Diversity in Higher Education
Volume 6

Black American Males in Higher Education: Diminishing Proportions

Henry T. Frierson
Willie Pearson, Jr.
James H. Wyche
Editors

Emerald

Emerald Group Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2009

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-84855-898-4
ISSN: 1479-3644 (Series)

CONTENTS

WHERE ARE THE BROTHERS? ALTERNATIVES TO FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE FOR BLACK MALES

Rhonda Vonshay Sharpe and William A. Darity Jr.

ABSTRACT

There has been much discussion, but little research about why African American males do not attend and or complete a college education. We examine the alternatives that might reduce or compete with the decision to complete a college education. We analyze the number of men incarcerated, trends in labor force participation, and occupation and wages by educational attainment. We find that even when the number of 18–24-year-old African American males incarcerated increased, the number of 18–24-year-old African American males enrolled in college had a larger increase suggesting that incarceration is not a plausible explanation for the growth rate in degree attainment for African American males. We find that the decrease in the overall percentage and in the percentage of 18–24-year-old African American males reporting employed as their labor force status and the increase in the percentage for these groups reporting not in the labor force and unemployed may have an impact on the college degree completion. Additionally, an increasing percentage of African American males have an associate's or bachelor's degree, but there was a larger percentage change in the percent of African American males with some college.

Black American Males in Higher Education: Diminishing Proportions
Diversity in Higher Education, Volume 6, 135–153

ISSN: 1479-3644/doi:10.1108/S1479-3644(2009)0000006012

African American males with some college earn significantly less than those with an associate's or bachelor's degree, but earn significantly more than African American women with some college or an associate's degree. This supports Dunn's (1988) finding that African American males do not invest in college because they desire "quick money." The earnings differential between African American males and females may also explain the degree attainment gap, as it is the African American females with a bachelor's degree that earn significantly more than African American males with some college.

OVERVIEW

Raising credentials can be accomplished either through on the job training programs or by self-investment in education. Both methods bear risk and require the outlay of time, money and, in many instances, foregone wages. Economists tend to approach the analysis of human capital investment as analogous to investments in the stock market or in capital projects. Economists focus on (1) private returns: benefits enjoyed by student and their family; (2) net present value: discounted economic benefits less costs; and (3) social cost and benefits: what society pays for education versus what society receives – better citizens. According to human capital theory, an individual faced with the decision to invest in a college education will do so only if the monetary benefits exceed the costs.[1] However, the monetary benefits and "true" costs are a function of social conditions.

For example, the availability of funds to invest in a college education affects costs faced by an individual, and it is a binding constraint for investment in college education. If the funds are "free" to the individual, for example grants, familial contributions or scholarships, then costs are lowered. Funds in the form of student loans increase the cost of investing in a college education relative to "free" support.

During the 2003–2004 academic year, approximately 63 percent of all students enrolled in college received some type of financial aid.[2] Seventy-six percent of African American students received aid. Fifty-one percent of all students received financial aid assistance from grants, and 35 percent received financial aid assistance from loans. In comparison, 64 percent of African American students received financial aid assistance from grants and 43 percent received assistance from loans. For African American students, initial entry into a college or university is more constrained by the availability of funds than their capacity to persist in college (Wilson, 2007).

However, costs are just one factor in the economists' construction of the decision. The other factor is monetary benefits. If there is high demand for the skills acquired, then the monetary benefits also will be high. Unfortunately, the demand for the skills at the time of enrollment in college may not be same upon graduation from college. Therefore, the benefits are unknown.

Much research has been done to provide estimates of the monetary benefits of personal investment in a college education. Using 1997–1999 earnings, Census estimates show that the average income for bachelor's degree recipients was 71 percent higher than the average income for those with only a high school diploma.[3] In addition, the estimated lifetime earnings of those with a bachelor's degree exceed that of a high school graduate by nearly 1 million dollars.[4] The estimated lifetime earnings for African Americans with a bachelor's degree is 0.6 million dollars higher than for those African Americans with a high school diploma. These results have been consistent over time.[5]

Thus far, we have shown the monetary benefits of a college education. In the remainder of this study, we explore alternatives to a college education. We do not anticipate identifying a single reason to explain the pattern or growth rate for degree attainment of African American males. Our objective is to evaluate alternatives that might reduce or compete with the decision to complete the college degree. Simultaneously, we analyze the number of men incarcerated and trends in labor force participation, and we analyze occupation and wages by educational attainment.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study examines alternatives to college degree completion for African American men. Our analysis of incarceration is limited by the availability of data, and, therefore, is confined to 2000–2004. Data for the number of incarcerated 18–24-year-old African American males comes from the Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear Annual Reports for 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004. Enrollment data was generated using Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data Systems; Completion Survey by Race accessed using WebCASPAR. Enrollment data is limited to African American males.

Labor force participation, income and occupational distributions were calculated using Public Use Micro Samples of the 1990 and 2000 decennial census and 2007 American Community Survey. The data are limited to

individuals who self identify as African American and are between the ages 18 and 65. Income data are self-reported and reflect wages earned for the previous year. Zero wage earners are excluded from all analyses of income.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. Does an increase in the number of 18–24-year-old African American males incarcerated correspond to a decrease in the number of 18–24-year-old African American males enrolled in college?
2. Are changes in labor force participation of African American males a plausible explanation for the growth rate in degree attainment of African American males?
3. Are the earnings differentials between those with some college and those with an associate's or bachelor's degree insignificant, thereby reducing incentives to complete the associate's or bachelor's degree?
4. Are the earnings of relatively less educated African American men higher than the earnings of African American women? If so, is this a plausible explanation for the degree attainment gap between African American males and females?

To address these research questions, we utilize cross tabulation. This study has several limitations. First, we do not provide a cost/benefit analysis of investing in a college education; therefore, we do consider the impact of the perceived cost of a college education on investing in a college education. Second, we do not control for number of hours worked – full-time or part-time. As a result, the average and median income values reported are biased downward for full-time workers and biased upward for part-time workers. Finally, the analyses are descriptive only which limits our ability to suggest causation for any trends identified or to control for personal characteristics, which might influence educational attainment.

INCARCERATION

In 2002, the Justice Policy Institute reported that for the year 2000 there were more African American men in imprisoned than enrolled in college. Their findings use proportional estimates rather than a census count; therefore, their methodology is flawed, and the findings are misleading. We do not find that the number of 18–24-year-old African American males imprisoned ever exceeded the number enrolled in college at any point during the time period of 2000–2005 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of 18–24-Year-Old African American Males Enrolled in College and Imprisoned: 2000–2005.

Year	Full-Time Students	Part-Time Students	Total Enrolled	Incarcerated
2000	363,174	241,164	563,434	179,500
2001	385,018	250,553	604,338	189,200
2002	407,961	257,693	635,571	195,500
2003	430,776	256,187	665,654	193,900
2004	445,349	263,880	686,963	194,900

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: Enrollment Survey, 2000–2004. Accessed at: www.WebCASPAR.nsf.gov. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear: 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 Annual Reports.

Instead, we find the number of 18–24-year-old African American males enrolled in college is more than three times the number incarcerated in 2000 and four times the number incarcerated in 2004. More importantly, the number of 18–24-year-old African American males imprisoned does not show a pattern of steady growth, but the number enrolled in college does show a pattern of steady growth. The findings in Table 1 do not lead us to conclude that incarceration is an alternative that competes with Black men pursuing a college education.

A comparison of enrollment and incarceration data for African American males is only half the story. The other half is the treatment of African American males by the criminal justice system, which may affect the eligibility to attend college. The literature on racial disparities and the criminal justice system finds that at the state level African American males are disadvantaged with respect to the decision to incarcerate or not and disadvantaged at the Federal level with respect to the length of prison sentences. African Americans are approximately 40 percent of the drug arrests, but nearly 60 percent of those in state prison for drug offenses. The higher arrests and conviction rates are a combination of the inequality in sentencing laws for crack cocaine versus powder cocaine and the concentration of law enforcement on inner cities. Therefore, "school zone" drug laws disproportionately affect African Americans.

In 2006, changes to the Higher Education Act removed the statute that made those convicted of violating "school zone" drug laws ineligible for financial aid for the remainder of their life.[6] Currently, the penalty for violating the "school zone" drug laws are: first offense loss of Federal financial aid for a one year; second offense loss of Federal financial aid for two years; and third offense lose eligibility for Federal financial aid for life.

These changes will likely have a positive impact on college attendance for African American males.

On contrary, the increase in the number of states over the past 20 years that have passed laws making it easier to try juveniles in adult court will likely impeded the educational attainment of African American males. These states have decided that the "principle of rehabilitation and prevention that characterized the founding of a separate juveniles system in the 19th century to the punishment and retributive-oriented approach of the adult system" is more appropriate.[7] Of the 73 children 13 or 14 years old and sentenced to life in prison, 36 of these children are African Americans.[8] Such a shift is likely slow the flow of African American males into the higher education pipeline or stagnant the growth in degree attainment.

In addition to the discrimination within the criminal justice system, African American males are also disadvantaged socially with respect to their White peers. So while African American and White males engage in serious crimes at about the same rate as teenagers, Whites have social networks that allow them to transition into college and employment. In the next section, we examine the labor force participation of African American males.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The labor force participation rates of African American males provide insight about employment trends. If an increasing number of African American male are unemployed, out of the labor force, or the military, then we might expect to see fewer invest in a college education. We find that the majority of African American males with a bachelor's degree or less are employed, which is also true for 18–24 year olds (see Table 2).

However, we do find that the percentage of African American males employed has been decreasing since 1990. In 1990, nearly 60 percent of all African American males and nearly 45 percent of 18–24-year-old African American males were working in civilian jobs. By 2007, the percentage of all and 18–24-year African American males working in civilian jobs had decreased to 51 and 39 percent, respectively. Additionally, the number of African American males in the armed forces decreased for both groups.

We also find that the overall percentage of African American males unemployed decreased from 10 percent in 1990 to 8 percent in 2007. The percentage of 18–24-year-old African American males increased slightly from 15 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2007. Unfortunately, the overall percentage and the proportion of 18–24-year-old African American males

Table 2. Labor Force Participation for African American Males with BS Degree or Less.

Employment Status	1990	2000	2007	Total
All men				
At work	58%	53%	51%	55%
Has job, not working	1%	1%	2%	1%
Armed forces – at work	3%	2%	1%	2%
Unemployed	10%	8%	8%	9%
Not in labor force	28%	36%	38%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
18–24-year olds				
At work	44%	41%	39%	42%
Has job, not working	1%	1%	1%	1%
Armed forces – at work	7%	4%	2%	5%
Unemployed	15%	15%	16%	15%
Not in labor force	33%	39%	42%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census Public Use Micro Sample and 2007 American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample. Accessed at: http://usa.ipums.org/usa/

not in the labor force increased by nearly 10 percentage points from 1990 to 2007.

The results in Table 2 suggest that the decrease in the overall percentage and in the percentage of 18–24-year-old employed and the increase in the percentage for these groups not in the labor force and unemployed may have an impact on the college enrollment. To explore the impact of labor force participation further, we examine educational attainment trends.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

If the increase in the percentage of African American males not in the labor force and unemployed affected the choice to attend college, then the percentage earning an associate's degree or bachelor's degree should also decrease. We find that the percentage of 18–24-year-old males with an associate's or bachelor's degree in 2007 was essentially the same as in 1990. But we are also interested in how the educational attainment of these males changes as they age; therefore we use cohort analysis to identify changes in educational attainment as the cohort ages (see Table 3).

Table 3. Educational Attainment for African American Males.

Age Cohort	No Diploma (%)	High School (%)	Some College (%)	Associate's Degree (%)	Bachelor's Degree (%)	Total
1990						
18–24	36	36	23	3	2	100
25–34	27	36	23	6	9	100
35–44	28	32	23	7	10	100
45–54	43	30	16	5	6	100
55+	62	21	10	3	4	100
Total	36	33	20	5	6	100
2000						
18–24	38	34	24	2	2	100
25–34	23	37	25	5	10	100
35–44	25	36	24	6	9	100
45–54	28	33	23	6	10	100
55+	43	30	17	4	6	100
Total	30	34	23	5	8	100
2007						
18–24	30	38	27	2	3	100
25–34	20	39	23	6	12	100
35–44	17	41	22	7	13	100
45–54	20	39	22	8	11	100
55+	26	35	21	7	11	100
Total	22	39	23	6	10	100

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census Public Use Micro Sample and 2007 American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample. Accessed at: http://usa.ipums.org/usa/

For the cohort of 18–24-year-old African American males, there was a 4 percent increase in the percentage with an associate's degree and an 11 percent increase in the percentage with a bachelor's degree over the time period from 1990 to 2007. We find a similar trend for the 2000 cohort of 18–24-year-old African American males – 4 percent increase in the percentage with an associate's degree and a 10 percent increase in the percentage with a bachelor's degree over the time period from 1990 to 2007. We do not find a similar trend for the older cohorts.

At the lower levels of educational attainment, the findings are mixed. The percentage of 18–24-year-old African American males without at diploma increased in 2000 to 38 percent and then decreased by 8 percentage points in 2007. The percentage of 18–24-year-old African American males with a high school diploma fell to 34 percent in 2000 and then rose to 38 percent in 2007.

Some college is the only category that increased consistently for 18–24-year-old African American males in each time period.

The analyses of 18–24-year-old have several implications. First, African American males may take longer to finish the degree because they are attending college as part-time students. Second, they may be returning to college later as a way to increase skills and improve employment opportunities. Finally, an increasing percentage of African American males are enrolling in college but not finishing. For each period, at least 20 percent of all African American males have had at least some college.

The increase in the number of African American men with college experience has increased from 28 percent in 1990 to 32 percent in 2007. Unfortunately, many of these males do not continue to pursue either the associate's or bachelor's degree. If the increase in earnings is insignificant, then this may explain the choice not to complete the associate's or bachelor's degree. In the next section, we examine earnings and occupational distribution by educational attainment.

EARNINGS AND OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Research on college retention of minority student does not consider earnings potential as a reason for dropping or stopping out (Carter, 2006). Given that the investment in a college education requires forgoing some if not all earnings, an inability to continue forgoing earnings seems like a plausible explanation.

The decision to continue delaying earnings may be rational if there is a statistically significant difference between earnings with some college and earnings with an associate's or bachelor's degree.[9] We find the differential in earnings for African American males with some college and those with an associate's or bachelor's is statistically significant. This finding holds for the sample of males and the younger 18–24-year-old cohort (see Table 4).

In 1990, the difference in average earnings of African American males with some college and those with an associate's degree was $3,396. By 2007, this difference had increased to $6,614. Similarly, the difference in average earnings of African American males with some college and those with a bachelor's degree was $9,957 in 1990 and $20,229 in 2007. For 18–24-year-old African American males, the difference in average earnings of African American males with some college and those with an associate's degree was $2,610 in 1990 and

Table 4. Income Differential by Educational Attainment and Gender for Full-Time Workers.

	1990		2000		2007	
	Mean	Difference	Mean	Difference	Mean	Difference
Men (18–65)						
Some college	$21,157		$31,064		$36,995	
Associate's	$24,553	$3,396	$35,416	$4,352	$43,609	$6,614
Bachelor's	$30,315	$9,157	$45,314	$14,250	$57,224	$20,229
Men (18–24)						
Some college	$10,220		$15,188		$16,505	
Associate's	$12,830	$2,610	$18,836	$3,648	$23,341	$6,836
Bachelor's	$16,154	$5,934	$23,412	$8,224	$27,429	$10,924
Women (18–65)[a]						
Some college	$16,715	$4,442	$24,717	$6,347	$29,940	$7,056
Associate's	$19,113	$5,440	$28,863	$6,553	$35,492	$8,117
Bachelor's	$24,024	$6,291	$36,311	$9,003	$46,450	$10,774
Women (18–24)						
Some college	$9,409	−$811	$13,856	−$1,331	$15,225	−$1,280
Associate's	$11,681	−$1,149	$16,965	−$1,871	$19,991	−$3,351
Bachelor's	$14,071	−$2,083	$20,809	−$2,602	$25,078	−$2,351[b]
Household income						
African American	$18,676	$24,814	$29,,667	$39,178	$34,091	$46,831

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census Public Use Micro Sample and 2007 American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample. Accessed at: http://usa.ipums.org/usa/. Table H-5. Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder – Households by Median and Mean Income: 1967 to 2007, US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

[a]The differences are in 2006 dollars and are between men and women of the same educational attainment and age grouping.

[b]The only difference in the table that is statistically insignificant.

$6,836in 2007. In 1990, the difference in average earnings of 18–24-year-old African American males with some college and those with a bachelor's degree was $5,934, but had nearly doubled by 2007 to $10,924. Given that the mean earnings of African American males with some college is greater than the median household income for African Americans, we speculate that African American males may not complete the college degree because their perception is that they are already doing as well as could be expected.

We also examine the difference in earnings for African American males and females with college experience. We do so to explore the possibility that African American females may be attending college at a higher rate because they earn less money than African American males with similar college experience. African American women earn less than their African American male counterparts with similar college experience. For 2007, the earnings differential for the 18–24-year-old cohort of African American men and women is not statistically significant.

In addition, we examine the earnings differential across college experience.[10] For all time periods, African American women with an associate's degree earned significantly less than African American men with some college, but African American women with a bachelor's degree earned more. Furthermore, African American women with a bachelor's degree earned more than African American men with an associate's degree, except in 1990 when they earned less.

The statistically significant difference in earnings between African American males and females within and across levels of college experience may explain the gap in associate's and bachelor's degrees earned. The analysis of income differentials for African American males suggests that factors other than increased earnings enter into the decision rule to invest in college. One factor might be satisfaction with occupation status achieved without college experience or a college degree.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

The top five occupations for African American men with no diploma did not change from 1990 to 2007, but the rank order and distribution did change (see Table 5). Although laborers and operatives and kindred workers are ranked first and second for tall these time periods, the percentage of African American males in these occupations decrease. In 1990, 34 percent of African American males were employed in the top five occupations. By 2007, the percentage employed in the top 5 occupations had decreased to 26 percent.

Four of the top five occupations for 1990 and 2000 and three of the top five occupations for 2007 are the same for those with no diploma and those with a high school diploma. Operative and kindred workers, labors, and truck and tractor drivers are the top three occupations, in order, for 1990, 2000, and 2007. It is unclear if the increased representation of African American men as operatives and kindred workers, truck and tractor driver, a more autonomous occupations, or the military is the result of better

Table 5. Top Five Occupations by Educational Attainment: 1990–2007.

1990		2000		2007	
No diploma					
Laborers	12%	Laborers	10%	Laborers	10%
Operative and kindred workers	10%	Operative and kindred workers	9%	Operative and kindred workers	6%
Janitors and sextons	7%	Janitors and sextons	5%	Cooks, except private household	5%
Truck and tractor drivers	6%	Cooks, except private household	5%	Janitors and sextons	5%
Cooks, except private household	3%	Truck and tractor drivers	5%	Truck and tractor drivers	4%
High school					
Operative and kindred workers	12%	Operative and kindred workers	11%	Operative and kindred workers	9%
Laborers	11%	Laborers	9%	Laborers	9%
Truck and tractor drivers	6%	Truck and tractor drivers	6%	Truck and tractor drivers	6%
Janitors and sextons	6%	Clerical and kindred workers	5%	Clerical and kindred workers	5%
Members of the armed services	5%	Janitors and sextons	4%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	5%
Some college					
Operative and kindred workers	7%	Clerical and kindred workers	9%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	8%
Clerical and kindred workers	7%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	8%	Clerical and kindred workers	7%
Laborers	7%	Operative and kindred workers	7%	Operative and kindred workers	6%
Members of the armed services	6%	Laborers	6%	Laborers	6%
Managers, officials, and proprietors	6%	Truck and tractor drivers	5%	Truck and tractor drivers	5%
Associate's degree					
Managers, officials, and proprietors	7%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	9%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	10%
Clerical and kindred workers	7%	Clerical and kindred workers	6%	Clerical and kindred workers	6%
Operative and kindred workers	6%	Operative and kindred workers	6%	Operative and kindred workers	5%
Laborers	5%	Professional, technical and kindred workers	5%	Professional, technical and kindred workers	5%
Members of the armed services	4%	Laborers	4%	Guards, watchmen, and doorkeepers	4%
Bachelor's degree					
Managers, officials, and proprietors	12%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	15%	Managers, officials, and proprietors	16%
Teachers	7%	Professional, technical and kindred workers	8%	Professional, technical and kindred workers	8%
Clerical and kindred workers	6%	Teachers	7%	Teachers	6%
Professional, technical and kindred workers	4%	Clerical and kindred workers	5%	Clerical and kindred workers	5%
Salesmen and sales clerks	4%	Salesmen and sales clerks	4%	Salesmen and sales clerks	4%

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census Public Use Micro Sample and 2007 American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample. Accessed at: http://usa.ipums.org/usa/

education credentials, on the job training, affirmative action or other antidiscrimination measures.

However by 2000, clerical and kindred workers is ranked fourth in 2000 and 2007 for those with a high school diploma replacing the military as a top five occupation and is also a top five occupation for those with some college. By 2007, managers, officials, or proprietor are on the top five occupations list, replacing janitors and sextons, and is also a top five occupation for those with some college. This suggests that better education credentials expand occupation opportunities and the clerical workers in 2000 have been promoted to managers and is a sign of occupational mobility.[11] Additionally, the percentage of African American males employed in the top five occupations is over one-third for all three time periods.

For the associate's degree, the percentage of African American males employed in the top 5 occupations is approximately 30 percent for all three time periods. The increase in education has afforded African American males the opportunity to lead – as managers, officials, and proprietors followed by clerks and operatives for 1990, 2000, and 2007. The top five occupations for some college are strikingly similar to those of the associate's degree. By 2007, 1 out of every 10 African American males was employed as a manager, official, or proprietor. The sheep's skin effect has also reduced the percentage employed as laborers or in the armed forces.

As degree attainment has increased, the percentage of African American men employed as operatives and kindred workers, laborers, janitors and sextons, or truck and tractor drivers has decreased. The top five occupations for African American males with a bachelor's degree do not include any of these occupations. Instead, they have been replaced with the following occupations: teachers, professional, technical and kindred workers, and salesman and sales clerk. We also find an increase in the number of African Americans employed as mangers, officials, and proprietors from 12 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2007. We were surprised to find that approximately 1 out of every 20 African American males reported teaching as an occupation.

This sounds like good news, but is it? Yes, if these occupations do not exhibit a type of labor market discrimination referred to as "crowding," the clustering of African American males into certain occupations, usually the less desirable jobs, which increases the supply of workers and decreases the wages (Bergmann, 1971). If African American males are overrepresented (underrepresented) in a occupation, then the occupation is "crowded" ("crowed-out"). A comparison of the top five occupations for African American males to tables and graphs of occupational crowding by Hamilton and Darity (forthcoming) finds several interesting trends. First, janitors and sextons, truck and tractor drivers, and the military are occupations, which were "crowded." For janitors and sextons, the overrepresentation of African American men decreased from 76 percent in 1990 to 49 percent in 2000. The overrepresentation for African American men in the military was 70 percent in 2000 down from 99 percent in 1990 and the overrepresentation as truck and tractor drivers was 12 percent in 1990 and zero percent in 2000.

Second, for African American males, professional, technical and kindred workers, managers, officials, proprietors, and operatives and kindred workers were occupations that showed relatively little changes in "crowded" occupations from 1990 to 2000. However, professional, technical and kindred and operatives and kindred workers had an increase in the number of "crowded-out" occupations over the time period from 1990 to 2000, but mangers, officials, and proprietors had a decrease in the number of "crowded-out" occupations over the same time period for African American males. African American males gained access to more laborers occupations as the percentage of occupations with no "crowding" increased from zero percent in 1990 to approximately 50 percent in 2000, but less access to sales occupations as the percentage of occupations with no "crowding" decreased while the percentage of "crowded-out" occupations increased. In 1990, approximately 85 percent of the clerical and kindred occupations were "crowded" with African American males and African American males were "crowded-out" of about 7 percent of these occupations. Finally, in high (low) education-wage occupations African American males have been historically "crowded-out" ("crowded").

Analysis of the top five occupations provides insight into the mostly likely employment opportunities by educational attainment, but not earnings. In Table 6, we report median nominal earnings, in 2006 dollars, for the top five occupations by educational attainment. Table 6 reveals several interesting trends. First, occupational rank does not correspond to higher earnings, which is consistent with Hamilton (2008) and Hamilton and Darity (2008) findings on occupational crowding. Second, for those without a college diploma, the median earnings in 2007 were generally lower than their earnings in 1990 or 2000. For those with no diploma or a high school diploma, median earnings for the top thee occupations decreased from 1990 to 2007. On average, the median earnings for African American males without a college diploma decreased from 1990 to 2007, while median earnings increased for those with a college diploma.

Table 6. Median Nominal Wages for Top Five Occupations: By Educational Attainment.

	Top Five Occupation				
	1	2	3	4	5
1990					
No diploma	$18,499	$24,411	$19,529	$26,039	$14,521
High school	$27,666	$20,173	$29,294	$21,156	$19,529
Some college	$32,451	$30,921	$21,156	$25,739	$39,058
Associate's degree	$44,754	$36,534	$33,168	$26,039	$30,921
Bachelor's degree	$51,335	$40,685	$40,685	$53,764	$45,568
2000					
No diploma	$18,169	$21,803	$19,381	$14,717	$29,071
High school	$27,860	$24,226	$32,705	$24,226	$22,651
Some college	$29,071	$38,761	$31,493	$25,437	$36,339
Associate's degree	$42,395	$32,705	$36,339	$46,029	$31,493
Bachelor's degree	$54,508	$54,508	$41,184	$36,339	$48,451
2007					
No diploma	$16,696	$18,214	$11,637	$18,214	$28,333
High school	$25,298	$20,238	$32,381	$23,274	$35,417
Some college	$40,476	$28,333	$30,357	$24,286	$35,417
Associate's degree	$43,512	$33,241	$33,545	$50,595	$32,381
Bachelor's degree	$60,714	$56,667	$40,476	$36,429	$48,571

Source: 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census Public Use Micro Sample and 2007 American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample. Accessed at: http://usa.ipums.org/usa/

CONCLUSION

We examined incarceration rates, labor force participation, and earnings differentials between those with a college degree and those with some college as factors, which might compete with or affect the degree attainment of African American males. Even when the number of 18–24-year-old African American males incarcerated increased, we find that the number of African American males 18–24 years old enrolled in college had a larger increase suggesting that incarceration is not a plausible explanation for the growth rate in degree attainment for African American males.

Although a majority of African American males reported being employed or in the military, a growing percentage of African American males reported "not [being] in the labor force." For 1990, 2000, and 2007, the percentage of African American males without college experience and reporting "not [being] in the labor force" was over 70 percent. The percentage difference between African American males with some college and no college diploma or a high school diploma is on average 28 and 15 percent, respectively.[12] Our analysis of labor force participation supports Dunn's (1988) findings that African American males may see college as a waste of time, but not his suggestion that the military is an alternative to investing in college.

Dunn reports the primary reason why African American males do not invest in college is that they desire "quick money" that can be earned from blue-collar jobs.[13] In general, the top five occupations for African American males without college experience are blue-collar jobs and employ approximately 30 percent of African American males. However, the median earnings for these occupations decreased from 1990 to 2007.

Additional support for the "quick money" claim is the increase in the percentage of African American males with some college from 1990 to 2007, but no corresponding increase in the percentage with an associate's or bachelor's degree in later years. Furthermore, we find significant differences between the earnings of those with some college and those with an associate's or bachelor's degree, factors other than increased earnings appear to influence the decision of African American males to complete the degree. Finally, the gap in degree attainment between African American men and women may be driven by economics. Specifically, African American males earn more than their female counter parts with similar college experience and degree attainment.

The policy implications of our finding are simple. The rhetoric about more African American males being incarcerated than enrolled in college needs to cease as it misleading. Assuming Dunn's finding are correct, then African American males need to be educated about the increased earnings potential from completing the associate's or bachelor's degree. Additionally, the costs of completing these degrees must decrease so that foregone earnings are no longer a competing with the decision to complete the degree. Finally, our findings suggest that more research needs to be done examining the reasons why African American males stop-out or drop-out of college that extend beyond academics and financial aid, but include family responsibilities and perceptions about earnings.

NOTES

1. Here cost include direct, tuition, fees, etc., and indirect, forgone wages. See Becker (1994) for a more detail explanation.
2. Table 324, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2007*, NCES 2008-022, March 2008.

3. Figure 1, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*, P23-210, United States Census Bureau, July 2002.
4. Figure 7, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*, P23-210, United States Census Bureau, July 2002.
5. See *Present Value of Estimated Lifetime Earnings*, Technical Paper 16 and *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*, P23-210, United States Census Bureau, July 2002.
6. Nelson (2006).
7. Mauer, King, and Young (2004).
8. Equal Justice Initiative (2007).
9. The decision is rational only in the pure economic sense. Familiar obligations may make said decision irrational.
10. We thank William Spriggs for this suggestion. He argues that African American women are attending college at a higher rate because they do not earn as much as men with lower levels of college experience or degree attainment.
11. Having better educational credentials does not negate but complements the impact of on the job training, affirmative action, or antidiscrimination laws because African American men are now "qualified" applicants in the pool.
12. Contact authors for this table.
13. Dunn's findings are from a survey of African American men and women enrolled at Mississippi Valley State University. The student's perspective is mostly likely influence by their experiences as paid blue-collar jobs generally have not been available to Black men, and they have been disappearing for all men over the past 25 years.

REFERENCES

Becker, G. S. (1994). *Human capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bergmann, B. R. (1971). The effect on White incomes of discrimination in employment. *Journal of Political Economy, 29*(2), 294–313.

Carter, D. F. (2006). Key issues in the persistence of underrepresented minority students. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 130*, 33–46.

Carter, D. F. (2007). *Digest of education statistics*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics.

Dunn, J. R. (1988). The shortage of Black male students in the college classroom: Consequences and causes. *The Western Journal of Black Studies, 12*(2), 73–76.

Equal Justice Initiative. (2007, November). *Cruel and unusual sentencing 13- and 14-year-old children to die in prison*. Retrieved February 19, 2009, from Equal Justice Initiative: http://eji.org/eji/files/20071017cruelandunusal.pdf

Hamilton, D. E., & Darity, W. A., Jr. (2008, August). Crowded out forever? An analysis of ethinic and racial occupational crowding over the last half century. Paper presented as the annual meeting of American Sociological Association Annual Meetings, Boston, MA.

Hamilton, D. E., & Darity, W. A., Jr. (Forthcoming). Crowded out? The racial composition of American Occupations. In: C. C. James Jackson (Ed.), *Research methodology in Black communities*. Oxford University Press.

Mauer, M., King, R. S., & Young, M. C. (2004, May). *The sentencing project*. Retrieved February 19, 2008, from The Sentencing Project: http://www.stencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/inc_meaningoflife.pdf

Nelson, G. (1967). *Present value of estimated lifetime earnings*. Washington, DC: US Goverment Printing Office.

Nelson, G. (2006, February 10). *Reach shorten on law to smoke out drug offenders*. Retrieved February 19, 2008, from The Michigan Daily: www.michigandaily.com

System, I. P. (n.d.). *WebCASPAR integrated science and engineering resources data system*. Retrieved October 28, 2008, from http://webcaspar.nsf.gov/index.jsp?subHeader = WebCASPARHome

System, I. P. (2002). *The big payoff: Educatonal attainment and synthetic estimates of work-life earnings*. Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau.

US Census Bureau. (n.d.). Retrieved October 26, 2008, from Historical Income Tables-Households: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/h05.html/

Wilson, V. R. (2007). One equal ground: Causes and solutions for lower college completion rates among Black males. In: N. U. League (Ed.), *The state of Black America 2007: Portrait of the Black male* (pp. 123–131). New York: Beckham Publications Group, Inc.