

## Regionalism and Percent Black: Trends 1926-1982

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### Introduction

In the absence of data, the usual thinking about race and social control in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is that treatment of Blacks was worse in the South, where Jim Crow segregation was the law, and worse before the Civil Rights Movement. Some authors even assume that there is some deep cultural antipathy of White Southerners towards Blacks that colors every thing about inter-racial relations in the South, while the North is assumed to be a land of relative racial equality and harmony. This culturalist line of argument would seem to predict that Black imprisonment rates and the Black/White disparity in imprisonment would be higher in the South than the North, and that both Black imprisonment and the disparity would decline as equality progressed. Neither of these simple predictions turns out to be true.

Another line of theory would predict that the strictures of Southern Jim Crow segregation would serve as a substitute for policing and imprisonment as a mode of social control. In this view, the segregated South had such rigid hierarchies of race, that Blacks could be controlled and prevented from threatening Whites without resort to formal criminal justice procedures. By contrast, the North was more subject to what is sometimes called "competitive" race relations, where racial/ethnic groups compete directly for jobs and space, and the absence of overt racial hierarchies leads groups to resort to the use of the social control system. This line of argument would imply that Black imprisonment rates would be lower in the South than the North and would increase after the Civil Rights Movement. These predictions are somewhat borne out. However, the observed patterns are more complex than this argument would imply, especially where White imprisonment rates are concerned.

The left-hand column of figure 1 shows the trends in Black and White prison admissions and the disparity ratio, separately for Northern and Southern states. The overall patterns in the Black/White disparity are simple and quite clear. First, there is a large "disparity gap" between the North and the South that persisted throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Even as the racial disparity overall rose and fell, the difference in disparity between the North and South stayed about the same. The only exception is that the disparity fell in the North but not the South between the 1920s and the 1930s. Second, in both regions, the racial disparity spiked in the 1940s, then grew steadily from 1950 through the early 1990s, then declined modestly at the end of the 1990s. That is, although the gap remained, the trends in disparity moved together in the two regions.

The regions do, however, show different patterns when Black and White rates are examined. The Black rate was markedly higher in the North than the South before 1970 and again after 1990; between 1974 and 1990, there was no North-South difference. By contrast, prior to the late 1990s, the White imprisonment rate was been consistently higher in the South than the North, with the North-South gap widening substantially between 1950 and 1990 and then narrowing in the 1990s. Thus, the consistently higher racial disparity in the North than the South through most of the century arises from different dynamics in different eras. Between 1950 and 1990, the disparity difference is due more to a higher White imprisonment rate in the South, while before the 1950s and then again in the 1990s, it is due more to a higher Black

imprisonment rate in the North.

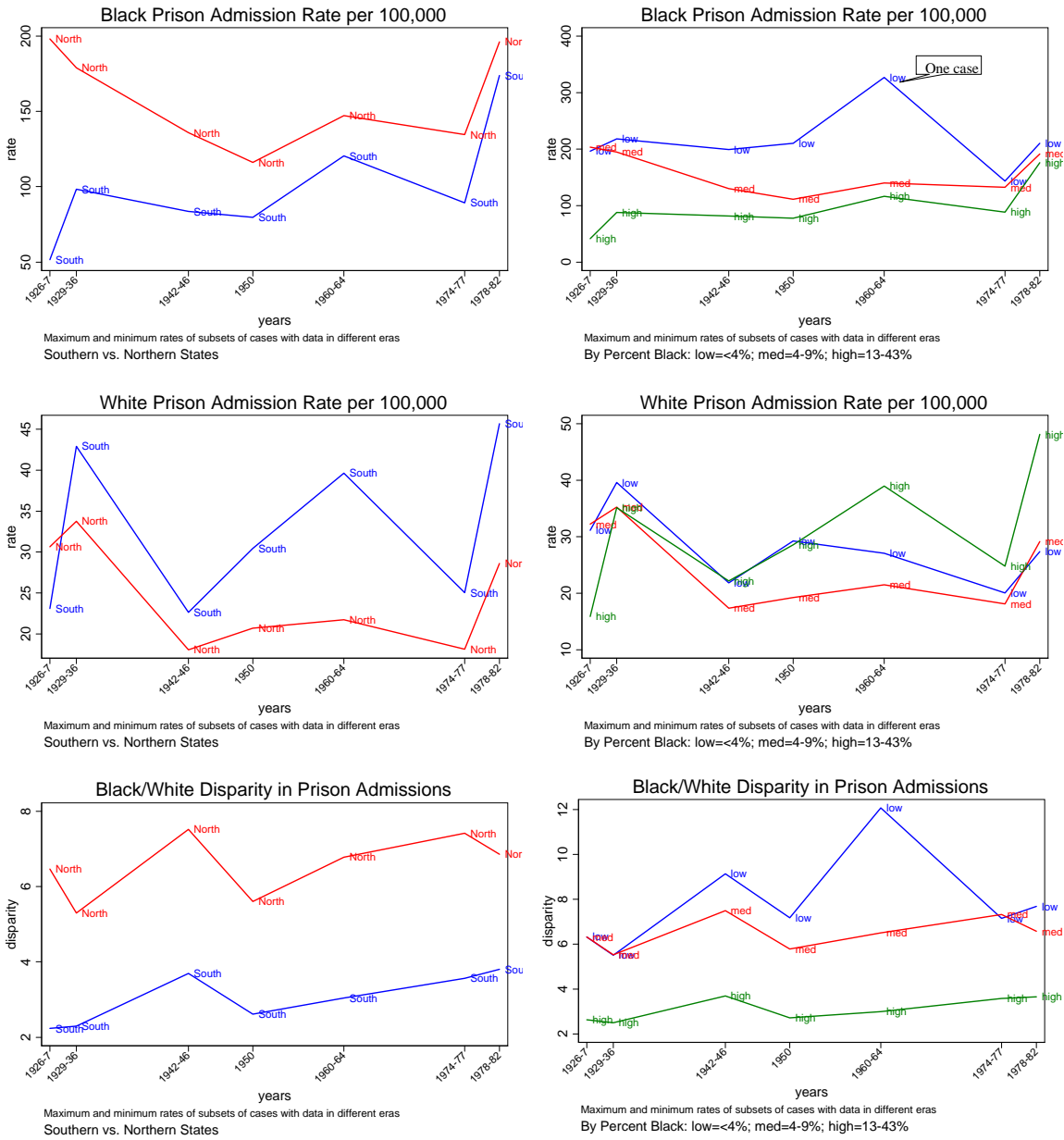
But what about the South matters? "Southern culture" or the legacy of slavery and segregation may not be the most important difference. The Black population is a larger share of the total in the South than the North. The right-hand side of figure 1 shows the time trends broken out instead by average percentage Black. The groups are defined by the average percent Black in the period 1926-82, using natural breaks in the distribution. All the states that are 13% or more Black group are Southern. The middle group that were 4-9% Black is predominantly Northern but includes three Southern states. All the states that are less than 4% Black are in the North. (Note that only one state that was less than 4% Black reported its prison admissions by race in 1964, so the anomaly for that year is just a data problem. )

The patterns for states that differ in percent Black are similar but somewhat more complex than the North vs. South divide. First, the disparity is consistently lower where the percent Black is higher, and higher where the percent Black is lower. Second, the gap in disparity is largest and most consistent between the high percent Black states and the middle group. The volatility in the disparity for the low percent Black group is partly due to differences in which states responded in different years. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the important distinction is between states with substantial Black populations (>12%) and the rest.

As with the North-South differences, inspection of the Black and White rates reveal that the relatively consistent difference in disparities arises from different sources over time. Before the 1970s, Black imprisonment was consistently higher where the percent Black was lower, while the White imprisonment rate had a curvilinear relation to percent Black before the 1960s, being lowest in the states that were 4-9% Black, with similar rates in states that were less than 4% or more than 12% Black. Thus the earlier inverse relation between the disparity and the percent Black was largely driven by differences in the Black rate. Between 1974 and 1990, the Black imprisonment rates were very similar across the three groups, and the disparity was driven by differences in the White rate. In the 1990s, the high %Black states reduced their imprisonment rates for both Blacks and Whites, while the states with smaller Black populations continued to post imprisonment increases for both races. At the end of the 1990s, the states in the 4-9% Black group had the highest imprisonment rates for both races.

These trends for the 1980s and 1990s throw into question theories of threat or political power that rely simply on the percentage Black in the population. There was something going on for the "intermediate" states that led to skyrocketing imprisonment for both Blacks and Whites. We will return to a more detailed analysis of the 1980s and 1990s. But first it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the earlier portion of the 1900s to see what trends can be discerned.

Figure 1. Trends in Black & White Prison Admissions by Region and Percent Black



## Racial Patterns in Prison Admissions 1926-1982

### Data

There has actually been little detailed analysis of racial trends in imprisonment in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A major cause of this gap is that the available data are weak. Langan (1991) compiled information all the available statistics on prison admissions disaggregated by race from printed reports of national prisoner statistics collected for some of the years 1926-1982. He reports that statistics on imprisonment broken down by race were compiled very irregularly over the years, and that the underlying data were often destroyed after written reports were prepared. His main conclusion is that Black imprisonment rose more than White imprisonment between 1926 and 1986. After using interpolation algorithms to generate estimates for missing data, he concludes that, nationally, the White imprisonment rate rose from 26 per 100,000 in 1926 to 63 in 1986 (an increase of 242%), while the Black imprisonment rate grew from 106 to 342 (an increase of 322%) (p. 7). This implies that the national Black/White disparity in prison admissions rose from 2.94 in 1926 to 5.43 in 1986. Langan notes that Southern states had lower Black imprisonment rates than Northern states, and suggests that the migration of Blacks from South to North is a likely factor in the rise in Black imprisonment rates, but does not present detailed analyses of trends by region. We have constructed these trends from his data.

We acquired a copy of his data file from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and used it to examine prison admission trends by race, region and relative size of the Black population. Prison admissions disaggregated by race and state are available for only a small number of years: 1926-1927, 1929-1936, 1942-46, 1950, 1960, 1964 and 1974-1982. States' participation was always voluntary, with a maximum of 44 and a minimum of 16 states reporting in any given year; participation rates were especially low in 1974-82. Only nine states (WV, KY, IL, MO, NY, PA, TN, WI, RI) have data for all the eras for which there are data. Shifting pools of states reporting make year-to-year comparisons difficult, as apparent differences may be due to shifts in which states reported in a given year. We reduce but do not eliminate the problem of missing data by calculating a state's average imprisonment rate using whatever years of data are available for each era.

Table A1 in the appendix shows the pattern of data availability for each state, broken down by region and average percent Black in the years 1926-82. We trichotomized the average percent Black at natural breaks in the distribution: less than 4%, 4-9%, and more than 13%. The first thing to notice is the extremely high correlation between the South and the percent Black. All of the states whose average Black population was less than 4% are Northern. All of the states whose average Black population was greater than 13% are Southern. Of the 14 states whose Black population was between 4% and 9%, all but three are classified as Northern. The exceptions are the border states Oklahoma, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The distinction between North and South as cultural regions has always been problematic: Oklahoma was "Indian Territory" at the time of the Civil War; Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Missouri were all slave states that stayed in the Union rather than joining the Confederacy. Because region and percent Black are so confounded, we will not be able to fully disentangle them, although we will try to shed further light on the relationships as we go.

## Trends in Black and White Prison Admissions

The years 1927-28 are before the great stock market crash, and the years 1929-36 are after. There was a steep rise in White prison admissions in the early years of the depression and then a decline as the 1930s wore on. As our focus is on the trends later in the century we group the depression years together. The years 1942-46 are war and post-war years. Near-universal mobilization of young men led to a dramatic drop in prison admissions during the war. Prison admissions rose in the immediate post-war period, but we average war and post-war years together, again because our focus is on the broader trends. There were single-year prison admission statistics for 1950, 1960, and 1964, i.e. just before and then during the Civil Rights era focused in the South; for most purposes we average the years 1960 and 1964 to get an "early 1960s" average. There was another wave of data collection in 1974-1982 to which fewer states responded. Imprisonment was generally rising in these years, but we average across the entire eight-year period for comparisons to earlier years.

Because there is so much missing data, comparisons between eras can be distorted by changes in the mix of states that reported. The appendix to this report attempts to address this problem by calculating the rate for each era separately for the subset of cases that are missing in another era, and then comparing the minimum and maximum rates for the subsets. This exercise indicates that, while missing data sometimes yields very wide variability in the rates – generally for states with small Black populations and also for Southern states in the 1970s – the effect of the regional difference and effect of Percent Black are quite robust across most eras.

The Black/White disparity was consistently lower in the South (2.5-3.5) than the North (5.5-8.5) from the 1920s through the 1970s, and changes in the disparity between eras were similar in both regions, except that the disparity fell in the North but not the South between 1927-28 and 1929-36. Disparity ratios are a product of both White and Black admission rates and they change when the prison admission rates for one race diverge from the other. For example, imprisonment rates for both races fell steeply in the 1940s versus the 1930s, but fell more steeply for Whites than Blacks, so the disparity went up in both regions. Imprisonment rates for both races rose in the 1970s, but rose more steeply for Blacks than Whites, so the disparity went up in both regions. There are regional differences in the 1940s and the 1960s. In the South, White imprisonment went up steadily after the 1940s while in the North, White imprisonment did not rise until the 1970s. Black imprisonment in the North was relatively steady through the 1960s, while Black imprisonment in the South rose between 1950 and 1960. In the 1960s and 1970s, Northern and Southern states had essentially the same Black imprisonment rates, but the disparity was still much higher in the North than the South because of the higher White imprisonment rates in the South.

The question is what theoretical sense to make of these differences. The data are too sparse to track detailed responses to events of the Southern Civil Rights era, usually dated 1954 to 1965. Data on prison admissions by race were not collected during the tumultuous years of the anti-war and Black riots of the late 1960s, nor for the early 1970s. Even for the 1974-82 period, individual states' reporting was too irregular to support definite conclusions. Nevertheless, it is suggestive the prison admissions went up in the South but not the North in the era in which the emphasis on social change in race relations was focused on the South, and then went up sharply in both regions by the late 1970s, after the turmoil in the North of the late 1960s.

The trends disaggregated by average Percent Black help to specify what was happening in the North. In the 1940s, although the drop in White prison admissions was consistent across all groups of states, the drop in Black prison admissions was steep only in the states that were 4-9% Black, i.e. Northern and border states with longstanding significant Black populations. Black prison admissions in these states stayed low through the 1960s. By contrast, in states with very small Black populations, Black prison admissions did not drop at all overall and, in fact, rose steeply in several Western states. After the War, Black imprisonment rates stayed high in these states. In the Southern states with large (13%+) Black populations, the 1940s decline was less extreme than in the states moderate sized (4-9%) Black populations, and was bouncing back after the 1950s. Although all three groups of states exhibited rising White prison admissions after the 1940s, this rise was steep only for the states with large Black populations. The 1970s rise in White imprisonment was smallest for the states with small Black populations, leading these states to post the greatest increase in the Black/White disparity.

### **Comparing Specific States**

We also examined the trajectories of individual states, comparing the 14 Southern states to the 17 Northern states which averaged at least 1.5% Black between 1926 and 1982. The 15 states which averaged 1.3% or less Black in this period had very small Black populations and highly unstable rates for most of the period and accounted for only 1.5% percent of the Black population in the 1930s and still only 4.1% percent in 1974-82. (In another section, we will explore the importance of rising Black population in some of these formerly virtually all-White states as a factor in more recent trends in prison admissions.)

Before the 1970s, the disparities in the Southern states ranged between 2.0 and 3.5 and exhibited relatively little fluctuation or trending across time. The exceptions on the high end were the border states Maryland and Delaware, which had disparity ratios over 6, more like the Northern states. At the other extreme, South Carolina had a disparity ratio of about 1 (i.e. racial equality) through the 1960s. These relatively steady disparity ratios in the rest of the Southern states arise because Black and White prison admission rates tended to move together in the South. That is, in the Southern states, shifts in social control were more evenly spread across Blacks and Whites.

By contrast, disparities in the 17 Northern states with significant Black population were higher and more variable, ranging broadly between 4 and 11, and were generally rising between the 1930s and the 1960s. We can learn more about these patterns by examining each era in turn.

### **Trends Before 1960: Effects of Depression and War**

Disparities in the North fell generally between 1926-7 and 1929-36 because White prison admissions rose more rapidly than Black, while disparities in the South remained relatively steady because prison admissions rose for both races.

Disparities rose between 1929-36 and 1942-46 in both the North and South because White prison admissions fell more rapidly than Black; only two states (Missouri and South Carolina) deviated from this pattern.

Between 1942-6 and 1950, White prison admission rates generally rose, especially in the South, while Black prison admissions generally held steady or rose more slowly, and the Black/White disparity generally fell. ( Only Wisconsin, and Connecticut had higher Black/White disparity in 1950 than 1942-6. )

Thus, the trends through 1950 seem to indicate that Black prison admissions were less volatile than White with respect to the major shocks of the depression and World War II and that shifts in the racial disparity in this period were driven more by changes in White imprisonment than by changes in Black imprisonment. They also show that the Southern states, where the Black population was much larger and official segregation was in place, had substantially lower Black prison admission rates than the North, but also substantially higher White prison admission rates.

None of these trends are consistent with the prior simplistic theories of social control.

### **Civil Rights Era: 1950, 1960, 1964**

We do not have detailed year-to-year data for the Civil Rights decade, only infrequent snapshots that give us tantalizing clues but too little information for definitive conclusions. Most Southern states showed steady disparity ratios between 1950 and 1960, with the disparities for Mississippi, North Carolina and Kentucky going down somewhat and the disparities for Louisiana, West Virginia and Florida going up somewhat. (Georgia and Oklahoma lack data for this comparison.) Between 1960 and 1964, more Southern states showed a rise in disparity, with North Carolina, Delaware, Maryland, and Georgia showing substantial increases, South Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia and Texas showing moderate increases. Disparities were steady between 1960 and 1964 for Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Florida and disparities declined for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Virginia. Putting these together, only the border states of Delaware and West Virginia showed steady increases in the disparity between 1950 and 1964.

Examining the Black and White rates for 1950 and the average of 1960 and 1964, we find that there is no particular evidence of targeting prison admissions to Blacks in the South during the Civil Rights era. Prison admission rates for both races went up in South Carolina, Alabama, North Carolina, Arkansas and Texas; rates went up for Whites but held steady for Blacks in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky; rates went down for both races in Virginia and held steady for both races in Maryland. The trends were more adverse for Blacks in only four states: White rates were steady while Black rates increased in Louisiana, Florida and Delaware, while White rates declined while Black rates rose in West Virginia. There is missing data for Georgia and Oklahoma for this comparison; both states are on the high end of average for both Black and White rates for the years for which there are data. Overall, then, there is no evidence to suggest that the Civil Rights era 1950-1964 led to a targeted imprisonment response in the South.

The North similarly shows no evidence of targeted imprisonment of Blacks during the Civil Rights era. We focus attention on the 17 Northern states whose populations averaged at least 1.5% Black between 1926 and 1982, as the Black prison admission rates for other states are extremely erratic. Between 1950 and the early 1960s, imprisonment rates in these states generally declined for both races, and racial disparities in prison admissions generally declined or stayed constant, rising only in Massachusetts, Nebraska and Pennsylvania.

In short, when the Civil Rights movement was most active, the Black/White disparity in imprisonment did not go up, although it also did not go down appreciably. Imprisonment for both races seems to have been generally going up in the South and holding steady or declining in the North. The Black/White disparity was generally steady or declining modestly. The apparent increased level of prison admissions for both races in the South during the Civil Rights era may point to overall increases in social control during a politically tumultuous period, but there is no evidence that the relative focus on Blacks was any higher during this period of social change. Given what happened in the next decades, it is tempting to read a story backward into this period. Perhaps the upheaval of the Civil Rights Movement did create a kind of impetus toward greater social control of Blacks by Whites, but as long as the Black Movement was in its ascendancy, this impetus was held in check by the political strength of the Civil Rights Movement. This suggestion cannot be tested with the available data, but it is worth keeping in mind as we consider subsequent trends.

### **After Civil Rights: The 1970s**

The trends between the 1960s and the 1970s are markedly different from those for earlier periods. Nearly all states exhibited a sharp increase in the racial disparity in prison admissions between 1960-64 and 1974-82. Comparing the 1960s to the 1970s, most Southern states exhibited a sharp increase in prison admissions for both races as well as a substantial increase in the racial disparity in prison admissions because the Black increase was higher than the White increase. Only Maryland exhibited a decline in the Black prison admission rate (from its previously very high level) and a decline in the disparity ratio. Delaware's rise in Black and White prison admissions was proportional, so its disparity did not increase from its already-high rate. Only Louisiana exhibited a decline in the White prison admission rate. West Virginia's increase in the Black prison admission rate was relatively modest, while Georgia's rise in the racial disparity was relatively modest. Thus, in the South, it looks like there was both an overall increase in social control and a greater targeting of the Black population in the decade **after** the Civil Rights era was over.

The pattern was similar but more variable in the North. Overall, the rate of prison admissions rose for both races but more rapidly for Blacks, leading to a rise in the disparity ratio. However, states varied quite a bit within this trend. We look in detail only at the twelve Northern states which averaged at least 1.5% Black 1926-1982 and had data for both periods. The disparity rose in nine of the twelve. In six states, the disparity rose because Black rates rose more rapidly than White: Massachusetts, Ohio, Rhode Island, Nevada, Missouri, New Hampshire. In two, the White rate actually declined: Wisconsin and Colorado. In Nebraska, the disparity rose modestly from its already very high level as the rate declined for both races but less for Blacks. There were only three exceptions to the overall rise in the disparity ratio: In New York and Pennsylvania, prison admissions rose for both races but the disparity declined, and in Illinois the rise for both races was proportional and the disparity held constant. The overall trend of rising overall imprisonment and rising disparity also applied to the states with very small Black populations, although individual states were more volatile.

In short, to the extent that we can tell from partial data, the general pattern is that Black prison admissions rose more rapidly than White prison admissions between the early 1960s and the late 1970s, and that this overall pattern was relatively consistent across states.



## Migration Patterns

Although exact calculations are impossible, given the incompleteness of the data, it is possible to get an approximate answer to Langan's suggestion that rising Black imprisonment and disparity was due to Black migration from the South to the North. We take the total, northern, and southern Black prison admission rates for five eras (1929-36, 1942-46, 1950, 1960-64, 1974-82) and then recalculate what the total rate for each era would be if the regional rate for that era were the same but the geographic distribution of the Black and White population were what it was in 1929-30, 1960-64 and 1974-82. The results are shown in Table 1 (below). This exercise suggests the Black imprisonment rate and the Black/White disparity would have been higher in the 1930s if the distribution of Blacks and Whites between the North and South had been what it became in the 1960s and 1970s, but the Black imprisonment rate and the Black/White disparity of the 1960s and 1970s would not have been appreciably lower if the population distribution had been what it was in the 1930s. In short, it appears that very little of the rising Black imprisonment in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be attributed to the Great Migration.

Inspection of the patterns in the table shows that, through 1950, changes in the Black/White disparity arose primarily from differences between the ways World War II and its aftermath impacted Blacks and Whites. During the Civil Rights era, Southern states exhibited rising White and Black prison admissions between 1950 and 1964, while prison admissions for both races were relatively flat in the North. Black prison admissions rose more steeply than White in both regions in the 1970s, but the rate of growth was faster in the South and North-South differences in Black imprisonment disappeared in the 1970s. However, because of the regional differences in White imprisonment, the regional difference in the disparity ratio persisted.

Table 1. Comparison of observed Black and White prison admission rates and Black/White disparity ratio with adjusted rates and ratios. Adjustment uses the observed Northern and Southern rates within an era and recalculates the national total on the assumption that the proportions residing in the North and South were those of another era.

	Era				
	1929-36	1942-46	1950	1960-64	1974-82
<b>Black rate</b>					
Observed	116	98	92	131	178
Adj to 74-82	137	109	98	135	178
Adj to 60-64	131	104	94	131	176
Adj to 29-36	116	95	88	126	174
<b>White Rate</b>					
Observed	36	19	23	27	31
Adj to 74-82	37	20	24	27	31
Adj to 60-64	36	19	23	27	31
Adj to 29-36	36	19	23	26	30
<b>Disparity</b>					
Observed	3.2	5.1	3.9	4.9	5.7
Adj to 74-82	3.7	5.6	4.1	4.9	5.7
Adj to 60-64	3.6	5.4	4.0	4.9	5.7
Adj to 29-36	3.2	4.9	3.8	4.8	5.7

### Percent Black

The final question is whether and how the percent of the population that is Black affects Black and White imprisonment and how this interacts with region. The table below shows the bivariate correlation between a state's percent Black and the Black and White prison admission rates for each era. The top line in each cell shows the correlation for all available data for an era, while the bottom line shows the range of correlations for subsets of the data that are non-missing for pairs of eras. Despite the sometimes-wide instability in the correlations due to missing data, there are clear patterns. First, the correlation between the Black prison admission rate and the percent Black is always negative across time and region. Second, this negative correlation weakened across time in the South, while it remained relatively consistent in the North. Third, in the South, the correlation between the White imprisonment rate and the percent Black changed from strongly negative before World War II to weakly positive by the 1970s. Fourth, in the North, the correlation between the White imprisonment rate and the percent Black was generally very weakly negative.

We also used linear regressions (not shown) to assess the separate and joint effects of South and Percent Black for each era. These results confirm the pattern of correlations. For Blacks, it is the Percent Black and not region that is significant, although interaction tests indicate that the magnitude of the linear effect of Percent Black is sometimes weaker in the South than in the North. For Whites, all the effects are generally quite weak. After 1960, there is a weak positive effect of South on White prison admissions, with a weaker negative effect of Percent Black. In the depression years (1929-36), there is a suppressor effect: neither South nor Percent Black alone is a significant predictor of White prison admissions, but when they are controlled for each

other, South is significantly positive and Percent Black is significantly negative. Thus, whatever regional differences there are between the North and the South seem to affect White imprisonment more than Black.

Table 2. For states, correlation of prison admission rate with average percent Black 1926-82. Note: due to missing data, the correlations for each era are based on different subsets of states. Range of correlations is given for subsets of paired comparisons.

Era	Black			White		
	South	North (all)	North (%B>1.5)	South	North (all)	North (%B>1.5)
1926-1927	-.58 -.58/-.53	-.26 -.31/+.09	-.25 -.42/-.07	-.55 -.44/-.55	-.12 -.13/+.13	-.15 -.30/-.03
1929-1936	-.53 -.58/-.49	-.42 -.52/-.04	-.43 -.50/-.22	-.68 -.72/-.62	-.22 -.30/-.08	-.34 -.38/-.21
1942-1946	-.23 -.33/-.21	-.50 -.55/-.34	-.49 -.52/-.34	+.05 -.34/+.11	-.14 -.37/-.14	-.22 -.37/-.17
1950	-.34 -.36/-.30	-.39 -.53/-.22	-.56 -.57/-.47	-.39 -.57/-.22	-.32 -.46/-.14	-.33 -.39/-.24
1960 & 1964*	-.30 -.31/-.22	-.15 -.40/-.15	-.40 -.47/-.40	+.05 -.14/+.26	-.13 -.26/-.13	-.25 -.27/-.25
1974-1982	-.25 -.27/-.08	-.36 -.56/-.08	-.48 -.55/-.42	+.20 +.19/+.31	-.19 -.28/+.10	-.19 -.19/+.01
Summary	Neg, declining strength	Negative; data erratic, probably no trend	Negative, consistent	Neg before 1940, weak pos in 1970s; mixed between	Weak (neg.)	Weak neg.

\* Data for 1960 & 1964 includes only one state with Black population exceeding 1.5%

The data seem quite overwhelmingly to reject a "threat" argument which claims that there is more threat to Whites from Blacks when Blacks are a higher proportion of the population and that there will be higher Black prison admissions when there is more threat. Instead, there is more support for a political strength model that suggests that Blacks are more likely to be imprisoned where their numbers are smaller. The declining strength of the negative relation in the South after World War II is consistent with the suggestion that rigid segregation may have substituted for policing as a mode of social control before the Civil Rights Movement.

Overall, sketchy as they are, data from 1926 to 1982 give lie to many of the common assumptions about race relations in the United States. They suggest that the use of prison to control the Black population is a long-standing feature of Northern states and call into question simple models of "threat" that do not also consider a group's political and economic strength.

## Appendix

### Checking for the impact of missing data

Because there is so much missing data, comparisons between eras can be distorted by changes in the mix of states that reported. This appendix attempts to address this problem. Table A1 summarizes the pattern of available data. As a way for controlling for this problem in assessing trends, we calculated average rates within eras from whatever data a state had available in that era, and calculated trends using all possible subsets of states that had data for each pair of eras. That is, for example, the average Black rate for 1929-36 was calculated for all states that reported at least once in those years, and then for the subset of states that also reported in 1926-7, then the subset that also reported in 1942-46, then the subset that also reported in 1950, etc. Figure A1 plots these rates comparing the South and the North and states with low, medium and high percentage Black. The lower line in each pair is the minimum rate (or disparity) calculated in that era for that group of states from among all the subsets that had non-missing data for other eras; and the upper line is the maximum. When the gap between the minimum and the maximum is large, this is because the inclusion or exclusion of a set of states from a particular era's summary made a big difference in the group average. This gap is wide when the states in the group have high variability. As the charts indicate, this variability is most significant for estimates of Black rates for the states with very small Black populations, and for Southern states in the early 1970s. Of course we cannot draw any conclusions about the states that did not participate at all in these programs, but we can assess the general trends and the range of variation depending on the subset of states examined.

These graphs indicate that the conclusions about the trends in imprisonment rates between the North and the South or by Percent Black are not altered even in the face of missing data problems.

Table A1: Data Availability Table

	North	South
<4% Black	RI all WI all NH not 42-46 MA not 74-77 NE not 74-77 CO not 78-82 ID not 60-64 MN not 60-64 MT not 60-64 OR not 60-64 UT not 60-64 WA not 60-64 WY not 60-64 NM not 60-62, 26-27 SD not 42-46, 60-64 CT not 74-82 VT only 29-36 & 74-7	
4-9% Black	IL all MO all NY all PA all NV not 26-27 MI not 50 OH not 74-77 CA not 60-64 IN not 74-82 KS not 74-82	KY all WV all OK 27-50 only
13-43% Black		DE not 26-27 TN all TX not 26-27 MS not 42-46 MD not 74-77 NC not 74-77 SC not 74-77 LA not 78-82 AL not 26-36 GA not 26-36, not 50 AR not 74-82 VA not 74-82 FL not 26-27, not 74-82

Figure A1. Assessing effect of reporting variability on historical imprisonment rates

