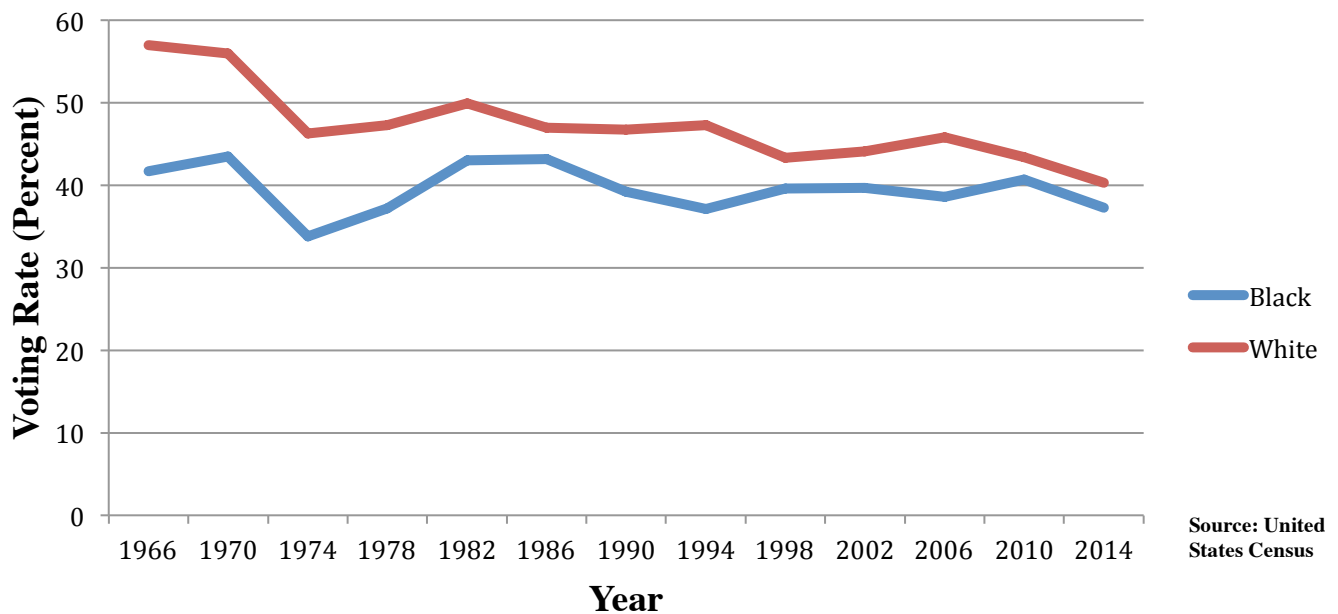


Figure 4.10

### Reported Voting Rates by Race, Congressional Elections, 1966-2014



American voting rates were only 2.7% behind, at 40.7%. Both representations of African American and white voting rates in presidential and congressional elections show the drastic

decline and eliminated inequality between the two races in terms of voting and voting rights. The fact that African American voting rates at one point, throughout the entire United States, surpassed white voting rates, displays the true success of the civil rights movement. African American voting rights and voting equality has been achieved.

In this section, I first provided data from before the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act of African American voting registration. Voting was beginning to increase but was still very low in the North and even lower in the South. I then showed how the civil rights movement and civil rights legislation helped to provide significant changes in African American voting. I argued this both in the short run and in the long run. From there, I then provided data to assess how the gap in voting inequality between whites and black drastically changed after the enforcement of the legislation and how today, the inequality is nonexistent. The efforts of the civil rights movement that helped to produce federal change created safe and free voting for African Americans. While the progress of economic conditions for African Americans was unclear, the goal of voting and voting equality has clearly and undeniably been a success. Next, I will provide a brief discussion on how this voting ability of African Americans has helped to create positive change in the area of black congressional representation. While black congressional representation is not proportionate to white, it is becoming more proportionate to the population of African Americans in the United States.

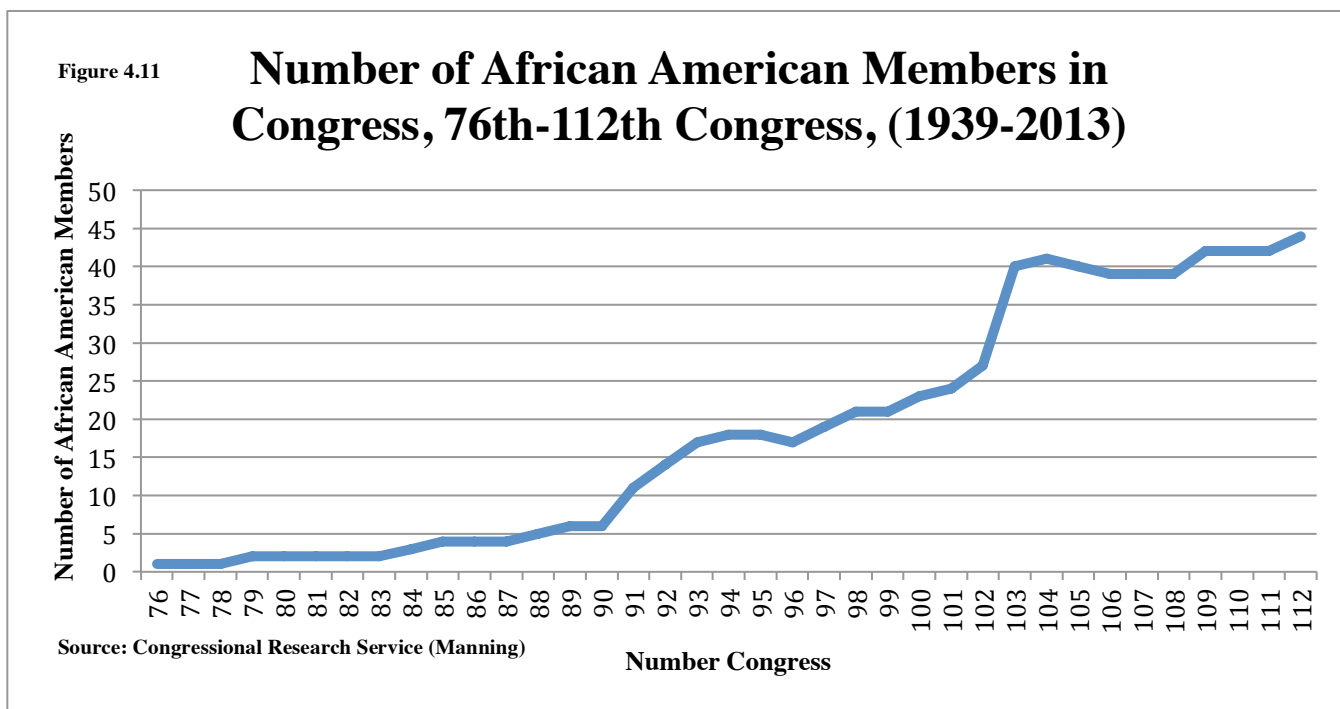
## **II. Congressional and Political Representation**

Although not explicitly a goal of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, black congressional representation was a beneficial consequence of the unthreatened African American ability to vote. Black congressional representation was all but invisible all the way up to the late

1960s. When blacks were unable to vote, they were unable to elect black officials to office. The rare instances when blacks had the ability to run for office, they were always defeated as a result of an all white electorate. As soon as blacks were provided with an undeterred vote, the number of black officials grew. As I will show next, the level of black congressional representation of today would undoubtedly be perceived as a success by the civil rights leaders of the 1950s and 1960s. While the number of African American members of Congress might not match the number of white members of Congress, the growth seen since the early 1960s and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, represents true progress. To exceed a white total that has amassed for more than 200 years in only 50 years would be unrealistic. Instead, steady growth and a representation becoming more proportionate to the African American population seems to display an overall success and realization of civil rights movement leaders visions.

To argue for black congressional representation was beyond civil rights leaders tasks. Black congressional representation would not occur until voting had been secured. Therefore, even though it might not have been mentioned prominently in activists' speeches and plans during the civil rights movement, civil rights leaders believed that in time, if voting could be achieved, so could African American representation within Congress. But leaders did know that "political empowerment (was) a vehicle for mobilizing the black community, articulate a black social and economic agenda, and electing both authentic black and responsive white officials" (Guinier 1991 1084). The graph on the next page displays the number of African Americans in Congress, both the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate, from 1939 to 2013. In the 88<sup>th</sup> Congress (1963-1965), there were only five African American members; all in the House of Representatives and all of who were from Northern states (Manning 2012). This

Congress was responsible for both the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. By the 91<sup>st</sup> Congress (1969 to 1971), after the civil rights movement and after all major civil rights legislation, the five African American members increased to 11. While not a huge surge, six more African American members of Congress in a 4-year span are significant. From 1939 to 1953, there had been a total, in 24 years, of 11 African American members. All five original members from the 88<sup>th</sup> Congress were reelected plus six more African American members in that 1969 alone.

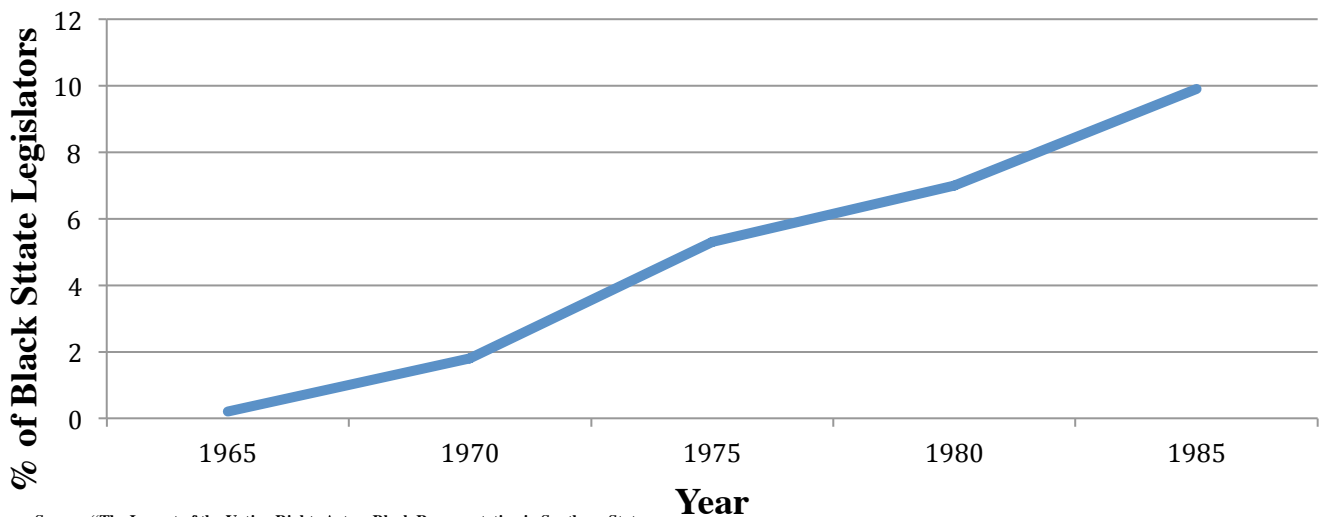


The number of African American members of Congress has seen a steady increase since the implementation of the civil rights legislation. By the 98<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1983, African American members had reached 21 members. Ten years later, the 103<sup>rd</sup> United States Congress, in 1993, African American members of Congress reached 40, with an African America member in the Senate; such hadn't occurred since 1977. Finally, in 2013, the 112<sup>th</sup> United States Congress, the

number of African American members reached its peak of 44 members. Even white members are still overrepresented relative to the white share of the population, the steady increase in African American representation seen since the passage of civil rights legislation, marks an opening of political doors and opportunities, just as in voting. African American members, unlike the pre civil rights period, have begun to take positions of leadership within Congress. Representative James E. Clyburn, a Democrat of South Carolina, served as the House majority whip in the 110<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 2007-2013 (Manning 2012 5). John Lewis, an individual, as previously discussed for being responsible for the progress of the civil rights movement, has served as the Democratic senior chief deputy whip since 2003 (Manning 2012 5). In addition, the Congressional Black Caucus was organized in order to advance African American goals and rights (Manning 2012 6). Aspects such as African American congressional leadership and a congressional black caucus did not exist prior to the passage of the civil rights legislation.

Figure 4.12

### Black Legislators as a Percentage of All State Legislators in the South, 1965-1985, Selected Years



Source: "The Impact of the Voting Rights Act on Black Representation in Southern State Legislatures"



Even in state legislators, specifically in the South, the number of African Americans has grown since the acts' passage. In the data on the previous page, the "South" includes Virginia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina and South Carolina. In 1965, black legislators as a percentage of all state legislators in the South was at 0.2%, 3 members total. By 1970, there were 32 black Southern state legislators. In 1975, black legislators represented 5.3% of all state legislators in the South and constituted 94 members. By 1985, 9.9% of Southern state legislators were African American, a total of 176 members. These changes do mark substantial progress in African American political representation. Taken from a previous graph, "Number of African American Members in Congress," in 1963, only 0.9% of Congress was African American. Four years later, black representation had increased to 2%. By 1983, it had increased to nearly 4% and today it holds around 8%. This number is small and African Americans are still severely underrepresented within Congress compared to their white counterparts. But it may be too much to expect a political system rooted in discrimination and opposition to black entry to fully reform within 60 years. Instead, a 7-percentage point growth throughout this time does mark a success. Today, the black population is around 13% and black congressional population has risen and is on its way to becoming proportionate to the black population in America (Census).

Black congressional representation is not proportionate to white. But the level of change made after the passage of civil rights legislation displays the impact of the civil rights movement and the federal government in affording African Americans the ability to not only vote but to be represented within the United States political system. The progress made in this area, while not fully achieved, constitutes a success because a complete achievement in this area or even partial achievement was not fully expected by African American civil rights leaders during the time.

....

“The acquisition of political power was one of the major objectives of civil rights leaders, organizations and campaigns, and all of the major civil rights organizations developed projects to increase political participation during the 1950s and 1960s” (Andrews, Beyerlein 2008 4).

As argued and supported by the data presented, this major objective of African Americans was achieved. Voter registration and participation markedly increased after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. “There can be no doubt that the major increase in the registration of blacks came from the action of Congress and the executive branch through the 1965 Voting Rights Act” (Rosenberg 1991 61; Andrews, Beyerlein 2008 4). These pieces of legislation allowed African Americans, both in the North and South to cast a ballot without the tremendous amount of fear of hostility from white oppressors. The movement was critical in the development and creation of these acts. “Mobilizing tactics such as those used in the campaigns in Birmingham or Selma played an important role in securing federal initiatives like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965” (Andrews 1997 816). These tactics as designed by the non-violent African American civil rights leaders helped to ensure a positive change in voting rights, voting equality, and political representation.

African American voter participation increased significantly immediately after the civil rights legislation. But more importantly, the gap in voting between African Americans and whites has closed too, both in the short run and the long run. African Americans at a point voted more than whites did. This decline in inequality and rise in isolated numbers marks a success for the civil rights movement. Even though African American congressional representation remains disproportionate to their white counterparts, their numbers have increased too and are becoming more proportionate to their share of the United States population. The civil rights legislation,

aimed at helping African Americans in these areas, did have a significant impact on African Americans ability to vote and to be represented within the United States political system. The goal of voting established by civil rights leaders is a success and contributes to the progress of the civil rights movement overall. In the next and final section, I will examine to what degree desegregation in America, in terms of schools, public places, and housing have improved. I will then provide a summary as to what extent the movement as a whole has been successful.

## Chapter 5: Desegregation

Throughout the Deep South, under Jim Crow Laws, African Americans and whites were completely separated. When it came to bathrooms, schools, restaurants, and more, African Americans and whites were to use different facilities. In most cases, African American facilities were of significantly lesser quality, when they were even afforded a facility in the first place. A primary goal of the movement, as previously described, was desegregation. As established in *Plessey v. Ferguson (1896)*, African Americans and whites were to be “separate but equal.” Despite segregation in schools being overruled in *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, little progress toward this goal was made in the South. Racist government leaders and a majority white public, refused to share the use of public facilities with African Americans. In this section, I will analyze the extent to which segregation and racial discrimination in America as a whole, not just the South, has changed. I will divide this chapter into three subsections: school desegregation, the desegregation of public places, and the desegregation of housing. While we have seen a complete reverse in segregation in public places, housing and school segregation present a less clear picture of the civil rights movement’s success in ending segregation.

In a 2004 *Gallup* poll titled “Has the Civil Rights Movement Overcome,” it was found that “while Americans believe that important progress has been made, black (and Hispanic) minorities still feel discriminated against in daily life, in many of the settings detailed in the Civil Rights Act” (Ludwig 2004). While only public opinion, these feelings of discrimination that still persist in the minds of many African Americans 50 years later and calls into question the extent of change in racial segregation and discrimination. I will use statistical data in order to highlight the role of the civil rights legislation on housing and school desegregation. For desegregation of public places, I will provide a general discussion rather than data in order to display the progress

made today. The degree to which desegregation has been achieved in this goal is ambiguous. Racial desegregation was suppose to occur through the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the 1968 Housing Act. Whether or not this desegregation did occur because of these acts is what I will be examining within this chapter.

## **I. Schools**

Due to Jim Crow laws and strict areas of segregation, black people were unable to attend the same schools as white individuals. Even after the end of Jim Crow and despite *Brown v. Board of Education* declaring “separate but equal” unconstitutional, school segregation, as a result of racist sentiment and a resistance to change, continued to persist. But *Brown’s* initial failures did ultimately lead to future benefits. Eventually with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that provided government enforcement of desegregation and a halt of funds to segregated schools, school segregation began to subside. With the Deep South slowly beginning to turn its course against racism and the North making more racial progress all around, signs looked positive in this area. But despite initial improvements, in the decades after the legislation passed segregation in public schools began to take a reverse trend.

I will show how despite initial strides in desegregation, school discrimination has begun to reverse trends in a manner more consistent with resegregation. Blacks and whites initially began to fill the same school system but as time progressed, blacks have slowly become more and more isolated to school systems made up of a majority of African Americans while whites remain in white primary schools. In this section, I will first display data that shows the segregated pre-civil rights legislation era. I will then show the progress made in the years following the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. While

the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act is not often seen as one of the major civil rights laws it is still important in that it helped enable initial progress toward desegregation. Finally, I will provide data that displays how in the long run the improvements in school desegregation were counteracted by a system engrained with unconscious racial tendencies reinforced by Supreme Court decisions and segregated neighborhoods and housing.

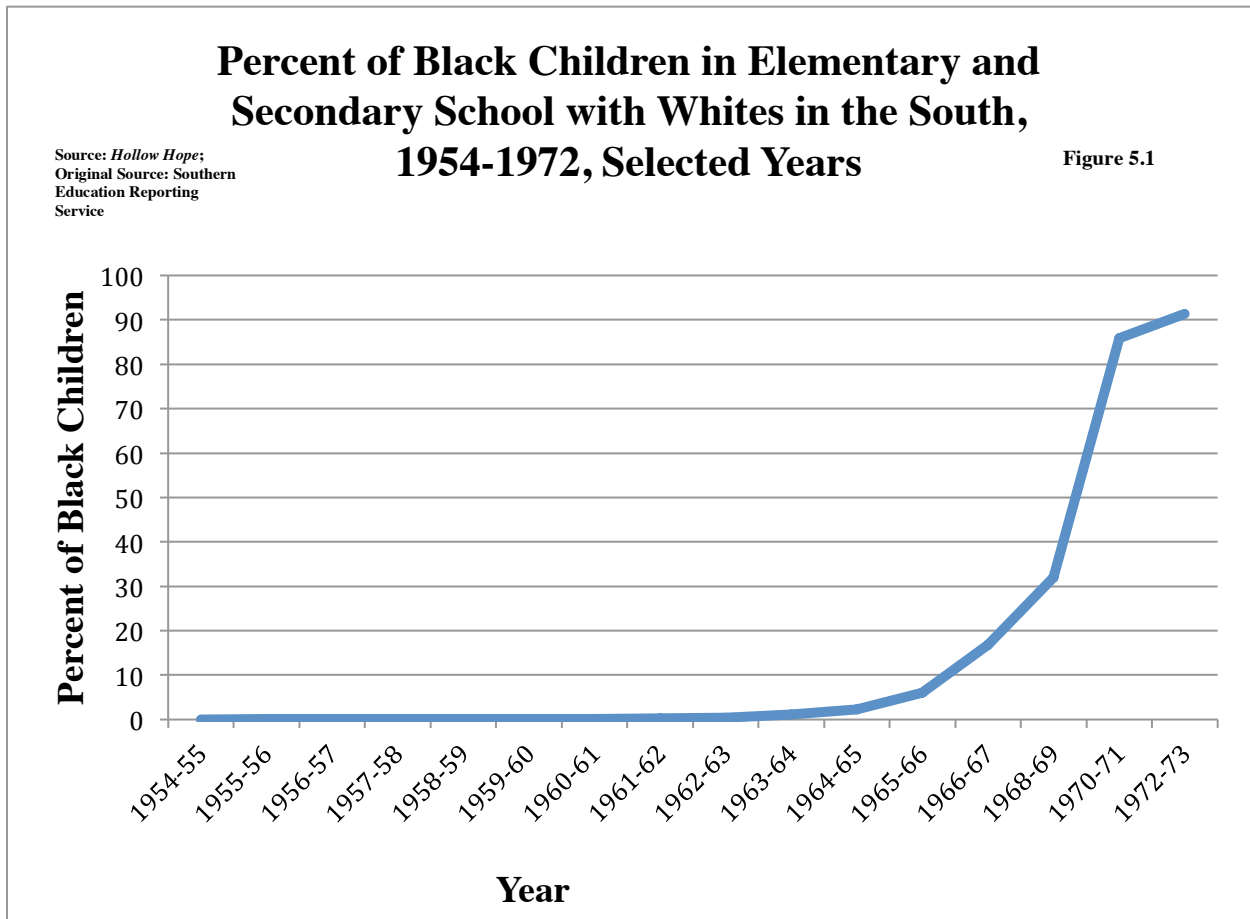
*Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark piece of judicial precedent intended to begin the desegregation of schools, failed to properly and quickly eliminate this discrimination. The decision was written with vague wording that allowed Southern states to continue school segregation. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy, in response to the blocking of the integration of University of Alabama by Governor George Wallace, delivered a televised speech calling for the first major civil rights act of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Frankenberg, Orfield 2014 4). At the time, nine years after *Brown v. Board* and a year before the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 99% of blacks in the South were still in completely segregated schools despite a judicial decision calling for the end of such discrimination (Frankenberg, Orfield 2014 4). Hardly any whites were in historically black schools and black teachers and administrators were not in white schools (Frankenberg, Orfield 2014 4). It took until 1968, after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, for the Supreme Court in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* to unanimously rule that desegregation in historically segregated states, the South, must be comprehensive and immediate (Frankenberg, Orfield 2014 4). The Supreme Court ruled that school districts could not comply with the ruling of *Brown* only removing attendance restrictions that were based on race (Guryan 2004 921). Districts were then forced to take action that would lead to the effective integration of the schools. Many of the busing plans that integrated large urban school districts followed from this ruling (Guryan 2004 921). Two years later, the recently bigoted and oppressive region of the

South became the nation's most integrated (Frankenberg, Orfield 2014 4). But this court case and its mandates are a direct result of the implications of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As I will show next, despite progress not being made directly after *Brown v. Board*, civil rights legislation had an immediate and positive effect on the integration of schools.

Before and after *Brown v. Board*, segregation in schools was extremely high. Before civil rights legislation was passed, blacks were in black-only schools and whites were in white-only schools. Black schools were provided with limited funding and lagged severely behind in education quality compared to their white counterparts (Rothstein 2014 1). This also contributed to major resource shortages for black schools (Rothstein 2014 1). In the South, after *Brown v. Board*, a substantial number of school districts put into place what became known as the "freedom of choice" desegregation plans (Owens, Reardon 2013 5). These plans were designed in order to preserve racial segregation by putting the onus on black families to enroll their children in white schools. This option was unappealing to a majority of black families because of the hatred and animosity that filled whites (Owens, Reardon 2013 5).

In North Carolina, only 0.026% of black school children attended desegregated schools in 1961, seven years after *Brown v. Board* (Klarman 1994 9). In Virginia, 208 African Americans out of an entire statewide school population of 211,000 were attending desegregated schools as of 1961 (Klarman 1994 9). But as compared to the Deep South it wasn't as bad. In the Deep South, not a single black student attended a desegregated public grade school in Alabama, Mississippi, or South Carolina as of the 1962 to 1963 school year (Klarman 1994 9). This isn't merely to highlight the failures of *Brown v. Board*. The decision would ultimately act as a propellant for change that I will argue shortly. But rather, this data displays the extremely low

rates of integration despite a judicial mandate. It directly highlights the very low starting points and the engrained animosity of white individuals towards African Americans.



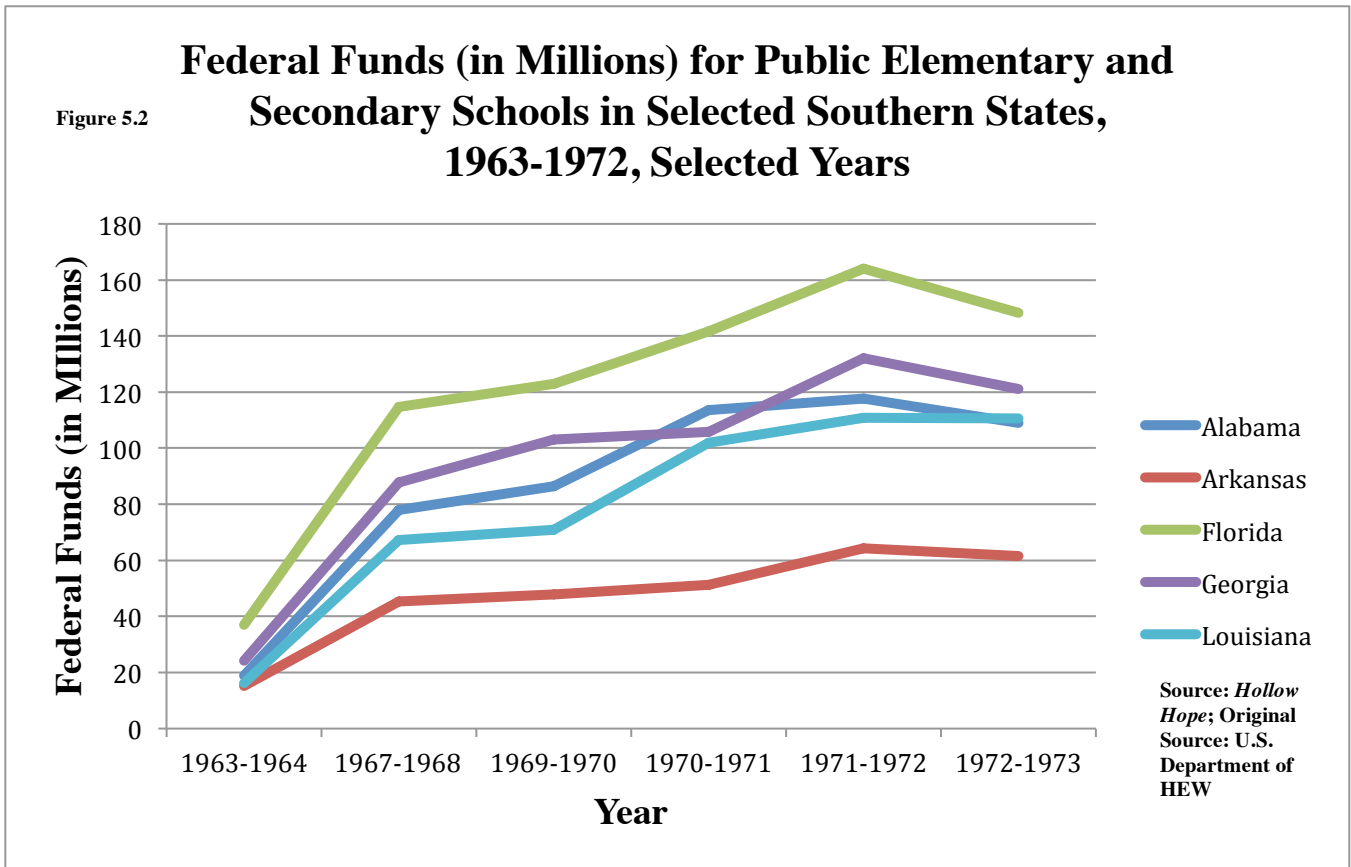
The graph above displays the percent of black children in elementary and secondary schools with whites in the South from 1954 to 1972. Originally conducted by the Southern Education Reporting Service and the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, it was later cited in the previously identified book, *Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change* by Gerald Rosenberg. In the 1955-1956 school year, only .001% of black children attended elementary and secondary schools with whites in the South; 23 black children. By the 1962-1963 school year, still only 0.45% of black children attended elementary and secondary school with whites in the South. But by 1965 to 1966, a year after the passage of the



Civil Rights Act of 1964, the figure increased to 6.1%; 184,308 black children were attending elementary and secondary school with whites in the South. A year later, after the passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in 1966 to 1967, 16.9% of black children were attending school with whites in the South; now 489,900 black children. The next year, 32% of black children were attending school with whites; 942,600 African American children. From 1955 to 1962, the percentage of black children attending school with whites in the South increased 0.33 percentage points. But in only three years, the years directly after the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the percentage of black children attending secondary and elementary school with whites in the South increased 25.9 percentage points, with an additional 758,292 African American students.

By 1972, 91.3% of black children were attending elementary and secondary school with whites in the South. This tremendous increase in school integration in the South can be directly attributed to the two pieces of civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s and the 1968 Supreme Court case. *Brown v. Board* did not have a strong impact. While it did act as a propellant, integration numbers directly skyrocketed after the acts were passed. This was a result of a multiple of factors: (1) the recognized legislative desegregation of schools, (2) the government enforcement of school desegregation, (3) government funding for desegregated schools, and (4) the restriction of funding for segregated schools. The graph on the next page shows federal funding, in millions, for public elementary and secondary schools in selected Southern states from 1963 to 1972. In Alabama, in 1963, before the two pieces of legislation were passed, the state was receiving \$18.9 million in federal funding. By 1967, the state was being provided with \$78 million and by 1972, they were being provided with \$109 million. In Mississippi, in 1963, they were receiving \$13 million in federal funding. Four years later, in 1967, the state was being

provided with \$56.6 million and by 1972, \$99.4 million. It is quite clear that the amount of federal funding for these Southern schools in the aims of desegregation significantly increased after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The funding was used to promote school integration and acted as a way for the government to enforce their power in order to ensure school desegregation would occur.



Federal support in terms of funding directly correlated with the extent of desegregation and integration within a particular school. For example, in 1967, in Birmingham City, Alabama, 8.9% of black students were in school with whites (Rosenberg 2008). They were supported by the federal government with \$3.6 million (Rosenberg 2008). But by the 1970 school year in which the percentage of black students in school with whites increased to 66.5%, federal funding

also increased to \$5.5 million (Rosenberg 2008). In the school district of Duval County, Florida, during the 1967 school year, 12% of blacks were in school with whites (Rosenberg 2008). In that year, they received \$5.8 million in federal funding. Three years later, the percentage of African Americans had increased to 63% and the amount of federal funding increased to \$9.3 million (Rosenberg 2008). Changes and improvements in school integration were supported and a result of federal funding as established by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. But the changes made at the ground level and lower educational facilities were only a part of a wider change. Seen previously with the discussion of the integration of the University of Alabama and University of Mississippi, colleges and universities began to enroll African Americans at higher rates as well, after the two pieces of legislation were passed.

In 1963, the number of black students at Southern, predominantly white public colleges and universities was 4,369 (Rosenberg 2008). Two years later, after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the number of black students increased nearly threefold to 12,054 students, constituting 1.9% of enrollment (Rosenberg 2008). A year later, after the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the number of black students at predominantly white public colleges and universities was 20,788 and an increase in 0.7 percentage points in terms of enrollment figures (Rosenberg 2008). The table on the next page displays the percentage of black enrollment at Southern, formerly all-white public colleges and universities, by state, in the years 1970 and 1978. In Alabama in 1970, 3.3% of black students were enrolled in formerly all white universities. By 1978, the number had increased to 10%. In South Carolina, a once 2.8% black enrollment rate increased to 9%. In many cases, the changes from 1970 and 1978 in Southern states in terms of black enrollment in

public, formerly all white, colleges and universities increased at times 200% to 300% and often at times 6 to 7 percentage points.

**Percentage of Black Enrollment at Southern, Formerly All-White, Public Colleges and Universities, by State, 1970 and 1978**

States	1970	1978
Alabama	3.3	10
Arkansas	4.6	10.4
Florida	2.9	6
Georgia	3.1	10.5
Louisiana	5	11.5
Mississippi	3.5	9.8
North Carolina	2.4	6.6
South Carolina	2.8	9
Tennessee	4.1	9.7
Texas	4.3	5.3
Virginia	2	5.2

Source: *Hollow Hope*; Original Source: Office for Civil Rights

Table 5.1

Clearly, in the years directly following the enforcement of the two pieces of legislation aimed at ensuring racial equality in schools, integration occurred at significantly high rates, especially in the South. Both elementary and secondary education and higher education experienced a great amount of desegregation that should have occurred years prior, following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. While *Brown v. Board* did not quickly create change due to hazy wording and state resistance, it served as an accelerant for future legislation and future change. Black enrollment in white schools and with white students dramatically increased after 1964 and 1965 and sustained for a good amount of time. Due to federal funding and federal enforcement, previously all-white schools were forced to desegregate. But as I will show next, the improvements made immediately after the passage of the civil rights legislation failed to sustain in the long run. School segregation, while not *de jure*, became *de facto*. Schools are becoming resegregated.

In 1970, the percentage of white students in a “typical black students school” or a school a black student would typically attend nationwide was 32% (Rothstein 2013 14). By the 1980 school year, this figure had increased to 36.2% (Rothstein 2013 14). But by 2001 to 2002, a decline began. That school year, the percentage of white students in a typical black students school had reduced to 30.7% and by 2009 to 2010 it had reduced even further to 29.2% (Rothstein 2013 14). Recently, in decisions such as *Parents Involved In Community Schools V. Seattle School District No. 1 Et Al* (2007), the Supreme Court has struck down voluntary desegregation plans holding that individual students may not be assigned nor denied a school assignment on the basis of race in voluntary plans, even if the intent is to foster integration (Lee, Orfield 2007 3). The court concluded that it was unconstitutional to take race into account in order to end segregation.

As a result of such decisions, this ultimately “represented a dramatic reversal of the rulings of the civil rights era which held that race must be taken into account to the extent necessary to end racial separation” (Lee, Orfield 2007 3). The increase that was seen after the acts and all the way through the 1970s and 1980s has begun to reverse trends. Supreme Court decisions, contrary to what had been made decades before, now inhibits and allows school resegregation to occur. With neighborhoods becoming more segregated, as I will speak about soon, schools are becoming segregated *de facto*. “Schools remain segregated today because neighborhoods in which they are located are segregated. Raising achievement of low-income black children requires residential integration, from which school integration can follow” (Rothstein 2014 2). This is exacerbated by the inability of the courts to properly continue the path they set in the mid 1960s. School integration as a result has halted.

## Percent of Black Students in Majority White Schools in the South, 1954-2011, Selected Years

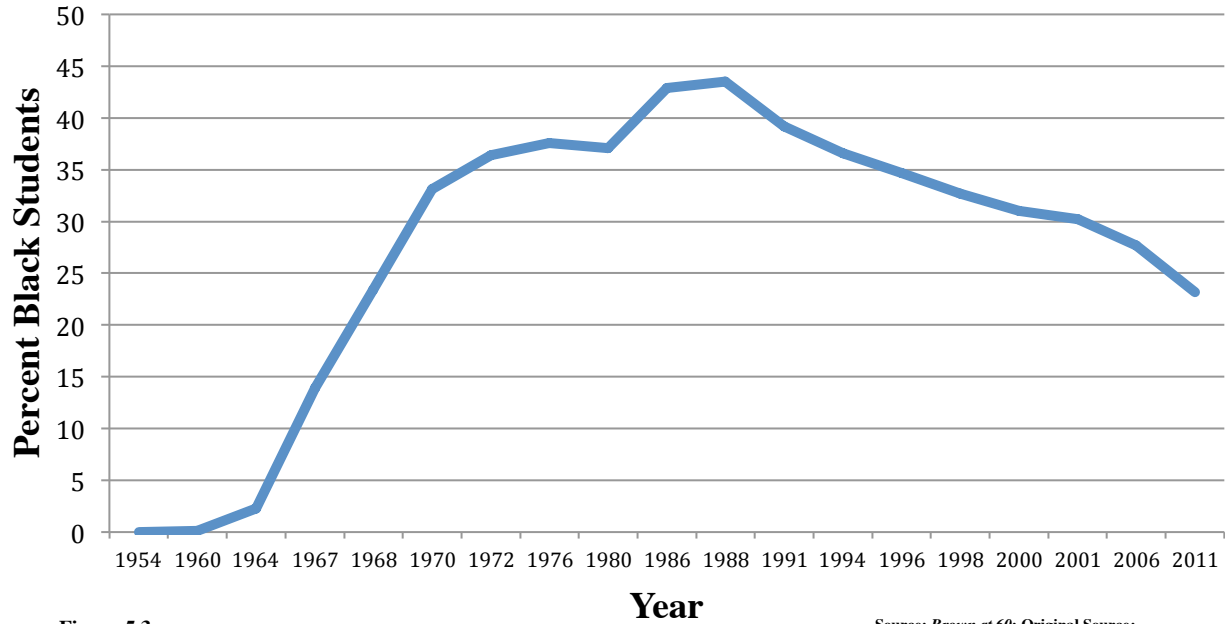


Figure 5.3

Source: *Brown at 60*; Original Source: U.S. Department of Education

## Percentage of White Students in School of Typical Black, 1980-2005, Selected Years

Region	1980	1984	1988	1995	2005	Change 1980-2005
South	41	41	41	37	32	-9
Border	38	36	37	36	31	-7
Northeast	28	28	27	26	25	-3
Midwest	31	30	32	31	29	-2
West	34	35	36	33	29	-5

Source: *Historical Reversals, Accelerating Resegregation*; Original Source: U.S. Department of Education

Table 5.2

The graph above displays the percent of black students in majority white schools in the South from 1954 to 2011. In 1954, the year of *Brown v. Board of Education*, 0% of black students were in majority white schools. By 1964, there were 2.3%. But by 1967, the black student percentage had increased to 13.9%, following the acts' passage. The percent of black students in majority white schools in the South reached its peak in 1988 at 43.5%. But from that year on, the percentage of black students in majority white schools in the South has declined. The stark improvement up until 1988, in which we see drastic integration of southern, once deeply segregated and racist territory, represents the progress of school integration. But the

decline is a significant reversal. In 2011, the percent of black students in majority white schools had declined to 23.2%, more than a 20-percentage point decline. Also seen on the previous page is a table of the percentage of white students in the school of a typical black. As argued similarly to previous data, this table instead includes changes from 1980 to 2005 and is organized by region. As seen, Southern states experienced a 9-percentage point decline from 1988 to 2005, from 41% of white students in the school of a typical black to 32%. The South, previously most notable in integration, is also the most notable in its resegregation. In addition, Border States saw a 7-percentage point decline from 1980 to 2005, from 38% to 31%. These massive declines as seen in the percent of black students in majority white schools and the percentage of white students in the typical school of blacks are due to reasons previously described: Supreme Court decisions and the persistent housing and neighborhood segregation. School desegregation has been riddled by its inability to counteract years upon years of discrimination. School segregation, once by law, is now by reinforced by societal factors.

This phase of the civil rights movement provides a sense of unclarity to the overall picture and to that of the goal of desegregation itself. Pre-1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act school segregation figures were astounding. Specifically in the South, racial segregation was nearly universal in public schools. Virtually no African Americans were enrolled in schools with whites at both the undergraduate and college level. *Brown v. Board of Education* did not have the impact it was designed to have and states and school districts were entirely resistance to change. Following the acts' passage, school integration was strong. The South, out of all regions, became increasingly integrated and blacks were finally beginning to enter schools with white people. But while the acts were extremely successful in the twenty or so years after their passage, they failed to ultimately establish a long-

term effect on this area. While not due to their failures necessarily, the Supreme Court and segregated neighborhoods ultimately resulted in the resegregation of schools. Following the 1980s, schools returned to a segregated level, while not of the 60s rates, but still unacceptable. While schools are admittedly more desegregated than before or during the civil rights movement, their trend towards resegregation would unquestionable disappoint civil rights leaders of the time. Therefore, in this area of desegregation, the goal has not been achieved. In the next section, I will analyze how the success of desegregation in public places has been achieved.

## **II. Public Place**

Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African Americans were refused service at white lunch counters, they were subjected to the back of the public bus, and had to use separate restrooms, if provided. In the South, public segregation was often accompanied by public discrimination. Violence would result if African Americans were seen in or attempted to use white facilities. As a result of civil rights actions and activities such as sit-ins, freedom rides, and boycotts, African Americans greatly impacted the desegregation of public places and facilities. The North, much less segregated already, made tremendous strides in desegregation of public facilities and the South would soon follow. The entire civil rights movement was a culmination of activities and demonstrations aimed at achieving various goals. Persistent segregation and discrimination finally resulted in a piece of legislation that declared such actions unconstitutional and would not be tolerated any further. It is this legislation that stands as the cornerstone of racial desegregation among public places throughout the United States of America. In this section, I will set the stage for pre-1964 Civil Rights Act racial segregation and discrimination in public places. I will then argue how the desegregation of public places due to the 1964 Civil Rights Act has been achieved and constitutes a tremendous overall success for the civil rights movement.



While this section might appear to be briefer, it is so because of the undeniable achievements made in this area.

African Americans, not just in the South, were denied the right to use the same public accommodations as whites. White people could access all such amenities, while African Americans were subjected to different facilities that were often poorer in quality. At a restaurant, African Americans were subjected to their own lunch counter. At a bus station, they had to use their own bathroom and had to be separated from whites when on the bus. This constant separation of the two races in public places led to direct confrontation. As previously argued, actions such as lunch counter sit-ins and freedom rides, were ground level activities that sought to desegregate these areas. The Jim Crow era mandated *de jure* segregation that provided a legal explanation for the separation of the races in public places. Previously discussed in the voting and economic conditions section, there was a large gap in equality between whites and blacks.

Segregation in itself is discrimination. But the segregation of public places would often result in oppressive and discriminatory behavior both when African Americans would use public facilities and when they would protest in the aim to desegregate such facilities. Progress before the civil rights legislation had been passed was starting to be made, but only in the North. Specifically in Washington, D.C., President Dwight D. Eisenhower helped to persuade D.C. movie theaters, hotels, motels, and restaurants to afford black customers equal service and quality to whites (NHPL 2009 48). But at the same time, bowling alleys and amusement parks in D.C. still remained segregated during the decade of the 1950s (NHPL 2009 48). Desegregation before civil rights legislation was achieved by peaceful organized protest against a system of engrained segregation and discrimination. The role of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by Martin Luther King Jr.,

were critical in the progress made toward desegregation. This grassroots movement was ultimately a critical impetus for the passage of the civil rights legislation. Supreme Court cases mandating desegregation were very important, as well. These mounting oppositions to segregation and growing changes culminated with the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Developed under Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, specifically Title II, was directly responsible for the success of the desegregation of public places that we see today. But segregation conditions did not change in the immediate aftermath of the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. By law, public places were forced to eradicate Jim Crow laws and attend to black individuals the same way as whites. But often times, traditional southern practices took the forefront. “In some places, especially small town and rural areas, gas stations and other facilities packed away their Jim Crow signs, but still continued their customary practices. For example, even without the printed racial designations, white men were directed to one restroom, white women to another, and black men and women to a third” (NHPL 2009 79).

In January 1966, a year and a half after the act had been passed, a black Navy veteran, Sammy Younge Jr. was killed in Tuskegee, Alabama by a white gas station attendant for trying to use a “white” toilet (NHPL 2009 79-80). The Klu Klux Klan would intimidate business owners who were planning on desegregating their businesses (Landsberg 2015 8). As well, the act excluded public places such as small bowling alleys, bars, and taverns if they did not sell food or if the majority of their products had not come from outside the state (NHPL 2009 80). Also, despite desegregation being enforced by law, a voluntary separation of the races would occur. White individuals still did not want to associate themselves with black individuals and therefore, would sit or keep to their own race (NHPL 2009 80). The act eliminated segregation in public

places but it did not eliminate the hateful sentiment whites had towards African Americans, specifically in the South.

But while instances of this resistance to desegregation occurred, the ability of the federal government to enforce it and the Supreme Court's role in supporting it helped to permanently establish desegregation in public places over the long term. Despite initial resistance to the change of desegregation in public places, today there are virtually no instances of resistance. Blacks might be subjected to slower service, or less desirable tables or motel rooms but the refusal of service does not exist anymore (Landsberg 2015 17). The two races are not separated. Both in the North and the South, blacks and whites will both be served, in the same forum, and on generally equal terms. Feelings of animosity from whites towards blacks might still exist in some people's minds as a result of upbringing but the discrimination and separation that was seen before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a few years after, does not exist today. "The most integrated institutions in the U.S. today are our public accommodations" (Landsberg 2015 18). As a result, the desegregation of public places is an absolute achievement for civil rights leaders. Previously, we saw how school desegregation is not a success because of the reversing of trends. Compiled with the success of this area, the ultimate success in achieving the goal of desegregation is unclear. In this next and final section, I will examine housing segregation and whether or not the 1968 Fair Housing Act was successful in desegregating housing. I will then conclude to what extent the goal of desegregation as a whole has been achieved by taking into account all three areas of desegregation and their own degrees of success.

### **III. Housing**

Housing segregation, seen before and during the civil rights movement, was a product of the lack of government enforcement, government policy, and white racial discrimination towards

African Americans. It was also a result of black migration and public housing projects. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans were subjected to poor neighborhoods, made up of mostly African Americans. In 1968, the Fair Housing Act was passed that was supposed to stop and prevent the racial discrimination of housing. As I will argue in this final section, housing segregation, rampant in the 50s and 60s, still persists today. While we do see a decline, the decline is insignificant in that for housing desegregation to be considered a success, the decline should have occurred at a faster and steeper rate. I will use indices of segregation in order to establish pre-1968 Fair Housing Act racial housing conditions. I will then use the same indices in order to establish the changes in the short run and in the long run. In a 2013 *Gallup* poll, “A narrow majority of blacks, 51%, say blacks have as good a chance as whites to get any housing they can afford, while 48% disagree” (Jones 2013). While not overt discrimination because of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, mortgage providers, real estate agents, and homeowners have discriminatory feelings that directly contribute to the persistent rates of high housing and neighborhood segregation and this feeling of black inferiority.

During the 1950s, in many large northern cities, housing discrimination was becoming rampant. Specifically in Chicago, white politicians would conspire with businessmen from downtown and developers in the city in order to prevent the business and central city district from becoming filled with black migrants (Patterson 1996 383). During this period, black people were beginning to move north at great rates. While the North wasn't as oppressive, many whites still did not want blacks to live in their area. In Chicago, these politicians exploited federal funds for urban renewal and declared black downtown neighborhoods to be “slums” (Patterson 1996 383). They tore them down and replaced them with commercial buildings for whites. African Americans were then displaced into poor neighborhoods in increasingly all-black projects

(Patterson 1996 383). Public housing policies contributed significantly to the entrenchment of residential segregation. Most public housing built during the 1950s to the 1970s was comprised of large, densely populated “projects,” that often times consisted of high-rise buildings that were located in poor, racially segregated communities (U.S. Housing Scholars 2008 5). Housing authorities often yielded to public and political pressure not to locate these public housing projects or their tenants in white neighborhoods (U.S. Housing Scholars 2008 5). If African Americans tried fleeing from these neighborhoods, often times they would run into violent white opposition in other parts of the cities and a dream of moving into the suburbs was simply unrealistic (Patterson 1996 383). As well, discriminatory practices by landlords and real estate agents prevented African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods that resulted in high levels of residential segregation in metropolitan areas across the United States (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012 12).

Seen on the next page is two tables of indices of black and white residential segregation of several major cities. The two indices are the index of dissimilarity and the P\* index. The index of dissimilarity, seen from 1910 to 1940, measures residential segregation and represents the relative number of blacks who would have to change geographic units order to achieve an even black-white spatial distribution (Massey 2001). This is on a scale of 0 to 100, “0” being the least segregated and “100” being the most segregated. The P\* index or isolation index, seen from 1900 to 1930, measures the percentage of blacks residing in the geographic unit of the average black person (Massey 2001). Once again, “0” would be the least isolated and “100” would be the most isolated. The table shows not only pre civil rights legislation residential segregation but also a rising rate of segregation. In 1910, Boston, a major city, had a dissimilarity index of 64. But by 1940, it was at 79. As well, its isolation index increased from 6 in 1900 to 19 in 1930.

The trend of increasing dissimilarity and isolation indexes is clear but the startlingly high figure of residential segregation is a result of racial discrimination.

### Indices of Black-White Segregation

Dissimilarity	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Boston		64	65	78	79
Buffalo		63	72	81	82
Chicago		67	76	85	83
Cincinnati		47	57	73	77
Cleveland		61	70	85	86
Philadelphia		46	48	63	68
Pittsburgh		44	43	61	65
St. Louis		54	62	82	84
Average		56	62	76	78
Isolation	1900	1910	1920	1930	
Boston	6	11	15	19	
Buffalo	4	6	10	24	
Chicago	10	15	38	70	
Cincinnati	10	13	27	45	
Cleveland	8	8	244	51	
Philadelphia	16	16	21	27	
Pittsburgh	12	12	17	27	
St. Louis	13	17	30	47	
Average	10	13	23	39	

Source: "Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas"

Table 5.3

Before the civil rights movement, whites would use racially restrictive covenants and violence to exclude blacks from white housing areas (Boustan 2013 318). Property owners could enter legally enforceable contracts that prohibited the sale, rental, or occupancy of the specified property by members of various groups including African Americans (Boustan 2013 323). Ultimately, these covenants were invalidated by the Supreme Court in the 1948 *Shelley v.*

*Kramer* decision but until the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, owners could still refuse to sell or rent their property to black households on an individual basis (Boustan 2013 323). With the previously mentioned public housing, and the role of the federal and local government, African Americans became increasingly isolated to ghettos. As well, with mortgage guarantees, the government subsidized whites to abandon urban areas for suburbs. Mortgage guarantees did not help blacks leave the cities because often times they were unavailable to them as lenders began “redlining” neighborhoods where African Americans lived (Rothstein 2012). This combination contributed heavily to the creation of segregated neighborhoods (Rothstein 2012). On the next page is a table similar to the one previously described, but instead it highlights the dissimilarity index from 1950 to 1990 and isolation index from 1960 to 1990 and in different cities. But it marks the segregation rates before, during, and after the civil rights movement.

In Chicago, previously mentioned to be extremely segregated, the dissimilarity index in 1950 was 88 and in 1960, 90. Dissimilarity index rates as high as the ones in Chicago were seen in cities such as Cleveland, Dayton, and Detroit. As well, their isolation indices were growing too. But such high rates of residential segregation were supposed to subside after the 1968 Fair Housing Act. The act was designed to provide equal housing opportunities, regardless of race. The act had three ways to enforce this: (1) “the U.S. Department of Justice may bring lawsuits where a ‘pattern or practice’ of housing discrimination exists or where alleged discrimination raises an issue of general public importance, (2) “administrative complaints can be made to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,” and (3) private plaintiffs can proceed to file suit in a court of law for charges of housing discrimination (Leadership Conference 2001). But instead of complete and widespread decline in residential segregation, we see a consistent and pervasive existence of blacks being isolated to communities only with blacks and

communities that are generally poor.

### Indices of Black-White Segregation

Dissimilarity	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Chicago	88	90	92	88	86
Cleveland	87	90	91	88	85
Dayton	87	90	87	78	75
Detroit	83	87	88	87	88
Greensboro	59	67	65	56	60
Houston	71	79	78	70	67
Indianapolis	77	80	82	76	74
Milwaukee	86	86	91	84	83
Philadelphia	71	76	80	79	77
Pittsburgh	69	75	75	73	71
San Diego	65	69	83	64	58
Average	77	81	83	77	75

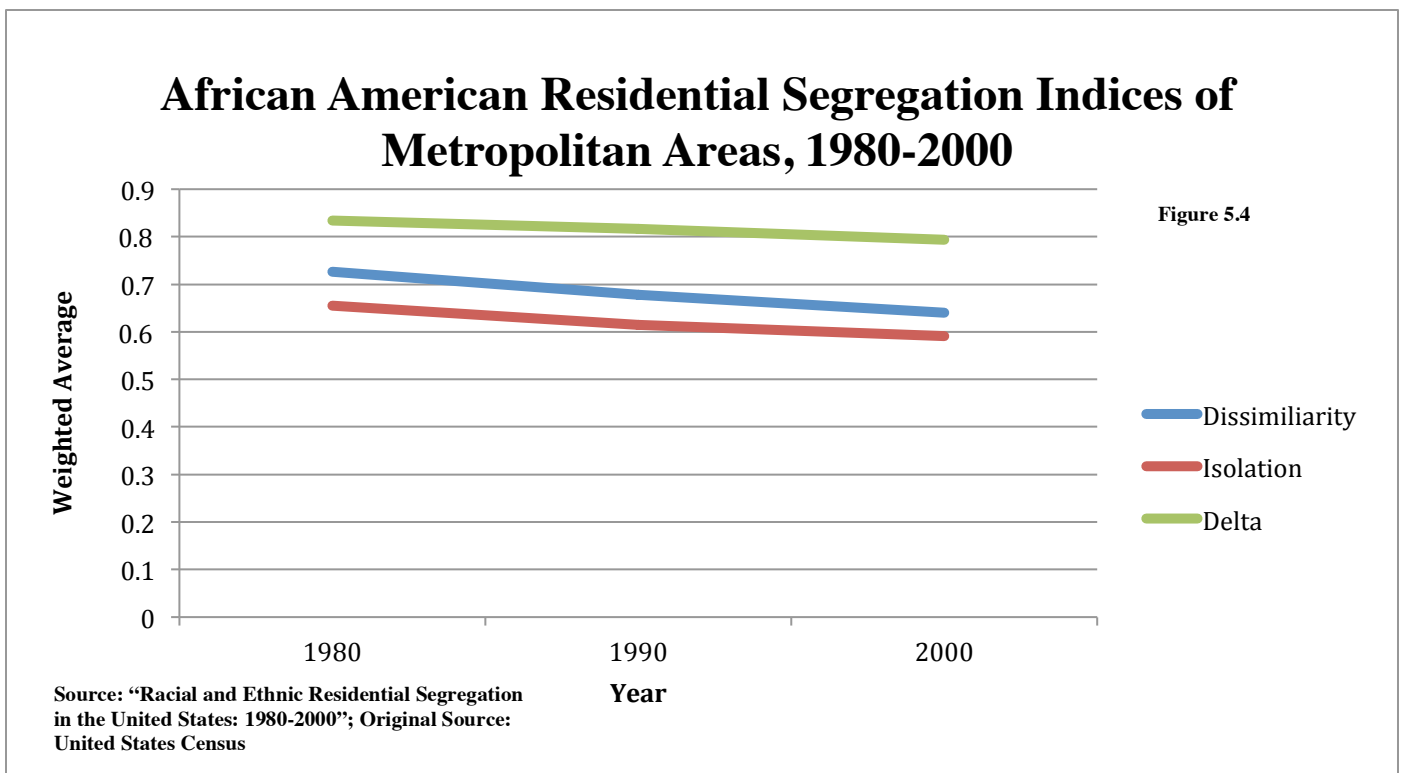
Isolation	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Chicago		84	86	83	84
Cleveland		80	82	80	81
Dayton		78	73	65	62
Detroit			76	77	82
Greensboro		64	56	50	56
Houston		73	66	59	64
Indianapolis			65	62	61
Milwaukee			74	70	72
Philadelphia			68	70	72
Pittsburgh		47	54	52	53
San Diego		42	42	26	36
Average		67	67	63	66

Source: "Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas"

Table 5.4



By 1990, Chicago’s dissimilarity index had only declined by 4 points from its 1960 rate. Its isolation index remained the same at 84, from 1960 to 1990. In Philadelphia, the city’s dissimilarity index had actually increased from 1960 to 1990, from 71 to 77 and its isolation index climbed from 68 in 1970 to 72 in 1990. There are instances of decline, rightfully so. For example, in San Diego, the dissimilarity index declined from 69 in 1960 to 58 in 1990 (Clark 1993). Also, Atlanta’s rate declined from 89 in 1960 to 81 in 1990 (Clark 1993). Declines in both indices after the 1968 Fair Housing Act were seen in many cities from 1970 to 1990 such as Baltimore, Columbus, and Dallas (Massey 2001). Even the dissimilarity and isolation index as a whole declined from 1970 to 1990. The graph below shows both indices of metropolitan areas



for African Americans from 1980 to 2000. It is on a different scale but “0” would still display the least amount of segregation while “1” would display the most. During this period, the dissimilarity index declined from 0.727 to 0.64 and the isolation index declined from 0.655 to 0.591. The third and final index is the delta index. This measures the proportion of a group’s

population that would have to move across neighborhoods to achieve a uniform density across a metropolitan area (Massey 1988). It too declined from .834 to .793.

These declines do exist but there remains nevertheless persistent residential segregation. As well, these declines are generally only occurring in metropolitan areas. These declines are far from dramatic and do not fulfill the goals of the legislation. To not decline even by an entire tenth of a point over twenty years is not significant. “A 1985 report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights examined 1980 Census data and found that the index was still 70 in the least segregated cities -- Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. And in cities like Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland, racial isolation escalated the index to around 90” (Leadership Conference 2001). That was almost 20 years after the piece of civil rights legislation. This is a result of not only the policies and practices of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, but of policies and practices that still exist today. If there is direct legislation to block racial discrimination in housing and desegregation hasn't occurred, than it must be the result of an engrained system and a continuance of oppressive practices. “Of all the aspects of segregation that civil rights has sought to undo, residential housing segregation has been the most intractable” (Leadership Conference 2001).

Residential and housing segregation is indeed rooted in historical practices and the discrimination of the time but it is maintained, continued, and at times worsened by today's discriminatory practices. This includes present-day discrimination and steering in the private rental, sales, lending, and insurance markets (Leadership Conference 2008). Other policies include exclusionary zoning, land use, and school policies at the state and local governmental level (Leadership Conference 2008). Today, black individuals seeking out a new home face a more subtle process of exclusion, rather than the blatant discrimination of the 1950s. But yet the exclusion is enabling this process of segregation. “Blacks who inquire about an advertised unit

may be told that it has just been sold or rented; they may be shown only the advertised unit and told that no others are available; they may only be shown houses in black or racially mixed areas and led away from white neighborhoods” (Massey 2001 14). Also, African Americans might be quoted a higher selling price or rent than that of whites; they might not be given the courtesy from selling agents and might be treated in a manner unequal to that of whites (Massey 2001 14). This is exacerbated by lenders becoming less willing to invest in predominantly black communities. It is also increased by lenders ordering predatory loans and loan terms that strip wealth from black homeowners rather than helping to build it (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012 12).

Often times, blacks are discriminated by the process of steering. This is a process in which real estate brokers or agents preserve housing segregation by “steering” African Americans to buildings or houses that are primarily occupied by other African Americans. (U.S. Housing Scholars 2008 13). This results in blacks being disproportionately directed to black neighborhoods and whites disproportionately being directed to white neighborhoods, reinforcing segregation in the housing market (U.S. Housing Scholars 2008 13). “The frequency with which racial minorities experience differential treatment in housing searches suggests that discrimination remains an important barrier to residential opportunities” (Pager, Shepherd 2008 9). In 2001, “The average white person in metropolitan America lived in a neighborhood that was almost 83% white and only 7% black. In contrast, a typical black individual lived in a neighborhood that was only 33% white and as much as 54% black” (Leadership Conference 2001). This figure, as argued previously, is not solely due to historical roots but also today’s practices. This persistent housing segregation was seen as early as when blacks were moving into cities and whites were moving out into the suburbs. Suburbanization contributed to the loss of

black job opportunities, high black unemployment and the rise of urban American ghettos (History 2010).

Residential and housing segregation was extremely high during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. African Americans were subjected to poor, all-black communities, while whites began to move into all-white suburbs. In 1968, the Fair Housing Act was passed that prevented discriminatory practices in housing and an equal opportunity for homeownership. While some improvements were made in cities, some did not see improvements at all. When the improvements did occur, they occurred at too slow of a rate across too long of a time period to be argued to be a successful desegregation of housing. African Americans, as a result of public housing projects, government policies, and discriminatory selling policies are still subjected to the poor, all-black neighborhoods that they lived in during the 1950s and 1960s. I employed a variety of segregation indices in order to show the lack of great change in housing segregation. The inability to significantly become desegregated in the housing area, despite legislation directly aimed at the fair and equal practice between races, would lead civil rights leaders of the movement to be unsatisfied with the progress made in this area. Its failures have also resulted in the resegregation of schools and poor economic conditions that African American civil rights leaders would certainly find to be disappointing.

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Within this chapter, I analyzed segregation in America. I examined whether the civil rights movement and the legislation that followed were successful in achieving desegregation in schools, public places, and in housing. School segregation was on a stark path to improvement until it reversed trends and began resegregating. Public places today are completely desegregated. Housing segregation still persists. While school segregation and housing

segregation might not be the result of law, they still exist because of societal factors and are rooted in a perpetuating system of discrimination. Both school and housing desegregation today, in the eyes of civil rights leaders, would be considered a failure. But the great changes in public place segregation and discrimination would constitute a success. Therefore, the mixed results make it difficult to determine whether or not desegregation from the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 1968 Housing Act was a success. But as we saw within the economic conditions section, African Americans are generally in an inferior position within society. While African Americans are simply not in the same schools with whites, the injustices occur in the poor housing blacks are subjected to and the lack of resources available to them. As a whole, the goal of desegregation, therefore, cannot be judged as having been achieved. In the next section, I will conclude this thesis by arguing to what extent the civil rights movement, encompassing the goals of improved economic conditions, voting rights for African Americans, and desegregation, was successful as a result of civil rights legislation and civil rights movement demonstrations.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

In 2008, a *Gallup* poll revealed mixed feelings towards the progress made in civil rights since the civil rights movement. 43% said all or most of the goals of the movement have been achieved, while 51% said only some of the goals have been achieved, and 3% said almost none have (Saad 2008). Still today, few Americans are optimistic about eradicating discrimination and racial injustice. “A *CBS News* poll conducted in late March 2014 found that while 59% of Americans — including 60% of whites and 55% of blacks — considered race relations in the U.S. to be generally good, about half (52%) thought there was real hope of ending discrimination altogether, while 46% said there would always be a lot of prejudice and discrimination” (Drake 2014). These public opinion polls testify to the inability of the civil rights movement to fully achieve its goals, even after many years. Conditions are better than they were in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and before, but complete equality still does not exist. We still live in a society in which the issue of race pervasively drives thought, sentiment, and decisions. If the civil rights movement were truly successful in achieving all of its goals, than the color of an individuals skin would have no sway within America.

Within this paper, I utilized primary source data in order to evaluate the progress made in America as a result of the civil rights movement. I used speeches and interviews from major civil rights leaders in order to establish that the leaders of the movement during the 1950s and 1960s sought out the improvement of African American economic conditions, voting rights, and desegregation. They aimed not only for the black advancement in these areas but also the closing of the racial gap with whites and an increase in racial equality between whites and blacks. I then analyzed whether or not these goals had been achieved in both the short term and long term as the result of four major pieces of legislation passed during the civil rights era: the 1964 Civil

Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 1968 Fair Housing Act. I examined whether African American poverty, unemployment, income and wages had improved. I studied if voting participation and registration, as well as congressional representation had increased. Finally, I evaluated whether desegregation had occurred in schools, housing, and public places. Overall, I can conclude that the civil rights movement, as reflected in public opinion and as supported by the data presented, was only partially successful in eliminating discrimination and achieving the full extent of the goals established by leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis. There are areas of great progress and significant improvement, but the inability in many conditions to not advance or achieve racial equality has kept African Americans in a position of inferiority and as a result, the civil rights movement was by no means completely successful.

As seen by the data developed from the United States Census, black unemployment rates have been higher than whites every year and have failed to improve in the past 50 years. In fact, the black unemployment rate is even higher today than it was in the 1950s. African American wages and income have increased over the long term but the white black wage and income gap has not improved and at times, has gotten worse. Declining African American poverty status does reflect a positive result of the movement but still African Americans are in an inferior position within society economically. African American voting rights represent the greatest success of the civil rights movement. There have been significant increases in participation and registration, at a point in which blacks in 2008 voted more than whites. Black representation in Congress is still far behind whites but yet it is rising and becoming more proportionate to the black population within America. Finally, public accommodations have been fully desegregated. No longer are public places such as restaurants or train stations segregated. But housing

segregation still persists. Ghettos and public housing projects that are all black still remain and blacks are still discriminated against in housing patterns and lending practices. As well, improvements in school desegregation that were made directly following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were reversed as we are seeing trend of resegregation in schools.

These varied outcomes and changes after the civil rights movement are ambiguous and therefore, hard to interpret. There have been great strides in racial equality, as seen in cases such as voting and the desegregation of public places. But for the majority of the goals desired by civil rights leaders, little progress has been made over 50 years despite legislation aimed at its improvement. Today, similar struggles reflect the same conditions seen during the 1950s and 1960s, a time of great oppression. Police brutality remains, as do ghettos, and racial prejudice and profiling still occurs. These persisting aspects of society today that were present during a racially divided era would disappoint civil rights leaders.

The two overwhelming and clear-cut successes, as previously stated, of the movement were the desegregation of public places and the right to an undeterred vote. These two areas, supported by substantial data, showed that the movement and the legislation that followed, specifically the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, were effective in advancing the African American cause to an extent. Today, African Americans and whites are equal within public places such as restaurants and theaters and are equal when exercising their constitutional right to vote. It was a tremendous struggle to pass these pieces of legislation. Southern resistance and what was argued to be a defense of states rights covered up overt racism. In the end though, political maneuvering and a changing American public helped to secure the passage of these acts. With these acts, the federal government finally intervened, which helped enable the progress to occur. Voting rights for African Americans had been granted years earlier but the



oppression they faced in trying to vote was astounding. Obstacles to voting and violent resistance prevented African Americans from casting a ballot. But with first, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and then the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the ability to federally intervene within states that extended these rights was granted. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was not incredibly strong but it paved the way for future federal enforcement and legislation. Its initial weak powers still marked a signpost for future change. It secured future acts and helped to bring reality closer to American ideals.

Voting and the ability to act freely within public places are two simple rights. What was once denied for African Americans could no longer be justified in the minds of many Americans and politicians. The violence witnessed on television and the oppression described in the newspapers served as an eye-opener. These were and still are such simple activities that it became hard to imagine that they could continued to be denied on simply the basis of a color of an individual's skin. The success of these changes is in deep contrast to the stalemate in improving African American economic conditions. Economic equality, besides an improving of poverty rates and the poverty gap, which is still high, has not allowed African Americans to thrive and to qualify the movement as an economic success. But to federally enforce and change the economic status of African Americans after years of inferiority is hard to do. The government cannot simply undo the culmination of years of poor work, poor pay, and under privilege. Slavery and then segregation of all aspects of life, specifically in the South, produces outcomes that remain unchanged. Addressing these problems of economic inequality and economic standing is not merely a matter of federal intervention. Federal law cannot change the skills of individuals or society's need for jobs for which whites are so often more qualified. Societal factors continuously play a role in the lack of progress and the slow change in the economic

stability for African Americans. As well, in school resegregation and housing discrimination, federal enforcement and legislation cannot eliminate unconscious discriminatory minds and thoughts or the comfortable feeling of living and attending school with one's own race. The failures of the government in securing the elimination of school segregation and housing segregation is, as argued, a result of changing Supreme Court decisions. But more importantly it is the result of years and years of pre-existing sentiment.

But while the failures of the movement are visible and would disappoint civil rights leaders, the failures might have been expected. The civil rights movement was one of goal progression. All three goals, as argued in this paper, were prevalent throughout the entire movement. But the leaders of the movement were still realistic as to what could be achieved, in what order it could be achieved, and when it could be achieved. African American civil rights leaders first wanted to be equal in terms of facilities as seen through the Montgomery Bus Boycott, actions following *Brown v. Board of Education*, and lunch counters sit-ins from college students across the nation. The movement then evolved into a fight for voting rights and to vote peacefully and without oppression. Congressional representation, while included within this paper, was not a true goal of the movement but merely a considered result. Civil rights leaders could not expect to achieve significant representation quickly within Congress. But the desire to vote, as leaders thought, could lead to power and political representation some time down the road. Once voting was achieved, the fight for economic equality that had already existed became more formidable. Martin Luther King Jr. led the Poor People's Campaign in 1968, years after law aimed at desegregation and voting had already been passed (Lohr 2008). While not his first fight for economic equality, this campaign marked a big push at this point to secure economic justice. Ultimately assassinated in the same year, the campaign still marks the evolving phases of

civil rights prospects and efforts. Leaders could not expect to gain economic equality before first gaining the vote and the desegregation of facilities such as the workplace. The progress in civil rights would absolutely dissatisfy African American civil rights leaders, but the evolution of the goals represents the pragmatic expectations of the movement.

The civil rights movement, while somewhat unsuccessful, did have another effect on society. Rather than only securing change for African Americans, the civil rights movement had an empowering effect. The civil rights movement served as an impetus for future social movements within America. While this paper is focused on the civil rights movement's ability to achieve its goals, it cannot be ignored that the movement served as a momentum boost for other social movements within the United States. While not started in this era, the feminist movement and the gay rights movement, both took inspiration from the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement displayed to society that rights could be achieved and could be fought for in an open public forum. Women began to fight for their rights and equality. While initially a movement begun by middle-class, suburban white women, black women soon began to join in (Chiles 2016). Gay individuals started to argue for their rights as people and to not be oppressed solely because of their sexual orientation. We begin to see successes too within these movements, such as Title IX (1972) and *Roe v. Wade* for the feminism movement and the state-level repeal of anti-gay legislation and the American Psychological Association not classifying being homosexual as a mental disorder anymore (Chiles 2016). The explosion of these movements in the late 1960s and 1970s was a result of the grass level actions taken upon in the civil rights movement. Most civil rights leaders would likely judge the general fight for equality that occurred after and a result of their movement to be a positive outcome. The civil rights movement served as a model for future movements and as a tool for human empowerment.

It is true that the outright discrimination and oppression of the 1960s does not blatantly exist today and rights for other Americans have been achieved. But beginning with slavery, the American system has been engrained with structural racism that is hard to eradicate. Jim Crow laws continued the brutal state of slavery in a legal manner. Even though discrimination by law today has been eliminated, America has been unable to end racism or erase racial inequalities and the ongoing and cumulative effects of slavery and segregation. There has been progress made that cannot be ignored. We no longer live in an America in which blacks and whites don't eat at the same lunch counter. We no longer live in a society in which African Americans are forced to ride in the back of the bus and sit next to each other. We no longer live in a system in which only whites are able to exercise their civil duty to vote. But race relations in America are not where they should be. Unconscious racial sentiment and feelings still remain. The inferiority of African Americans from the 1900s could not be overcome in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. My intent in writing this thesis was to bring greater awareness to this issue. I wanted to address the successes of the civil rights movement. Courageous figures at the grassroots acted resiliently and nobly. They were inflicted with pain and struggle all in a fight for equality. But the failures of the movement and the failures of legal legislation is what I really wanted to highlight and hope can be addressed by society in the near future.

The four pieces of legislation underlined in this paper, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 1965 Voting Rights Act, 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and 1968 Fair Housing Act, were laws aimed at achieving progress and equality for African Americans. The legislation mostly helped in the short term. Great achievements were seen directly after the acts had been passed. Conditions before and immediately after were significantly different. But the legislation failed to achieve the movement's long term goals. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was impactful

for anti-discrimination purposes while failing to notably change economic conditions as a result of other societal factors in play. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was extremely influential because of its ability to use federal enforcement. Similar law has been passed after the fact and amendments to the laws have been made but law has not been effective in closing racial gaps in economic conditions. It is hard to change society even across 50 years. But the law should be the way to do so. But the fact is it is difficult to reverse years of discrimination and its effects. I propose that future research should be directed as to why legislation has failed on these economic fronts. I note that it is the years of effects but legislation should have a greater impact in racial equality. Future research should specifically be directed at economic terms and school and housing segregation. The movement's successes on voting rights and the desegregation of public places should be used as models. These successes need to be put into perspective when studying the movement's failures.

My paper and the data I provided are based on trends and statistical changes. My evaluation of the progress made from the civil rights movement are determined based on isolated terms and black comparison to their white counterparts. I analyze conditions before the movement and the passage of these acts, as well as immediately afterwards and in the long run. I assembled statistical data on a variety of issues of over a more than 50-year span. This paper marks research aimed to highlight the limitations of an extremely powerful social movement. I contributed to an already expansive field of information but I was able to uniquely display the wide range of topics addressed within the civil rights movement while also addressing its associated legislation. Future research should be focused in on the civil rights legislation and amendments passed after 1968 to determine whether these acts have had any influence or sway on long-term changes. Research should also study the African American job market and hiring

practices. As well, research should be concerned with residential selling patterns and government involvement in inner cities. Race relations within America need to be better. Everyone within society should be equal and free of any type of discrimination or feelings of inferiority. The civil rights movement and the leaders of the movement hoped to achieve this. In some areas, the goal has been fulfilled but in others it has yet to be accomplished. If these issues can be addressed and research can be directed towards the movement's failures, than hopefully the failures can become successes.

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