



*Race and Male Employment in the  
Wake of the Great Recession:*

*Black Male Employment Rates in Milwaukee  
And the Nation's Largest Metro Areas  
2010*

by:

Marc V. Levine  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
Center for Economic Development  
Working Paper  
January 2012

## *I. Introduction*

Over the past four decades, the job market for working-age African American males has essentially collapsed in cities across the country. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a number of studies have revealed (including several by this Center), nearly half of working-age black males were not employed in many inner city neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> Despite panglossian depictions of increasingly “competitive inner cities” and “market-driven” economic development, many inner city neighborhoods across the U.S. continued to experience the social and economic distress that occurs, to borrow William Julius Wilson’s evocative expression, when work disappears.

As a coda to this four-decade labor market meltdown, the Great Recession that began in 2007 has added another devastating blow to inner city economies and the employment prospects of African American males. Even though the recession “officially” ended nationally in 2009, employment continued to contract in most metropolitan areas through 2010, the year for which the most recent data on race and employment at the local level are available. Consequently, in 2010 the employment rate for African American males reached historic lows in metropolitan areas across the country. By 2010, in five of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas, fewer than half of working-age black males held jobs. In 25 of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas, fewer than 55 percent of working-age black males were, in fact, employed.

No metro area has witnessed more precipitous erosion in the labor market for black males over the past 40 years than has Milwaukee. Once a region posting black male employment rates above the national average, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Milwaukee’s black male employment rate had plummeted to among the lowest in the country. Racial disparities in male employment had grown wider in Milwaukee than in any metropolis in the nation.<sup>2</sup> For black Milwaukee, even before the Great Recession of 2007, there had already been over two decades of a “stealth depression.”

The 2010 data, however, revealed a new nadir for black male employment in Milwaukee. Only 44.7 percent of the metro area’s working-age black males (those between the ages of 16-64) were employed in 2010, the lowest rate ever recorded for black males in Milwaukee, and a substantial decline from 52.9 percent in 2008, the start of the Great Recession. Only two of the 40 large metro areas analyzed in this report –Buffalo and Detroit—reported lower black male employment rates in 2010 than did Milwaukee. Moreover, Milwaukee also registered, by several percentage points, the largest racial disparity in employment rates for males of any metropolitan area in the country.

The amplitude of the black male jobs crisis in Milwaukee is even more starkly apparent in the employment rate for black males in their *prime* working years (ages 25-54), which reached a new historical nadir of 52.7 percent in the region in 2010. This is the lowest employment rate among black males in their prime working years of any metropolitan area in the country – lower, even, than in Detroit. It is more than 32 percentage points lower than the 85 percent employment rate for prime working age white males in Milwaukee – a disparity that is more than triple the rather modest racial employment gap in the region in 1970. Perhaps no statistic better epitomizes the severity of Milwaukee’s black male employment crisis: ***by 2010, barely more than half of African American males in their prime working years were employed, compared to 85 percent almost forty years ago.***

This report is divided into three sections. First, we present the 2010 census data on employment rates in metro Milwaukee, by race and ethnicity, placing the recent data in historical perspective. Second, we examine employment rates in 40 of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas, not only surveying racial disparities in employment in 2010, but also examining trends in a number of these metro areas since the 1970s. These historical and comparative data provide an important benchmark for understanding labor market conditions in Milwaukee. Finally, and very briefly, we present some quite preliminary, working hypotheses of factors that may explain variations among metropolitan areas in black male employment rates. These factors may point towards new policies, as the deepening crisis of black male employment in Milwaukee and most metro areas across the country underscores the ineffectiveness of the current mix of policies and strategies.

## ***II. Gauging the Labor Market***

The most commonly reported measure of labor market conditions is the unemployment rate. This statistic measures the percentage of people over the age of 16 in an area’s civilian labor force, actively looking for work, who do not have a job. It is the metric most frequently used in comparing the state of the labor market in cities or regions or among various racial and ethnic groups.

Economists generally agree, however, the unemployment rate is a seriously flawed and often misleading indicator of labor market performance. As the Bureau of Labor Statistics has noted, “some have argued that this measure is too restricted, and that it does not adequately capture the breadth of labor market problems.” Austan Goolsbee, former economic policy adviser to

President Obama and economist at the University of Chicago, has forcefully argued that the unemployment rate has understated true levels of joblessness since the mid-1980s, “only because government programs, especially Social Security disability, have effectively been buying people off the unemployment rolls and reclassifying them as not ‘in the labor force.’” “In other words,” argues Goolsbee, “the government has cooked the books.” He calls this the “unemployment myth.”<sup>3</sup>

Sophisticated economics journalists such as *The New York Times*’ David Leonhardt have also analyzed the shortcomings of the official unemployment rate. The indicator, argues Leonhardt, fails to account for the enormous increase over the past three decades “in the number of people who fall into the no man’s land of the labor market... These people are not employed, but they also don’t fit the government’s [narrow] definition of the unemployment – those who ‘do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior four weeks, and are currently available for work.’”<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, Harvard sociologist Bruce Western has pointed out that the official unemployment rate is particularly misleading in gauging the labor market status of historically disadvantaged groups. This is not only because it misses discouraged workers and those “marginally attached” to the labor market, categories in which disadvantaged groups are overrepresented. In addition, Western argues, the mass incarceration of black males in the U.S. since the 1970s has artificially deflated the unemployment rate by removing thousands of working-age black males – who otherwise would be counted in the employment and unemployment statistics-- from the labor force.<sup>5</sup>

For all these reasons, as Leonhardt notes, is “there is no doubt that the unemployment rate is a less telling measure than it once was. It’s simply no longer the best barometer of the country’s economic health.” As an alternative, he and others recommend looking to the “employment-population” ratio for a “truer picture” of labor market conditions. The “employment-population” ratio, also called the “employment rate,” is also the favored labor market indicator of economists such as Paul Krugman and organizations such as the OECD, which use it to make cross-national comparisons of labor market conditions.<sup>6</sup> Put simply, the employment-population ratio measures the percentage of the working-age population (or a subset of that population) that is employed. Its particular value as a labor market indicator is that it tells us, much better than the flawed, narrower unemployment rate, the extent to which the working-age population in a community or among certain racial or ethnic groups is, in fact, working – which is, in the end, what we really want to know about the health of a labor market. Thus, we agree with Leonhardt that the employment-population ratio gives a “true picture” of labor market

conditions, and this report presents current and historical data on the employment rates in Milwaukee and other large metropolitan areas.<sup>7</sup>

### ***III. Race and Male Employment Rates in Milwaukee: 2010***

As Table 1 reveals, only 44.7 percent of working-age African American males in the four-county metropolitan Milwaukee region held a job in 2010, a substantial decline from the 48.9 percent rate registered in 2007, the cusp of the Great Recession. As noted earlier, this 44.7 percent black male employment rate is the lowest level in metro Milwaukee ever recorded in census data. The employment rate for black males in Milwaukee has fallen by over 28 percentage points since 1970; by almost 8 percentage points alone since 2000.

Not unexpectedly, employment rates for both white and Hispanic males also fell significantly between 2007-2010, a sign of the devastating impact of the Great Recession, which shaved 50,000 jobs, or almost six percent of the employment base, from the metro Milwaukee economy. All ethnic and racial groups were affected; indeed, as economists have noted, the employment-population ratio for all males has been declining nationally for a generation, a troubling indicator of diminishing labor force participation and sub-optimal national job creation.<sup>8</sup> As Table 1 shows, this decline has been occurring for all ethnic groups in Milwaukee since 1970.

But, given the more profound long-term, structural decline in black male employment rates in Milwaukee, the racial disparities remain deep. Indeed, as Table 11 below (p. 19) shows, Milwaukee's racial gap in employment rates remains the widest among large U.S. metropolitan areas. In 1970, the difference between black and white male employment rates in Milwaukee was 11.5 percentage points; by 2010, that gap had nearly tripled, to 32.7 percentage points. The black male employment rate in 2010 was over 20 points lower than the Hispanic male rate.

Table 2, focusing on males in their prime working years (between the ages of 25 and 54), provides even more striking data on race, ethnicity, and plummeting employment-population ratios in Milwaukee. After four decades of massive declines and in the wake of the Great Recession, by 2010 barely more than half (52.7 percent) of Milwaukee's African American males in their prime working years held a job. As Chart 2 (below, p. 12) shows, Milwaukee now holds the dubious distinction of posting the lowest employment rate for this critical age cohort in any of the large metropolitan areas examined in this report. This 2010 rate is down from 84.8 percent in 1970 and from an already low 61.1 percent in 2000. Employment rates for prime working age males have declined in Milwaukee across racial and ethnic lines: among white

males, for example, the rate has dropped from a full employment level 94.5 percent in 1970 and 89.7 percent in 2000, to 85.1 percent in 2010. Hispanic “prime-age” males have absorbed a significant drop in their employment rates since the beginning of the Great Recession, although the Hispanic rate remains higher in 2010 than it was in 2000.

**Table 1:**

**Racial Disparities in Employment Rates for Working-Age Males:  
Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1970-2010**

(percentage of males, ages 16-64, employed)

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>
1970	73.4	85.9	80.4
1980	61.6	83.8	72.9
1990	55.9	84.8	70.8
2000	52.4	84.0	65.9
2007	48.9	81.4	77.1
2010	44.7	77.4	65.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1970-2000*; *American Community Survey, 2007, 2010*

Nevertheless, notwithstanding these declines among whites and Hispanics, the collapse in the black male employment since the 1970s has produced a sharp widening in racial disparities for Milwaukee males in their prime working years. In 1970, the black male employment rate among 25-54 year olds in Milwaukee was 9.7 percentage points lower than the white rate; by 2009, that gap had more than tripled, to 32.4 percentage points. In 1970 the black male employment was 5.4 points lower than the Hispanic rate in Milwaukee; by 2010, it was almost 20 points lower.

**Table 2:**

**Racial Disparities in Employment Rates for Metro Milwaukee Males  
in their prime working years (ages 25-54): 1970-2010**

(percentage of males, ages 25-54, employed)

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>
1970	84.8	94.5	90.2
1980	74.9	92.3	90.4
1990	64.9	92.1	75.1
2000	61.1	89.7	70.6
2007	56.8	89.6	84.3
2010	52.7	85.1	72.6

Table 3 offers a stunning indicator of the racial disparities Greater Milwaukee’s labor market. Youth, of course, typically have much lower employment rates than do men in their prime working years; as Table 3 confirms, that is the case *within* each racial and ethnic group in Milwaukee. However, the *between* group differences are astonishing. In every age cohort, the black male employment rate lags over 32 percentage points below the white rate, and over 20 points below the Hispanic male rate. And, in an inversion of the traditional expectations regarding age and employment, in 2010 the employment rate for white young adults (ages 16-24) in metro Milwaukee was over six percentage points *higher* than that of African American males in their prime working years (ages 25-54). The Hispanic youth rate was only three percentage points lower than the black “prime years” rate. These are simply astounding disparities and speak to the extraordinary weakness in the black male labor market in Milwaukee.

**Table 3:**

**Male Employment Rates in Metropolitan Milwaukee: 2010**

Percentage employed, by Race, Ethnicity, and Age

<b>AGE CATEGORY</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>
Young Adults (ages 16-24)	26.8	59.2	49.5
Prime Working Age (25-54)	52.7	85.1	72.6
All Working Age (16-64)	44.7	77.4	65.0

Source: *American Community Survey, 2010*

The official *unemployment* rate for black males in Milwaukee has climbed precipitously from 8.6 percent in 1970, to 21.7 percent in 2007 (just before the Great Recession), to 29.5 percent in 2010. These numbers are disquieting in themselves, but, as noted earlier, given the shortcomings of the unemployment rate as an indicator, they tell only part of the story. The reality that only 44.7 percent of working age black males in Milwaukee were actually *employed* in 2010 is not only the result of high unemployment; it is also the product of a massive decline since the 1970s in black male labor force participation (working-age men who not employed but not counted in the unemployment statistics). As I have analyzed elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> the shrinking percentage of Milwaukee’s black males in the labor force over the past decades can be accounted for by several factors: 1) the rise of mass incarceration; 2) changes in disability rules enabling men who had historically been counted as unemployed to be shifted to disability rolls; and 3) an increase in workers who have dropped out of the labor force, “discouraged” or “marginally

attached” to the labor market because of chronically poor employment prospects. All of these trends disproportionately affected the black male employment rate. An average 5,000 working-age black males have been incarcerated annually in Milwaukee since the early 2000s, a growing number for non-violent drug offenses.<sup>10</sup> These are 5,000 men annually, not employed, but not counted in official unemployment statistics, as they are not in the active labor force. A fact rich in symbolism and a telling indicator of the social and economic crisis facing Milwaukee: ***more Milwaukee African American males were admitted to Wisconsin correctional facilities in an average year in the 2000s than were employed at the end of the decade as production workers in factories in the city of Milwaukee.***

As for disability, the number of working-age males in Milwaukee not employed and reporting an employment disability shot up by 63 percent between 2000-2007, ten times the population growth in working-age males. Indirect data suggest that the black male disability rate increased over two and one-half times faster than the white rate.<sup>11</sup> These data would seem to confirm the Goolsbee, Autour, and Dugan arguments that expansion of the employment disability system is, to some extent, camouflaging the true extent of labor market distress in communities like Milwaukee.

Table 4 shows the degree to which non-participation in the labor force, as opposed to simply unemployment, has become a central component of black male joblessness since the 1970s. Again, the category of black males in their prime working years (ages 25-54) stands out: by 2010, over one-quarter of this cohort was not in the Milwaukee labor force (and thus not counted in the official unemployment statistics). That is triple the rate of labor force non-participation of this cohort in the 1970s, and almost quadruple the rate for white males in their prime working years in Milwaukee. The non-participation rate for young black males is striking as well: in 1970, the same percentage of white and black males between 20-24 years old was not in the labor force. By 2010, the black rate of non-participation was triple the white rate.



**Table 4:**

**Percentage of Working-Age Males Not in the Labor Force, By Race  
Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1970-2010**

% not in labor force

Age Cohort	Race	1970	1990	2010
16-19	Black	59.5	56.5	68.2
	White	44.5	37.5	51.1
20-24	Black	16.4	26.1	37.3
	White	16.4	12.2	11.2
25-54	Black	8.7	22.1	26.5
	White	3.4	4.5	7.1
55-64	Black	27.6	50.8	46.8
	White	14.1	30.0	24.3
16-64	Black	20.3	31.7	36.5
	White	11.2	11.4	14.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, various years

Finally, deindustrialization has undoubtedly been a particularly salient factor in the erosion of the black male employment rate in Milwaukee since the 1970s. The city of Milwaukee, where almost 90% of the region's black males live, has lost over three-quarters of its industrial jobs since the 1960s. As Table 5 suggests, this manufacturing decline has disproportionately affected the employment prospects of African American males. In 1970 54.3 percent of Milwaukee black males were employed in 1970 as factory operatives, more than double the white percentage. By 2009, only 14.7 percent of black males were working in Milwaukee factories, about the same percentage as white males. By 2009, in fact, even though working-age black males outnumbered Hispanic males by 55 percent in Milwaukee, there were more Hispanic male production workers (7,200) than black male production workers (4,842) in the region, a sign of the degree to which manufacturing is no longer the bulwark it has been historically for the Milwaukee black male working class.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 5:**

**Percentage of Employed Males Holding Production Jobs:  
By Race, Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1970-2009**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>
1970	54.3	23.2	46.7
2000	20.4	14.7	31.2
2007-09	14.7	13.0	23.4

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Community Survey, 2007-09*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population and Housing*; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American Factfinder, Census 2000*

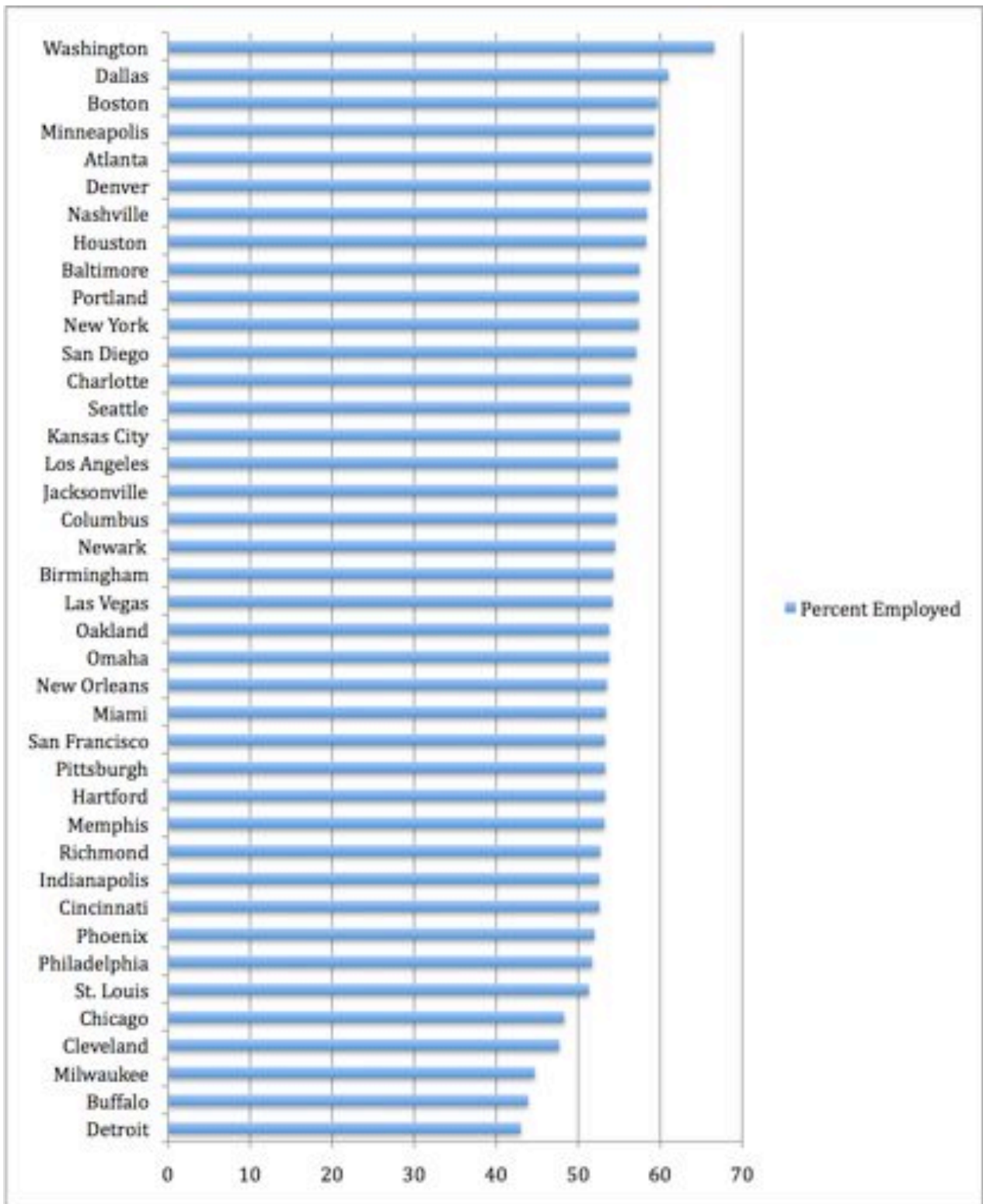
***IV. Race and Employment Rates in Large Metropolitan Areas:  
Historical and Comparative Perspectives, 1970-2010***

In the wake of the Great Recession, black male employment rates fell across America's largest metropolitan areas. Between 2007-2010, among the 40 large metro areas examined in this report, the number posting black male employment rates below 55 percent grew from five to a remarkable 25; the number with black male employment rates below 50 percent grew from three to five. In the central cities of these regions, the labor market situation was even more disastrous for black males. In a whopping 17 of these 40 central cities, fewer than 50 percent of working-age African American males were employed in 2010; in 34 of the 40, the employment rate was under 55 percent. By any reckoning, the 2010 data reveal how pervasively, to borrow Wilson's expression, work has disappeared for black males in urban America.

Charts 1 and 2 display black male employment rates in 2010 in our sample of 40 large metropolitan areas for two age cohorts: the entire working-age population (ages 16-64), and prime working age males (ages 25-54). For both cohorts, the same five metropolitan areas posted the lowest black male employment rates: Detroit, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Chicago, and Cleveland. Metro Detroit registered the worst black male employment rate for the entire working-age population (43.0 percent), while Milwaukee held the unenviable position of lowest employment rate for prime working-age black males (52.7 percent).<sup>13</sup> The majority of the metro areas fell within an employment rate range of 53-59 percent for all black males, and a band of 60-68 percent for black males in their prime working-years.

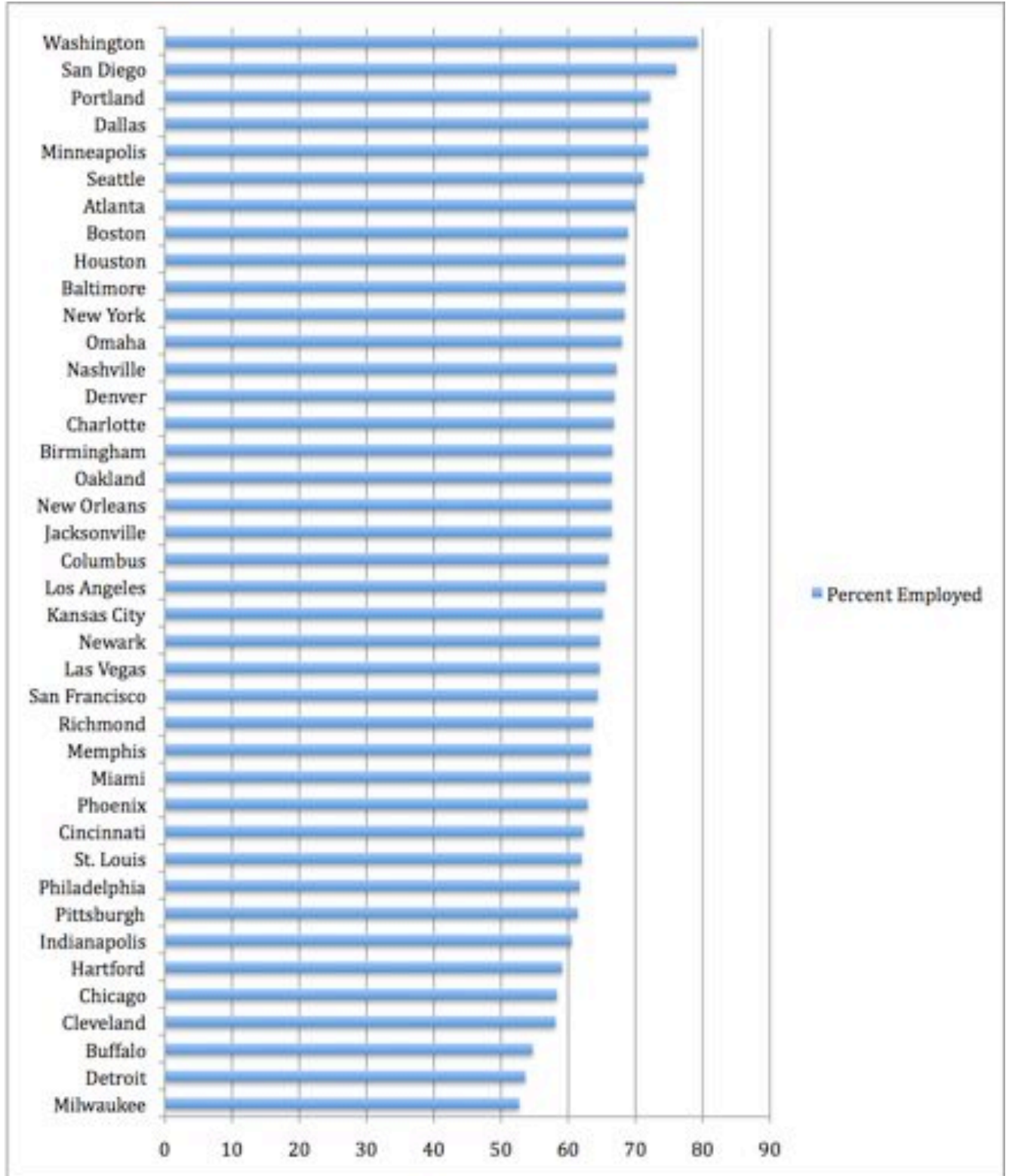
**Chart 1:**

**Black Male Employment Rates in Selected Metro Areas: 2010  
All Working-Age Males (16-64)**



**Chart 2:**

**Black Male Employment Rates in Selected Metro Areas: 2010  
Prime Working Years Males (25-54)**



Looking back historically, these rates represent a culmination of a forty-year meltdown in black male employment in large U.S. metropolitan areas. Tables 6-8 report on black male employment rates back to 1970 for a subset of the metro areas in this study. In every metropolis, black male employment rates declined between 1970 and 2010, between 9.7 and 28.7 percentage points for all working-age black males, and between 7.0 and 32.1 percentage points for prime working-age black males (see Table 8). For both cohorts, Milwaukee registered the largest percentage point decline over the forty-year period of all the metro areas we examined. As Table 6 shows, the average black male employment rate in these metropolitan areas declined steadily after 1970, and by almost 20 percentage points between 1970 and 2010.

**Table 6:**  
**Mean Black Male Employment Rates in Large Metropolitan Areas, 1970-2010**

<b>AGE COHORT</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2010</b>
16-64	72.3	62.0	54.1
25-54	83.3	70.3	64.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, various years

Not only did Milwaukee suffer the largest absolute percentage point drop in black male employment rates between 1970 and 2010 in our pool of metro areas, but as Tables 9 and 10 show, Milwaukee's relative ranking among metro areas has declined markedly over the years. For example, in 1970, metro areas Milwaukee's 84.8 percent employment rate for black males in the 25-54 year old age cohort placed it 10<sup>th</sup> among 26 large metro areas studied. By 2010, though, the black male employment rate in Milwaukee had fallen to 52.7 percent, dead last among these metro areas.

**Table 7:****Change in Black Male Employment Rates in Selected Metropolitan Areas: 1970-2010**

Percentage of working-age (16-64) black males employed

<b>METRO AREA</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>PCT. POINT CHANGE IN RATES</b>
<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>73.4</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>28.7</b>
Detroit	71.6	43.0	28.6
Cleveland	73.7	47.7	26.0
Chicago	72.1	48.3	23.8
Buffalo	67.5	43.9	23.6
St. Louis	74.1	51.3	22.8
Charlotte	79.2	56.5	22.7
Richmond	73.7	52.7	21.0
Philadelphia	72.7	51.7	21.0
Newark	75.3	54.5	20.8
Kansas City	74.9	55.1	19.8
Cincinnati	70.9	52.6	18.3
Houston	75.9	58.3	17.6
Atlanta	76.1	59.0	17.1
Boston	75.2	59.7	15.5
Baltimore	72.8	57.5	15.3
San Francisco	68.2	53.3	14.9
Birmingham	69.2	54.3	14.9
Memphis	67.9	53.2	14.7
New York	71.8	57.4	14.4
New Orleans	67.8	53.5	14.3
Oakland	67.3	53.8	13.5
Minneapolis	71.5	59.3	12.2
Dallas	72.2	61.0	11.2
Washington, D.C.	77.0	66.6	10.4
Nashville	68.0	58.3	9.7

**Table 8:**

**Change in Employment Rates For Black Males in Prime Working Years  
in Selected Metropolitan Areas: 1970-2010**

Percentage of working-age (25-54) black males employed

<b>METRO AREA</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>PCT. POINT CHANGE IN RATES</b>
<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>84.8</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>32.1</b>
Detroit	83.2	53.6	29.6
Cleveland	84.3	58.1	26.2
Chicago	84.0	58.3	25.7
Buffalo	79.9	54.7	25.2
St. Louis	85.7	62.0	23.7
Richmond	86.0	63.7	22.3
Charlotte	87.9	66.8	21.1
Kansas City	86.2	65.2	21.0
Cincinnati	83.2	62.3	20.9
Memphis	83.8	63.4	20.4
Newark	84.6	64.7	19.9
Philadelphia	81.3	61.7	19.6
Birmingham	85.9	66.6	19.3
Houston	87.2	68.5	18.7
Boston	85.2	68.9	16.3
Atlanta	85.7	70.0	15.7
New Orleans	81.3	66.5	14.8
New York	82.7	68.4	14.3
Nashville	80.9	67.4	13.5
Baltimore	81.2	68.5	12.7
San Francisco	76.9	64.4	12.5
Minneapolis	83.6	72.9	10.7
Oakland	76.0	66.5	9.5
Dallas	79.4	71.9	7.5
Washington, D.C.	86.3	79.3	7.0

**Table 9:**

**Employment Rates for Working-Age Black Males in Selected  
Large Metropolitan Areas: 1970-2010**  
(percentage of black males, ages 16-64, employed)

<b>Rank</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2010</b>
1	Charlotte 79.2	Washington, D.C. 74.5	Washington, D.C 66.6
2	Washington, D.C. 77.0	Charlotte 73.8	Dallas 61.0
3	Atlanta 76.1	Atlanta 70.9	Boston 59.7
4	Boston 75.2	Richmond 68.0	Minneapolis 59.3
5	Houston 75.9	Nashville 67.3	Atlanta 59.0
6	Newark 75.3	Dallas 66.9	Nashville 58.3
7	Kansas City 74.9	Newark 65.4	Houston 58.3
8	St. Louis 74.1	Boston 64.0	Baltimore 57.5
9	Cleveland 73.7	Baltimore 63.5	New York 57.4
10	Richmond 73.7	Houston 63.4	Charlotte 56.5
11	Milwaukee 73.4	Minneapolis 62.9	Kansas City 55.1
12	Baltimore 72.8	New York 61.7	Newark 54.5
13	Philadelphia 72.7	Birmingham 61.3	Birmingham 54.3
14	Dallas 72.2	Memphis 61.0	Oakland 53.8
15	Chicago 72.1	Kansas City 60.8	New Orleans 53.5
16	New York 71.8	Oakland 60.0	San Francisco 53.3
17	Detroit 71.6	Philadelphia 60.0	Memphis 53.2
18	Minneapolis 71.5	Cincinnati 59.2	Richmond 52.7
19	Cincinnati 70.9	St. Louis 58.7	Cincinnati 52.6
20	Birmingham 69.2	Chicago 57.5	Philadelphia 51.7
21	San Francisco 68.2	Cleveland 57.0	St. Louis 51.3
22	Nashville 68.0	Milwaukee 55.9	Chicago 48.3
23	Memphis 67.9	San Francisco 55.8	Cleveland 47.7
24	New Orleans 67.8	New Orleans 55.5	Milwaukee 44.7
25	Buffalo 67.5	Detroit 53.7	Buffalo 43.9
26	Oakland 67.3	Buffalo 51.0	Detroit 43.0



**Table 10:**  
**Employment Rates for Prime Working-Age Black Males in Selected**  
**Large Metropolitan Areas: 1970-2010**  
(percentage of black males, ages 25-54, employed)

Rank	1970	1990	2010
1	Charlotte 87.9	Charlotte 82.8	Washington, D.C 79.3
2	Houston 87.2	Washington, D.C. 80.0	Minneapolis 72.9
3	Washington, D.C. 86.3	Atlanta 79.0	Dallas 71.9
4	Kansas City 86.2	Nashville 76.7	Atlanta 70.0
5	Richmond 86.0	Richmond 76.5	Boston 68.9
6	Birmingham 85.9	Dallas 75.1	Baltimore 68.5
7	Atlanta 85.7	Newark 75.0	Houston 68.5
8	St. Louis 85.7	Houston 72.5	New York 68.4
9	Boston 85.2	Boston 71.3	Nashville 67.4
10	Milwaukee 84.8	Memphis 71.5	Charlotte 66.8
11	Newark 84.6	Birmingham 70.8	Birmingham 66.6
12	Cleveland 84.3	New York 70.6	New Orleans 66.5
13	Chicago 84.0	Minneapolis 69.8	Oakland 66.5
14	Memphis 83.8	St. Louis 69.2	Kansas City 65.2
15	Minneapolis 83.6	Kansas City 69.1	Newark 64.7
16	Cincinnati 83.2	Cincinnati 68.2	San Francisco 64.4
17	Detroit 83.2	Oakland 67.9	Richmond 63.7
18	New York 82.7	Philadelphia 67.5	Memphis 63.4
19	Philadelphia 81.3	Chicago 66.7	Cincinnati 62.3
20	New Orleans 81.3	New Orleans 66.4	St. Louis 62.0
21	Baltimore 81.2	Cleveland 66.2	Philadelphia 61.7
22	Nashville 80.9	Milwaukee 64.9	Chicago 58.3
23	Buffalo 79.9	Baltimore 63.5	Cleveland 58.1
24	Dallas 79.4	Detroit 62.2	Buffalo 54.7
25	San Francisco 76.9	San Francisco 60.5	Detroit 53.6
26	Oakland 76.0	Buffalo 57.9	Milwaukee 52.7

As black male employment rates have plummeted across urban America, racial disparities in employment rates have widened considerably, especially in places like Milwaukee. Tables 11 and 12 report racial disparities in male employment rates in our pool of large metropolitan areas. For both the “all working age males” cohort and “prime working-age males” cohort, Milwaukee registered the widest racial gap among large metro areas in employment rates: in both categories, the white male rate was over 32 points higher than the black rate. For the 25-54 year old category, this represents more than tripling of the racial gap in employment rates that existed in Milwaukee in 1970. As we have noted, male employment rates have fallen since the 1970s across racial lines. However, although employment rates for white males in their prime working years are down in places like Milwaukee from the full employment levels of nearly 95 percent posted in the 1970s, they have not fallen nearly so steeply as has the black rate – hence, the widening racial employment gap. Moreover, through 2010, Milwaukee’s white male employment rate ranked relatively high compared to other metro areas: 9<sup>th</sup> among the 40 metro areas for all working-age white males; 10<sup>th</sup> among the 40 for prime working age males. By contrast, as we’ve noted, for black males, Milwaukee ranks last, or next-to-last, for both cohorts. In short, the huge racial disparities in male employment rates in Milwaukee stem not only from the disastrous conditions facing African American males, but also from the relative strength, compared to other metro areas, of the labor market for white males in Milwaukee.

Milwaukee may be the metro area with the deepest racial disparities in male employment rates, but racial gaps are pronounced in metro areas across the country, as Tables 11 and 12 make clear. Consider this: In 2010, in only two metro areas (Washington, D.C. and Dallas) was the *black* male employment rate *higher* than 60 percent; conversely, in only two metro areas (Portland and Detroit) was the employment rate for white males *lower* than 70 percent. Washington, D.C. registered the highest employment rates for all working-age black males (66.6 percent) and for prime working-age black males (79.4 percent). Yet, the top-ranked black male employment rate in Washington, D.C. was lower than even the lowest white male employment rate in *any* of the large metropolitan areas examined in this study (for both age-cohorts).

The degree to which the racial gaps in male employment have grown significantly over the past 40 years can be seen graphically in Charts 3-16. These charts examine employment-population ratios in every census year since 1970, by race, for five older, historical industrial Northeast-Midwest metropolises: Baltimore, Boston, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and St. Louis.

**Table 11:****Racial Disparities in Male Employment Rates in Selected Metropolitan Areas****All Working-Age Males, By Race: 2010**

Percentage of working-age (16-64) males employed

<b>METRO AREA</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>PCT. GAP IN BLACK/ WHITE RATES</b>
Milwaukee	44.7	77.4	32.7
Buffalo	43.9	72.2	28.3
Omaha	53.8	82.0	28.2
Chicago	48.3	75.8	27.5
Cleveland	47.7	74.6	26.9
Detroit	43.0	68.1	25.1
Richmond	52.7	77.3	24.6
Hartford	53.3	76.8	23.5
St. Louis	51.3	74.5	23.2
Philadelphia	51.7	74.8	23.1
Memphis	53.2	75.9	22.7
Kansas City	55.1	77.7	22.6
Indianapolis	52.6	74.4	21.8
Phoenix	52.0	73.6	21.6
New Orleans	53.5	75.1	21.6
San Francisco	53.3	74.1	20.8
Baltimore	57.5	78.3	20.8
Newark	54.5	74.7	20.2
Cincinnati	52.6	72.5	19.9
Denver	58.8	78.2	19.4
Houston	58.3	77.6	19.3
Pittsburgh	53.3	72.4	19.1
Minneapolis	59.3	78.4	19.1
Columbus	54.7	73.7	19.0
Miami	53.4	72.1	18.7
Oakland	53.8	72.3	18.5
Seattle	56.3	74.6	18.3
Birmingham	54.3	72.1	17.8
Jacksonville	54.8	72.6	17.8
Los Angeles	54.8	72.3	17.5
New York	57.4	74.7	17.3
Charlotte	56.5	73.8	17.3
Las Vegas	54.2	71.2	17.0
Boston	59.7	76.6	16.9
Dallas	61.0	77.6	16.6
Atlanta	59.0	74.7	15.7
San Diego	57.1	71.9	14.8
Washington, D.C.	66.6	81.3	14.7
Nashville	58.4	72.9	14.5
Portland	57.4	69.8	12.4

**Table 12:****Racial Disparities in Male Employment Rates in Selected Metropolitan Areas****Males in Prime Working Years, By Race: 2010**

Percentage of working-age (25-54) males employed

<b>METRO AREA</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>WHITE</b>	<b>PCT. GAP IN BLACK/ WHITE RATES</b>
Milwaukee	52.7	85.1	32.4
Buffalo	54.7	80.9	26.2
Chicago	58.3	84.5	26.2
Cleveland	58.1	84.0	25.9
Hartford	59.1	84.9	25.9
Detroit	53.6	77.8	24.2
Richmond	63.7	87.5	23.8
Indianapolis	60.5	83.2	22.7
Philadelphia	61.7	84.1	22.4
Omaha	68.0	89.0	21.0
Kansas City	65.2	85.9	20.7
Pittsburgh	61.4	81.5	20.1
Memphis	63.4	83.4	20.0
St. Louis	62.0	82.0	20.0
Cincinnati	62.3	81.9	19.6
Newark	64.7	83.9	19.2
Denver	66.9	85.9	19.0
Miami	63.3	81.9	18.6
Phoenix	62.9	81.4	18.5
Baltimore	68.5	86.6	18.1
Houston	68.5	86.4	17.9
New Orleans	66.5	84.3	17.8
San Francisco	64.4	81.6	17.2
Columbus	66.6	82.8	16.8
New York	68.4	84.7	16.3
Boston	68.9	85.0	16.1
Los Angeles	65.6	81.2	15.6
Jacksonville	66.5	82.0	15.5
Charlotte	66.8	82.3	15.5
Minneapolis	71.9	87.1	15.2
Atlanta	70.0	85.1	15.1
Dallas	71.9	86.3	14.4
Nashville	67.2	81.5	14.3
Las Vegas	64.7	78.7	14.0
Oakland	66.5	80.3	13.8
Birmingham	66.6	79.6	13.0
Seattle	71.2	82.3	11.1
Washington, D.C.	79.3	90.2	10.9
Portland	72.2	78.5	6.3
San Diego	76.1	79.5	3.4

Chart 3:

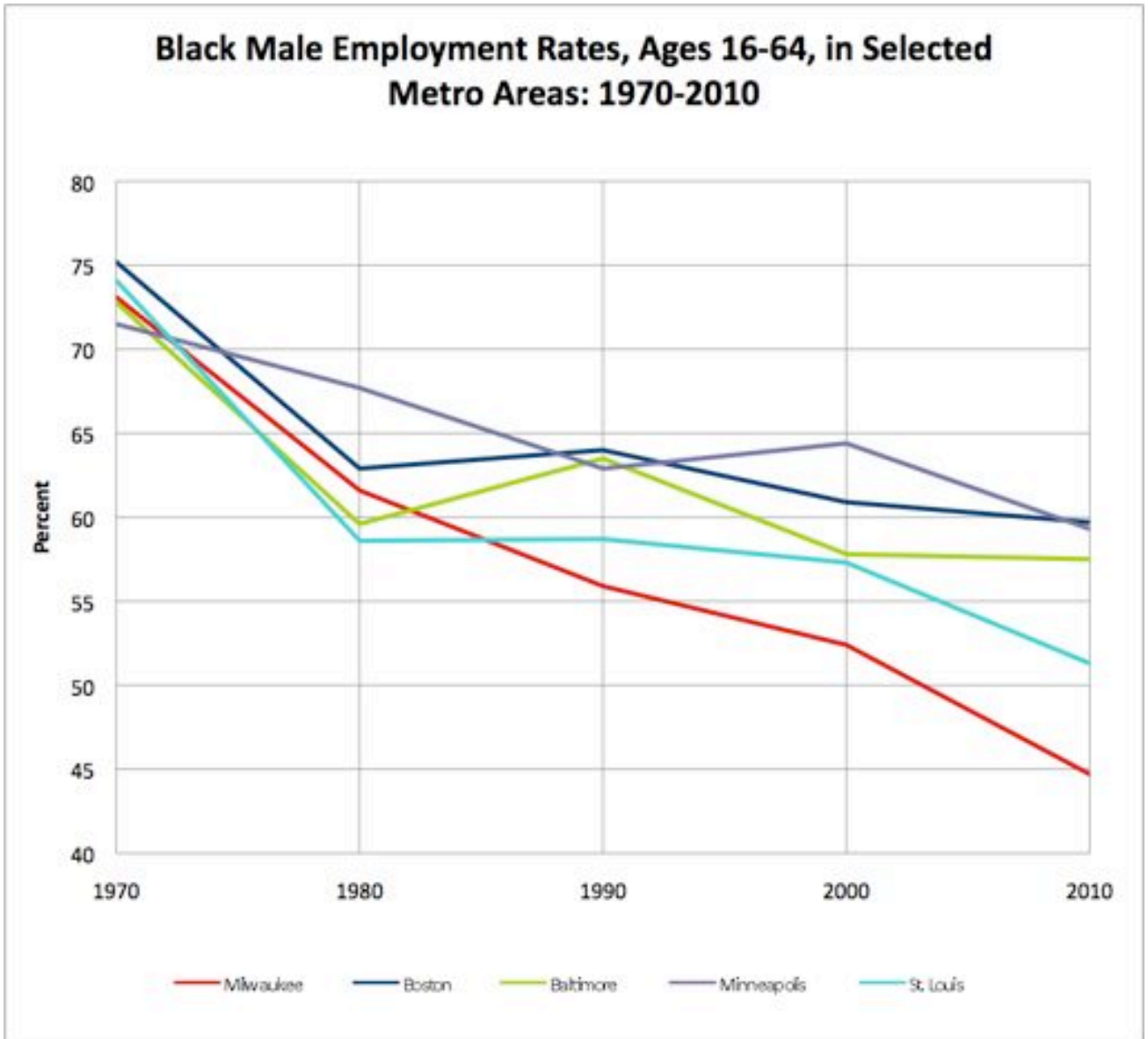


Chart 4:

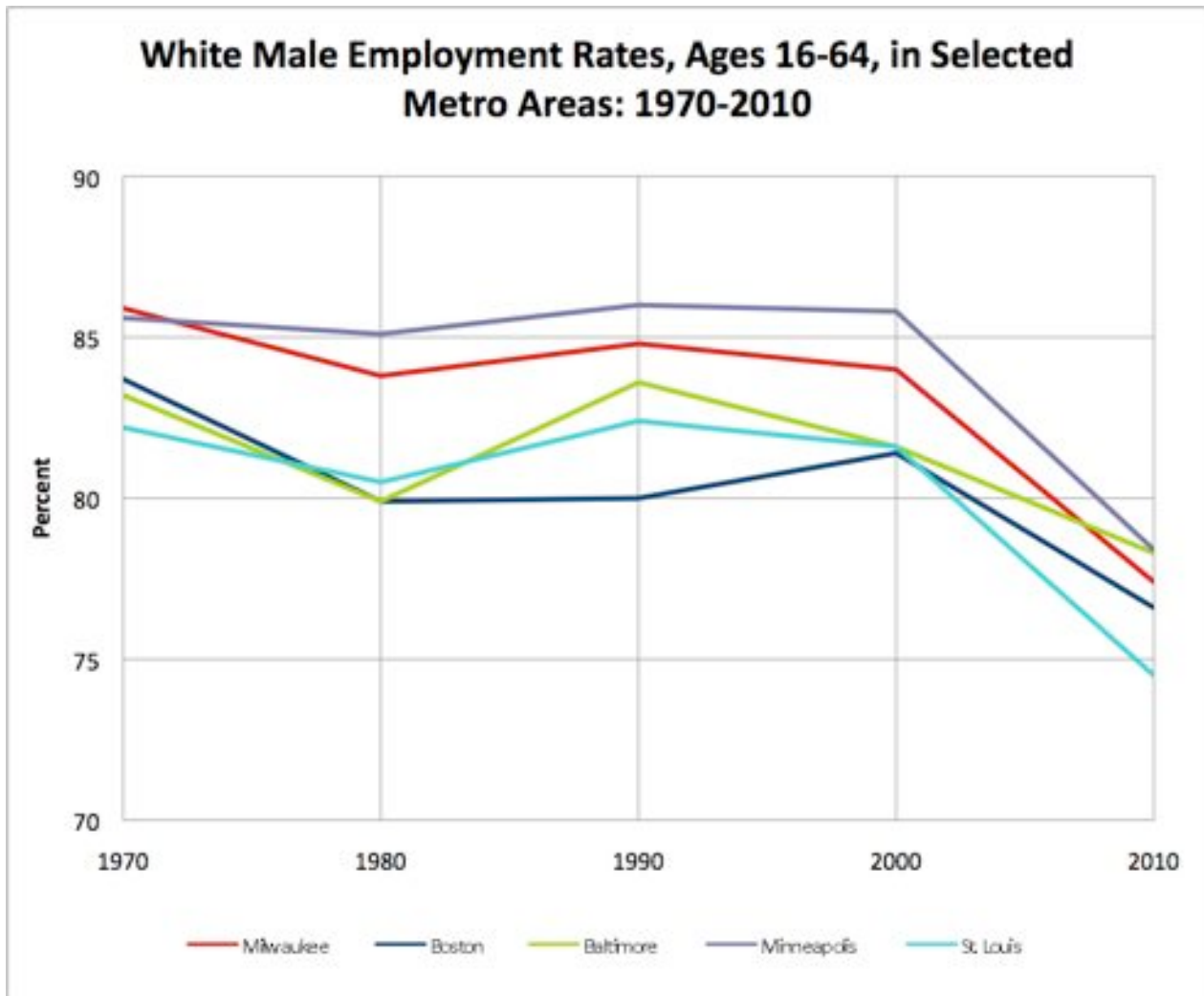


Chart 5:

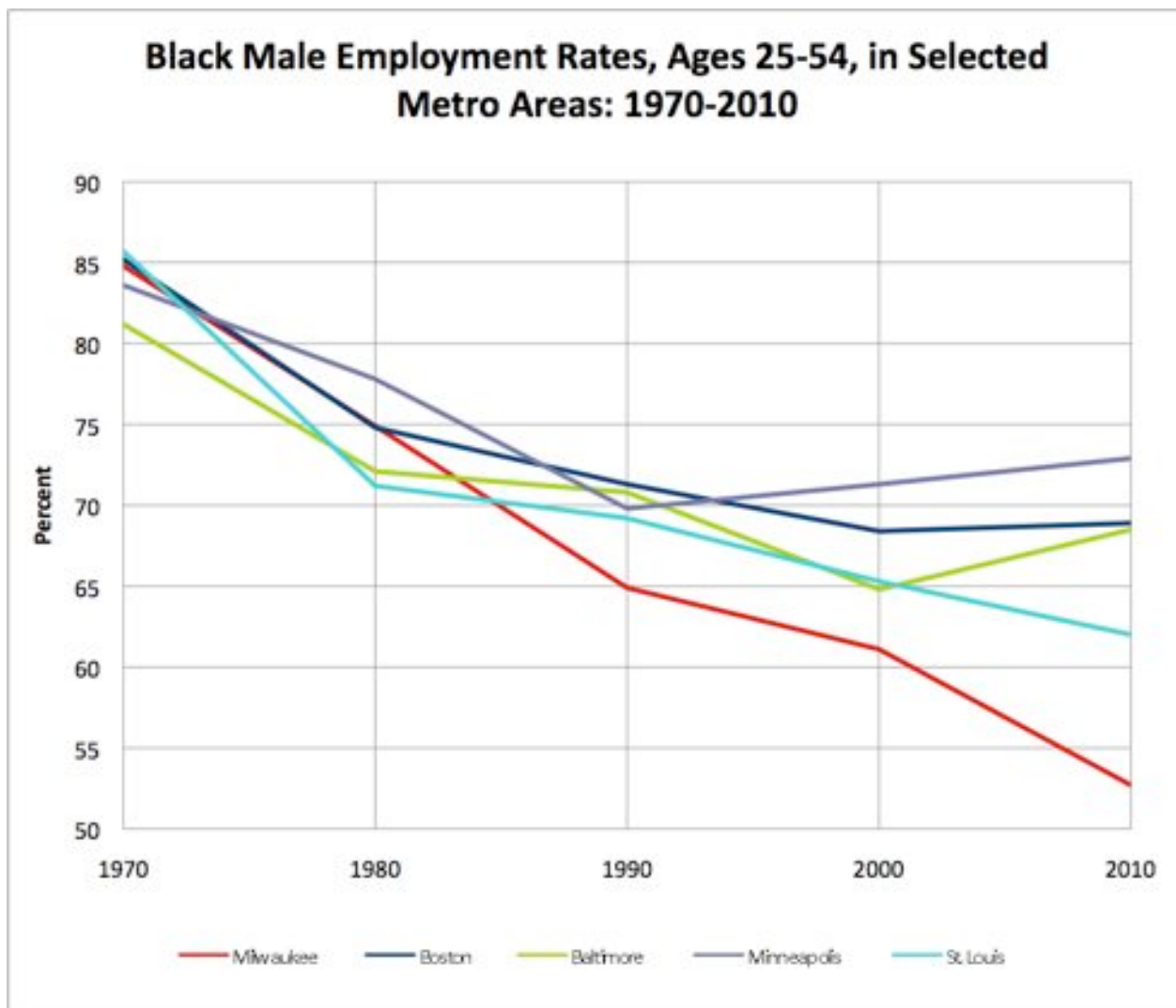
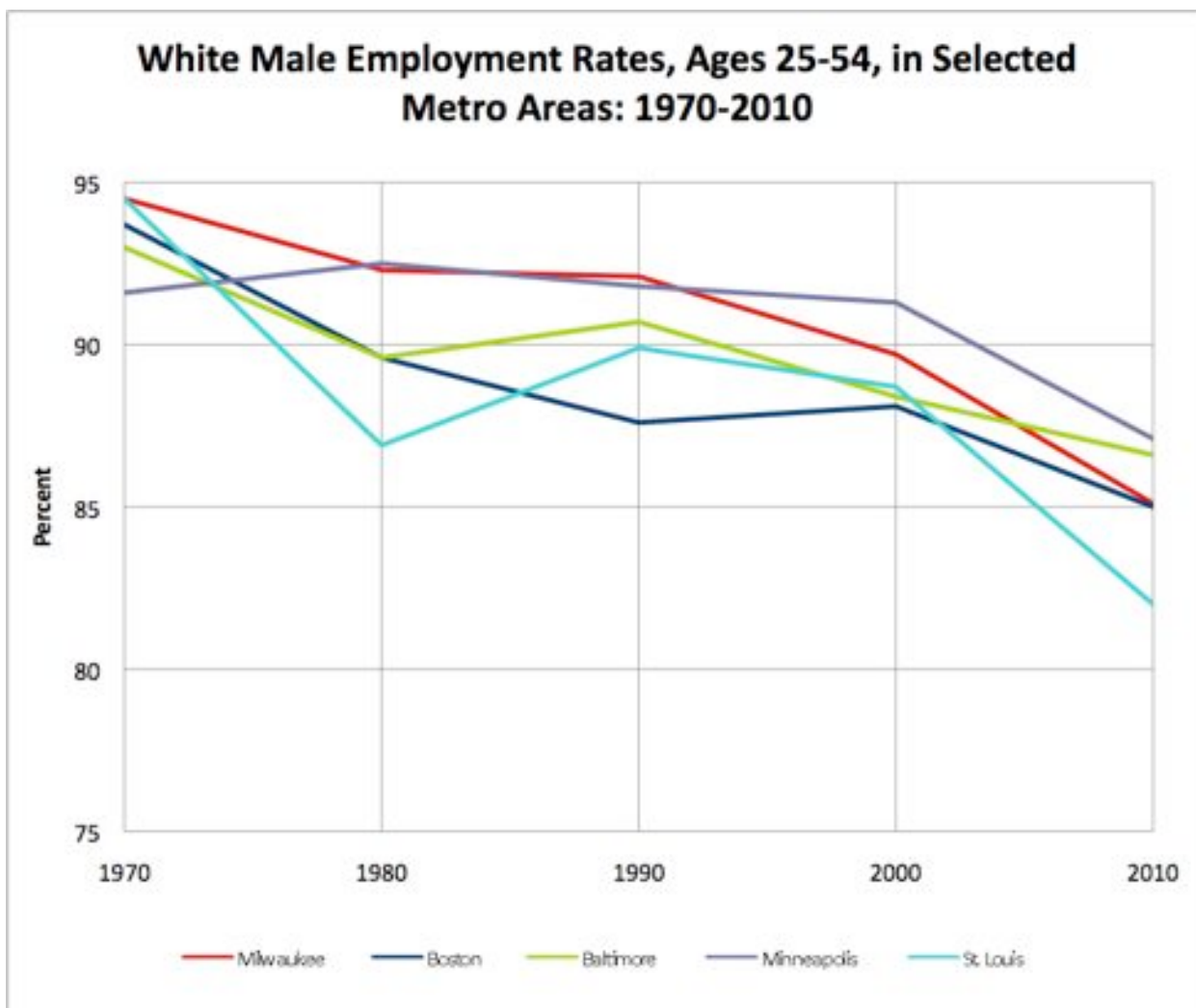
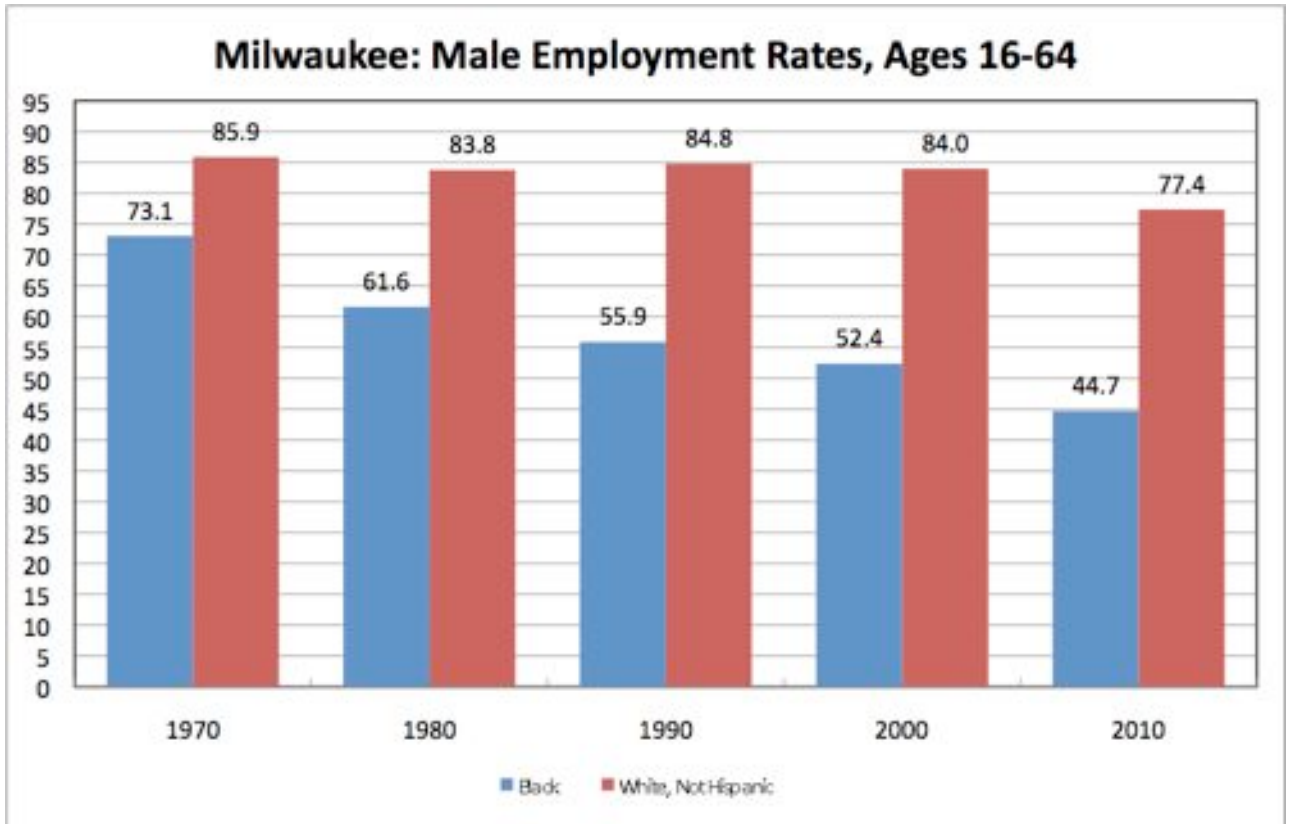


Chart 6:





**Chart 7:**



**Chart 8:**

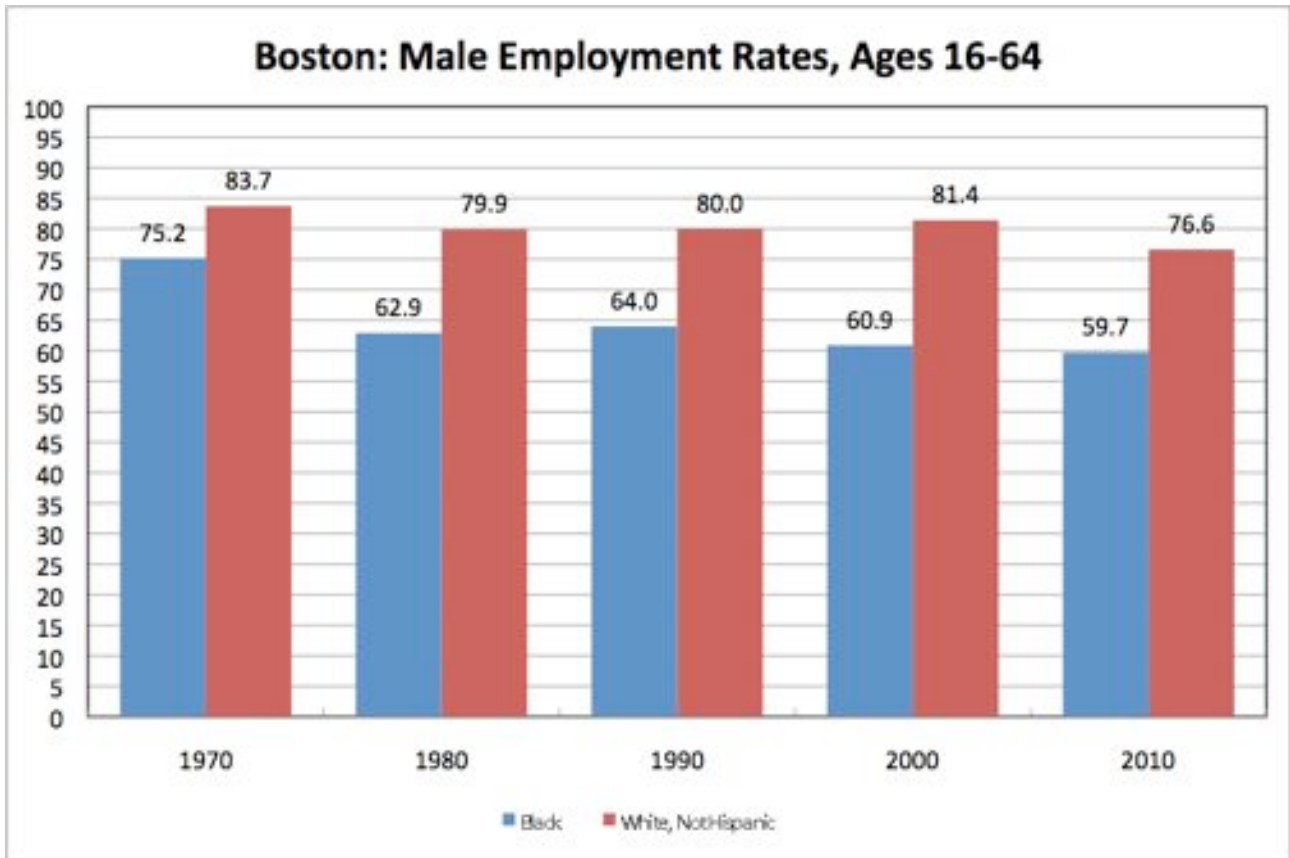


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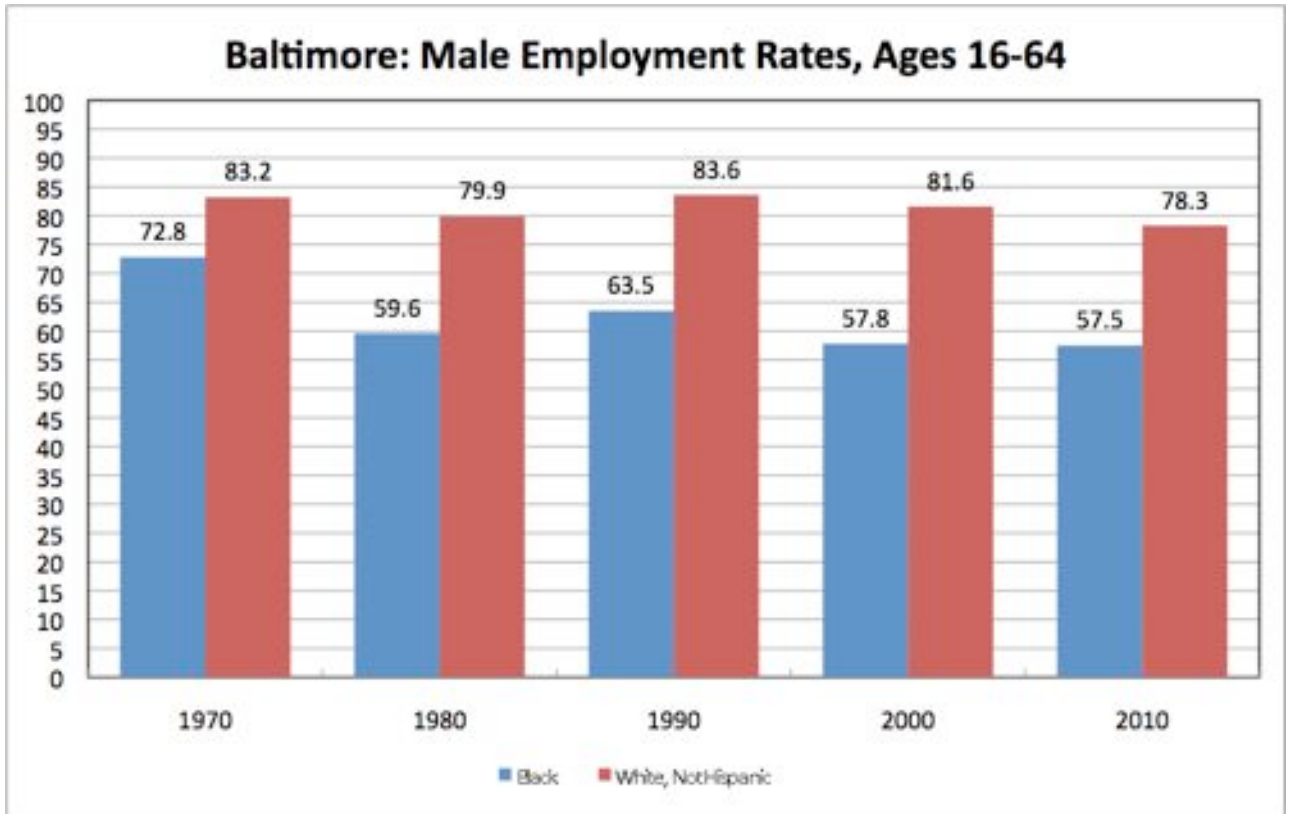
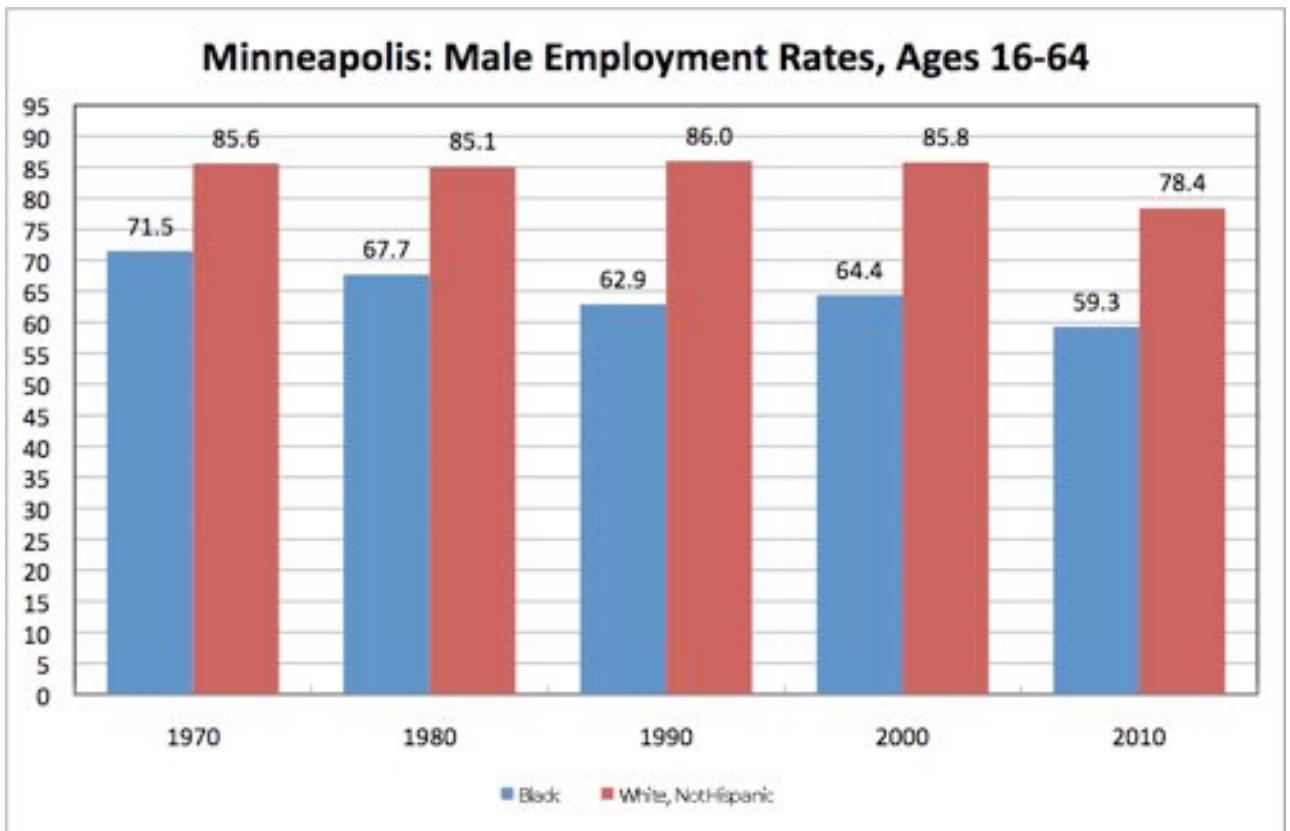
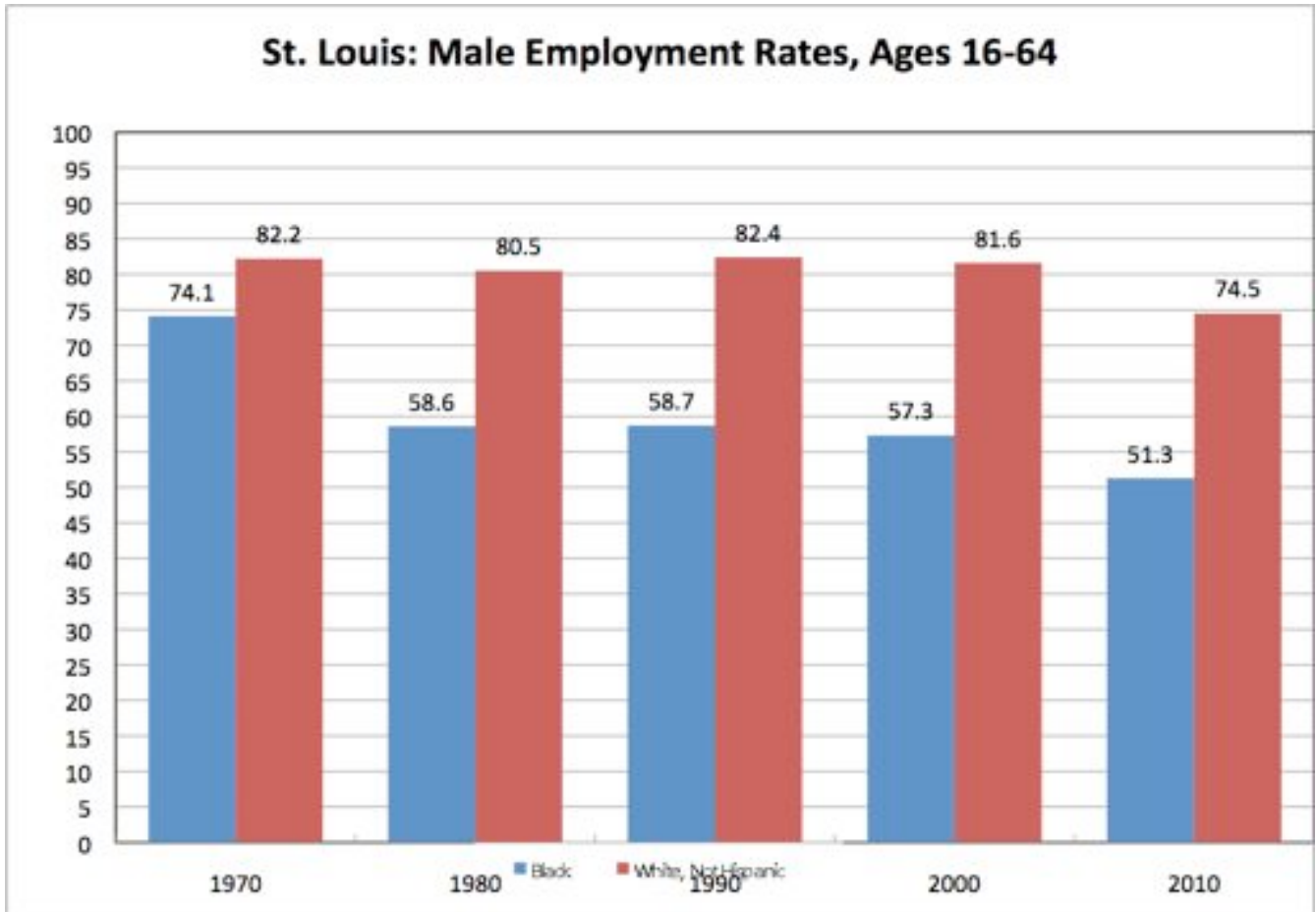


Chart 10:



**Chart 11:**



**Table 13:**

**Growing Racial Gaps in Employment Rates  
For Working Age Males in Selected Metro Areas: 1970-2010**

(percentage point difference in white and black  
employment-population ratios, males 16-64)

Metro Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change in % gap 1970-2010
Milwaukee	12.5	22.2	28.9	31.6	32.7	20.2
Boston	8.5	17.0	16.0	20.5	16.9	8.4
Baltimore	10.4	20.3	20.1	23.8	20.8	10.4
Minneapolis	14.1	17.4	23.1	21.4	19.1	5.0
St. Louis	8.1	21.9	23.7	24.3	23.2	15.1

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population* (1970-2000); *American Community Survey* (2010)

Chart 12:

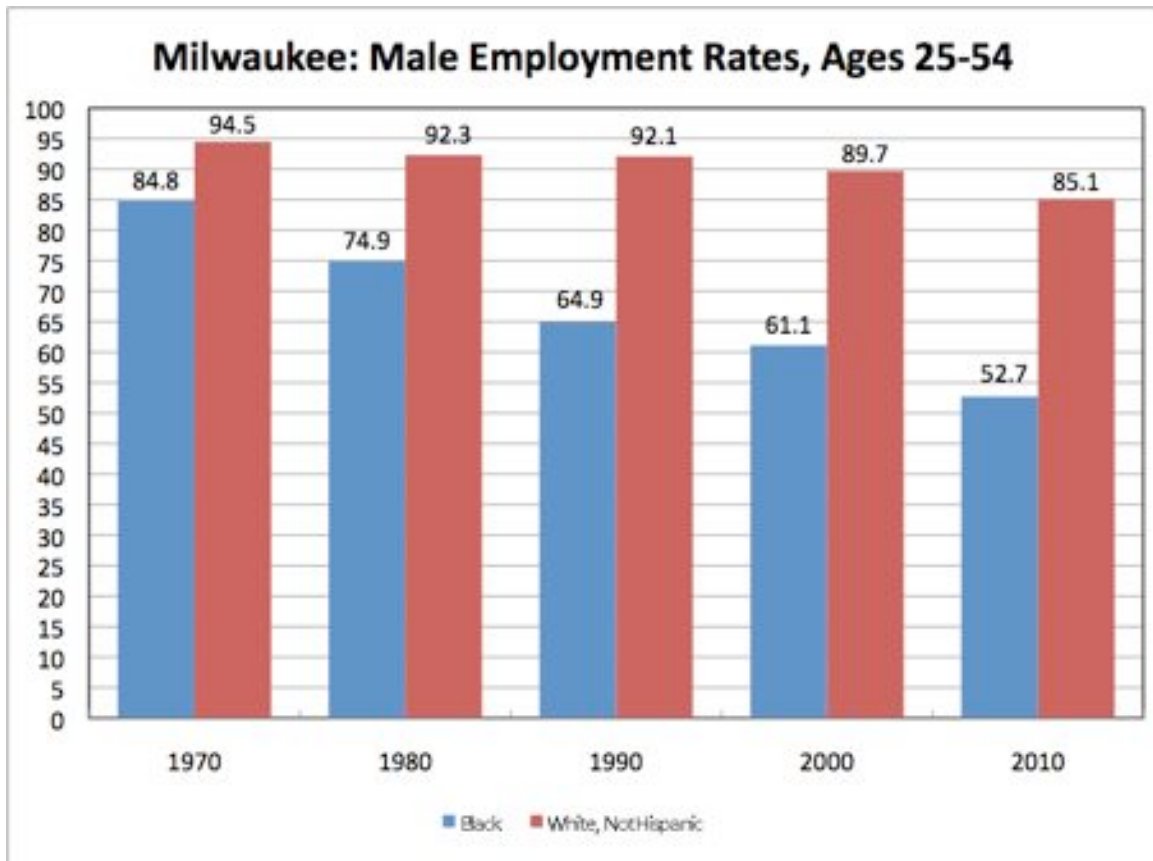


Chart 13:

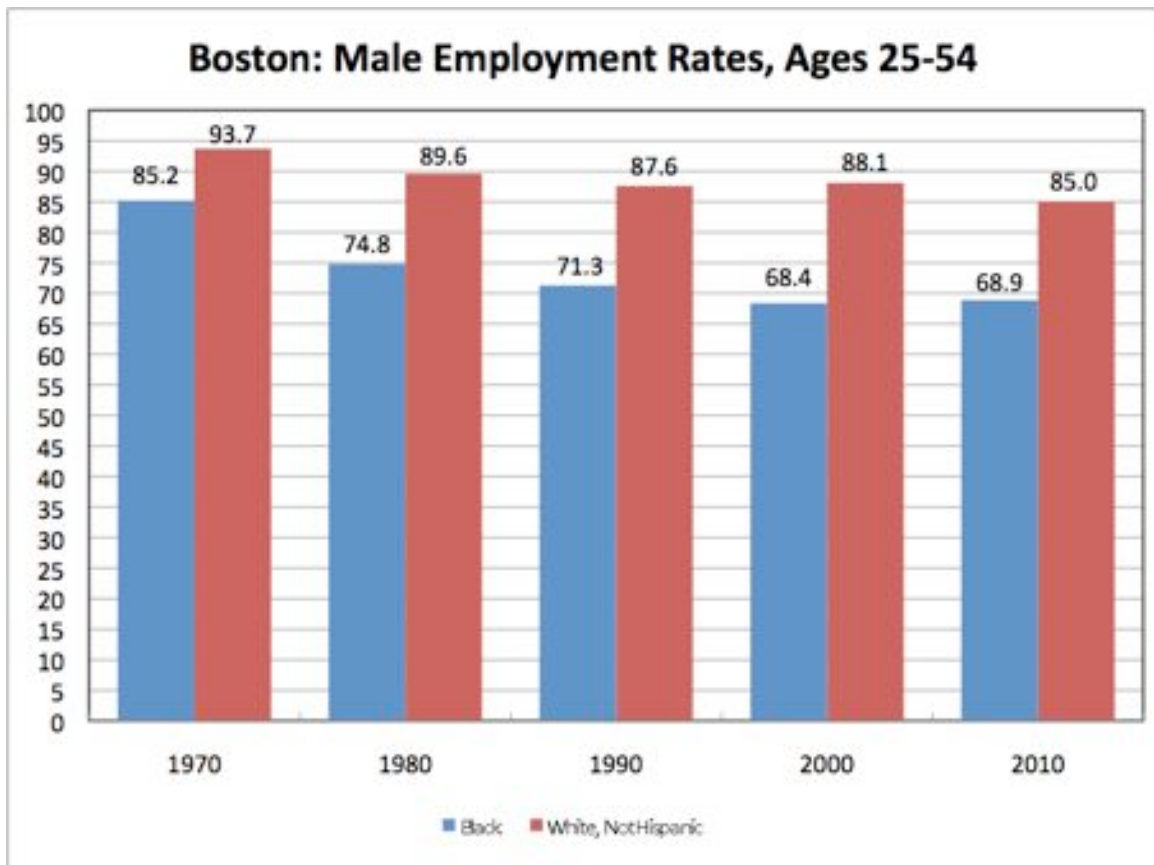
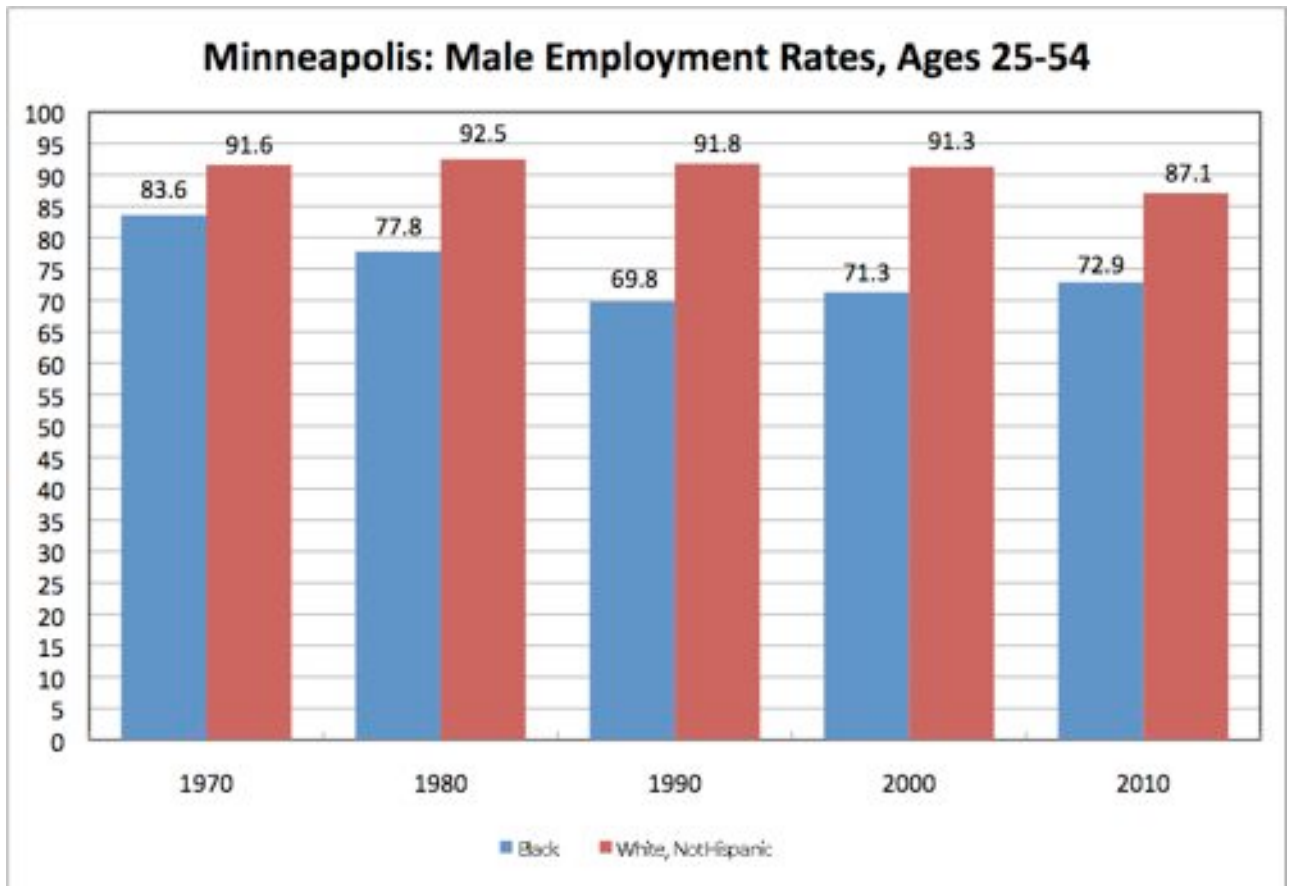


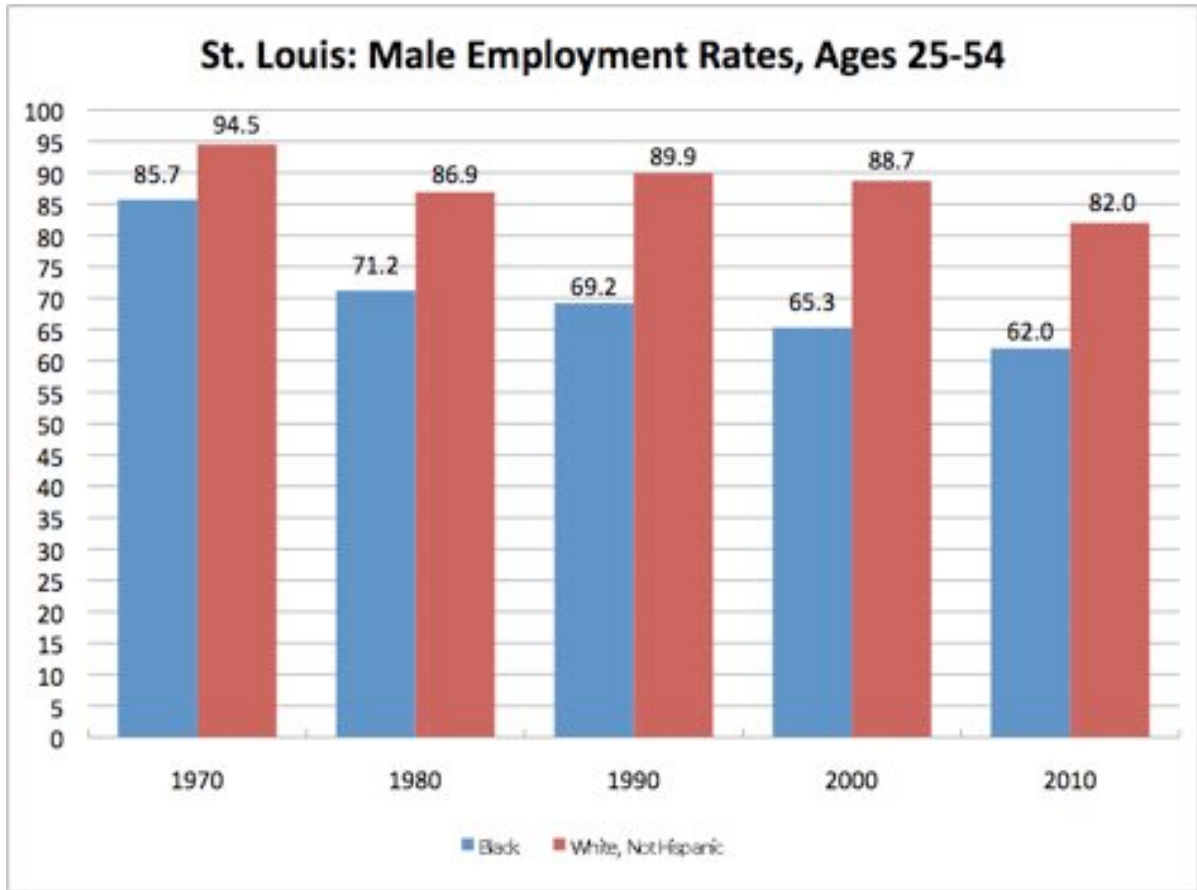
Chart 14:



Chart 15:



**Chart 16:**



**Table 14:**

**Growing Racial Gaps in Employment Rates  
For Prime Working Age Males in Selected Metro Areas: 1970-2010**

(percentage point difference in white and black  
employment-population ratios, males 25-54)

Metro Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change in % gap 1970-2010
Milwaukee	9.7	17.4	27.2	28.6	32.4	22.7
Boston	8.5	14.8	16.3	19.7	16.1	7.6
Baltimore	11.8	17.5	19.9	23.6	18.1	6.3
Minneapolis	8.0	14.7	22.0	20.0	14.2	6.2
St. Louis	8.8	15.7	20.7	23.4	20.0	11.2

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population* (1970-2000); *American Community Survey* (2010)

Several trends are apparent in these charts:

- In all five of the metro areas, the white male employment rate has declined noticeably since the 1970s: in general, from the low to mid 80 percent range, to the mid to upper 70 percent range. For white males in their prime working years, the employment rate has generally declined from the low to mid 90 percent range, to the mid 80 percent range. In short, there has been about a 5-10 point decline in white male employment rates in these metro areas over the past forty years: a discernible, but not catastrophic shrinkage in the employment-population ratio, and a generally similar trend in all of the metro areas. The trajectory of white male employment in Milwaukee since the 1970s has followed this pattern.
- On the other hand, consistent with the data in Tables 7 and 8 for the wider pool of large metro areas, black male employment rates have deteriorated significantly in all of these five metro areas. The decline for all working-age black males ranges from 12.2 percentage points in Minneapolis to 28.7 percentage points in Milwaukee; for prime-working age black males, the range was a decline of 10.7 points in Minneapolis to the massive 32.1 points in Milwaukee. Charts 3, 5, and 7 reveal strikingly the degree to which, although black male employment rates have declined markedly since 1970 in all five of the metro areas, some regions have done much worse than others, and Milwaukee's decline stands out in its depth and acuteness. Let's take the crucial "prime working years" cohort (ages 25-54), for example. In 1970, the black male employment rate for this cohort clustered around a tight range of 81-85 percent in all five metro areas. By 2010, however, as illustrated graphically on Chart 5, there was wide dispersal, with Minneapolis' 72.9 percent employment rate for prime working age black males exceeding Milwaukee's 52.7 percent by 20 percentage points.
- As a consequence of the racial variation in these patterns of employment rate decline, there has been a sharp increase since 1970 in the gap separating white and black male employment rates in all five metro areas (see Tables 13 and 14). Once again, let's take the example of the employment rate for prime working age white males. In 1970, in all five metro areas, the white male employment rate was generally 8 or 9 points higher than for blacks. By 2010, though, these gaps had doubled in most of the metro areas. In Milwaukee, as already noted, the racial gap between 1970 and 2010 had tripled, to 32.4 percentage points (the widest disparity in the nation). In 1970, Milwaukee's racial gap in



male employment rates was more or less indistinguishable from this benchmark group of Northeast-Midwest metropolises; by 2010, Milwaukee was unambiguously, and by a wide margin, the metropolis with the sharpest racial disparities in employment rates.

In sum, the historical and comparative data on race and employment rates reveal the extent to which the labor market for black males has deteriorated since the early 1970s in metropolitan areas across the country. Employment rates for all males have fallen since 1970, a troublesome sign of structural insufficiencies in domestic job generation, as economists such as Paul Krugman and Lawrence Summers, among others, have pointed out. But as the data in this report make clear, the decline in employment rates since 1970 has been particularly vertiginous for black males. Nowhere in America has the forty-year decline been more precipitous than in Milwaukee, and in no other large metro area is the contemporary black male employment crisis more acute than in Milwaukee. By 2010, Milwaukee's employment rate for prime working age black males was the lowest among the 40 large metro areas examined in this report; for all working age black males, Milwaukee's rate was second-worst (only Detroit's was lower). Among these large metro areas, the gap separating white and black male employment rates in 2010 was higher in Milwaukee than anywhere else. Understanding the nature of the crisis of black male employment, and devising productive strategies for addressing it, is a pressing economic policy matter everywhere, and nowhere is the matter more urgent than in Milwaukee.

### ***V. Race and Employment Rates in Large Metropolitan Areas: Some Tentative Explanations***

It is beyond the scope of this working paper to develop a rigorous model accounting for patterns among large metro areas in race and employment, or a full explanation for why Milwaukee has manifested the largest decline among metros in the black male employment rate and widest racial gaps in male employment rates. That will be the subject of a future Center study.

However, it would be useful, for the purposes of discussion, to sketch what appear to be promising lines of inquiry, albeit in a tentative and quite preliminary manner. As we have suggested earlier, the deindustrialization since the 1960s of places like Detroit, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, and Milwaukee has been an important element in declining black male employment rates in those metropolises. Table 5 in this report showed how disproportionately black males



relied on manufacturing production jobs for employment in Milwaukee in the 1970s. Thus, as manufacturing employment in Milwaukee declined, or shifted to suburbs that were generally inaccessible to Milwaukee's blacks in a highly segregated metropolis, or as black males were displaced to some extent by other ethnic groups in manufacturing employment, the overall black male employment rate in metro Milwaukee plunged.

Suburbanization and racial segregation are undoubtedly important pieces of an explanation as well. As Table 15 shows, there are important differences among large metropolitan areas in the degree to which working-age black males live in the suburbs. Black males are more concentrated in the metro area's central city in Milwaukee (or, put another way, fewer live in the suburbs) than in any of the other metropolitan areas (including several with much more territorially expansive, "elastic" jurisdictional boundaries than has Milwaukee). The racial disparities in suburbanization are, by a significant margin, greater in Milwaukee than anywhere else in the country. In an era in which the lion's share of metro area job growth has occurred in the suburbs, the consequences of this racial disparity for employment opportunity have been profound: the "spatial mismatch" noted by scholars such as Kain, Kasarda, and Wilson among others since the late 1960s. In metro Milwaukee, *all* of the region's net job growth since the 1980s has occurred in the suburbs, where few working-age black males live and where transportation links between the central city and suburban jobs are poor (and increasingly facing service cutbacks). It is plausible, then, to surmise that suburbanization and segregation are important elements influencing the employment rate for black males in Milwaukee and other regions.

In Table 16, we array some correlations between some potential explanatory variables and black male employment rates in the 40 large metro areas analyzed for this study. Correlations, of course, are not necessarily causation, and more rigorous modeling will include many other variables and regression analysis to factor out spurious relationships among variables. As Table 16 shows, there is a strong negative correlation between black male employment rates and levels of racial segregation in a metro area (racial segregation measured by the standard "index of dissimilarity"). In other words, the higher the index of racial segregation in a region, the lower the black male employment rate (for both age cohorts). In addition, we ran correlations on educational variables, testing the association between high school and college graduate rates and black male employment rates. Unsurprisingly, given all the research on the "educational

**Table 15:**

**Racial Disparities in Suburbanization of Working-Age Males in Selected Metropolitan Areas: 2010**

Percentage of metro area's working-age (16-64) males living in central city, by race

<b>METRO AREA</b>	<b>BLACK % LIVING IN CITY</b>	<b>WHITE % LIVING IN CITY</b>	<b>SUBURBANIZATION GAP</b>
Milwaukee	88.6	22.5	66.1
Buffalo	69.3	14.7	54.6
Indianapolis	85.3	38.1	47.2
Columbus	76.3	34.9	41.4
Birmingham	50.9	6.7	44.2
Cleveland	51.0	10.3	40.7
Detroit	62.1	21.6	40.5
Omaha	82.2	41.9	40.3
Cincinnati	48.9	9.3	39.6
Baltimore	51.0	11.5	39.5
Memphis	69.7	30.9	38.8
Nashville	69.1	30.5	38.6
Chicago	55.2	17.8	37.4
Philadelphia	52.2	15.5	36.7
Kansas City	52.5	16.8	35.7
Boston	43.2	9.7	33.5
Portland	59.1	26.0	33.1
New Orleans	52.2	19.1	33.1
Jacksonville	84.4	52.3	32.1
New York	61.8	30.4	31.4
Hartford	33.4	3.0	30.4
Newark	32.8	4.2	28.6
Charlotte	59.7	31.2	28.5
Oakland	38.2	10.7	27.5
Pittsburgh	37.5	10.4	27.1
Houston	50.0	24.7	25.3
St. Louis	31.4	7.2	24.2
Denver	42.9	20.4	22.5
Phoenix	48.9	28.6	20.3
Dallas	31.8	11.7	20.1
Minneapolis	27.9	10.8	17.1
Washington, D.C.	21.7	7.1	14.6
Richmond	25.9	12.1	13.8
Los Angeles	40.2	27.8	12.4
San Diego	52.8	40.7	12.1
Seattle	26.2	18.5	7.7
Las Vegas	32.4	30.1	2.3
San Francisco	16.1	21.0	-4.9

premium” and economic opportunity, there is a strong association between black male educational achievement and employment rates. However, there are important nuances in how to interpret this correlation. In Milwaukee, for example, the black male employment rate has fallen continuously since the 1970s, even as the percentage of high school graduates among black males in the region has more than doubled, and the percentage of black males with college degrees has tripled. Human capital development is undoubtedly a strong component in understanding the black male employment picture, but, given the other factors influencing regional employment opportunities, it may be misleading to view it as a panacea.

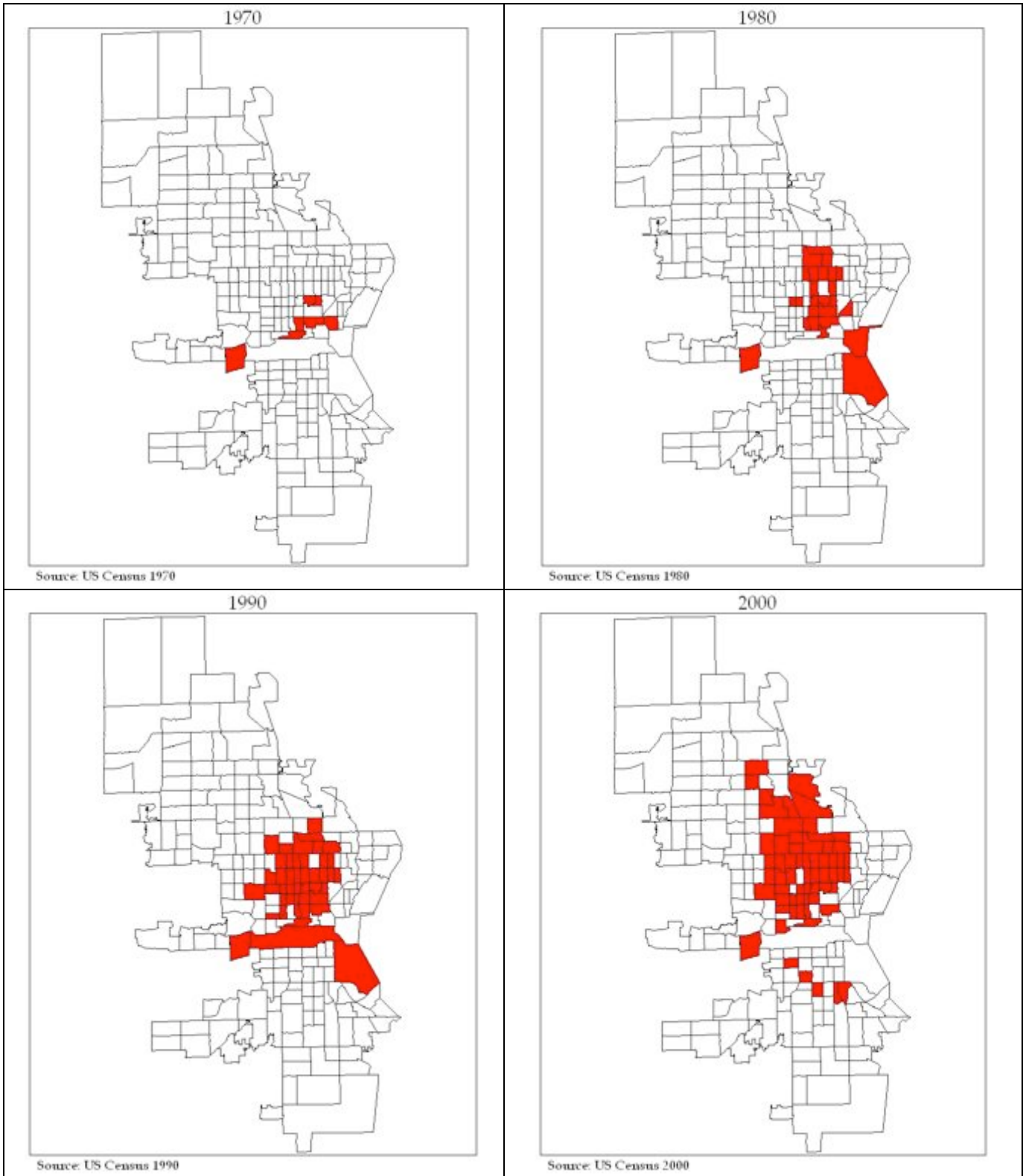
**Table 16:**  
**Correlation Coefficients Between Black Male Employment Rates and Selected Variables**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient
Employment Rate (25-54) and Metro Racial Segregation	-.482
Employment Rate (16-64) and Metro Racial Segregation	-.458
Employment Rate (25-54) and % of black males living in central city	-.534
Employment Rate (16-64) and % of black males living in central city	-.540
Employment Rate (25-54) and % of black males college graduates	+.717
Employment Rate (16-64) and % of black males college graduates	+.738
Employment Rate (25-54) and % of black males high school graduates	+.566
Employment Rate (25-54) and % of black males high school graduates	+.487

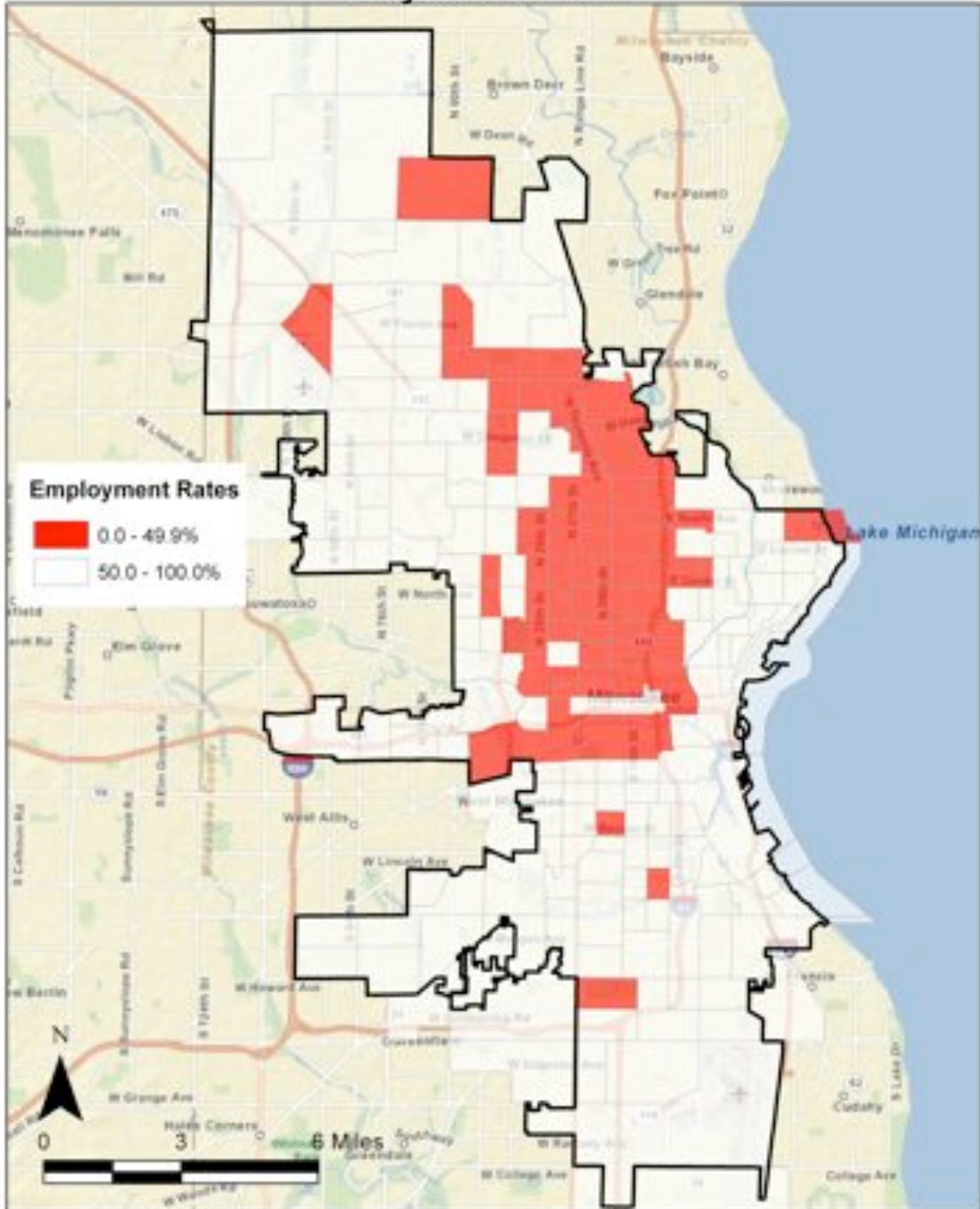
## ***VI. Race and Employment in Milwaukee: Policy Implications***

Black male employment rates have tumbled in Milwaukee and across metropolitan America since the 1970s. As the maps below reveal, the number of city neighborhoods in which male employment rates have fallen below 50 percent has inexorably grown in Milwaukee since 1970. Joblessness is claiming wider and wider swaths of the city. In 1970, eight Milwaukee

**Labor Market Exclusion in Milwaukee 1970-2000:**  
Census tracts in fewer than 50% of working age males were employed



## Male Employment by Census Tract (Ages 16+) City of Milwaukee



Source: American Community Survey 2006-2010 5 Year Estimates, and UWM Center for Economic Development using ESRI ArcMap 10.0, November 2011.

census tracts posted male employment rates below 50 percent; by 2010, there were 64 city census tracts in which a majority of working-age males were not employed. The persistent failure to meaningfully combat this calamity threatens the economic fabric of the city and the region.

In earlier reports<sup>14</sup>, we have analyzed the shortcomings in Milwaukee's current portfolio of strategies to combat black male joblessness, and outlined new directions for public policy. In 2010, with fresh new evidence that the labor market situation for black males continues to deteriorate in Milwaukee, it is clear that we need a broad range of aggressive local policies, supported by policies at the state and federal levels. In concluding this report, we re-state the policy goals and potential policies we have outlined in earlier reports.

Civic leaders should immediately set two goals:

- 1) To increase in five years Milwaukee's black male employment to the *average* of the nation's 40 largest metropolitan areas;
- 2) To increase in 10 years Milwaukee's black male employment rate to the point where it has among the 10 highest rates among the largest metro areas.

An outline of policies to achieve these goals might include the following:

- 1) *Public job creation and leveraging*. This is premised on two realities: 1) substantial demand-side job shortage in Milwaukee, particularly in inner city, predominantly African American neighborhoods; and 2) failure of private investment markets and government incentives to business to promote adequate job growth in the city of Milwaukee. Public jobs strategies include: a) transitional jobs to met public needs (parks, street repairs, neighborhood cleanup, etc); b) infrastructure investments, providing medium-term construction employment and longer term job prospects through enhanced economic development (such as bridges, roads, and transit); c) targeted investment in growth sectors, such as green jobs. The Milwaukee Energy Efficiency program (ME2), a building retrofitting program with great potential, is a good example, and should be expanded. Some estimates are that a federal green jobs program, funded at \$100 billion nationally, could generate over 11,000 jobs in Milwaukee County, many of them moderate-skilled manufacturing jobs that would be accessible to the region's black male jobless.
- 2) *Enhanced training and job placement*. Targeted to growth sectors of regional economy, such as health care or medical instruments, but others to be identified by economic analysis. Included here as well should be a systematic, adequately funded prisoner reentry program, given the crisis of incarceration among African American males.

- 3) *Drug policy reform and public health policy.* The explosive growth since the 1980s in the number of African-American males in prison or jail has been extensively documented, the vast majority for drug possession offenses. About 10 percent of working-age African-American males not in the labor force in Milwaukee are incarcerated -- about the same percentage as nationally. As Bruce Western has noted, the failed “War on Drugs” has essentially substituted a criminal justice policy for inner city employment policy in cities like Milwaukee. However, in the words of *The Economist* magazine, a criminal justice policy that locks up “so many for so little” (referring to lesser drug offenses), is hardly an example of effective labor market policy.<sup>15</sup>
- 4) *Enhanced procurement by local businesses and large public and non-profit institutions from inner city enterprises.* A “Buy Milwaukee” program, with targeted purchases from inner city businesses, could stimulate African American business growth and the hiring of black males. A good example is in Philadelphia, where the University of Pennsylvania has explicitly targeted purchases of goods and services from inner city suppliers likely to employ minorities. Large local corporations should also target a share of their supplier or service-provider purchases in this manner. Creating jobs near the neighborhoods where the vast majority of African American male jobless live is essential.
- 5) *Strategies to better integrate the inner city economy into the regional economy.* A critical element of a jobs strategy in Milwaukee must involve regional equity and “smart growth” policies in transportation, public finance, and land use that go far beyond the timid regionalism of the M-7 (our most visible regional economic development entity). In addition, we need to do a much better job of opening up the suburban labor markets of the region to racial diversity. “Opening up the suburbs” might include several policy options, but the two most important are transportation and housing. Regional transportation policies must be realigned to facilitate the access of central city workers to suburban employment centers; and building affordable housing in the suburbs is essential, so that low-to-moderate-skilled workers, with limited incomes, can live in greater proximity to the location of 90 percent of the region's entry-level job openings. “Regional equity agreements” for hiring jobless workers from the inner city on suburban construction projects (such as schools and hospitals, as well as roadwork) could also help raise the level of African American male employment.



## ***About This Report***

Dr. Marc V. Levine, Professor of History, Economic Development, and Urban Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee wrote this report. Levine is the founding director of the UWM Center for Economic Development (UWMCED), and is currently a Senior Fellow at the Center. Catherine Madison, senior academic staff at the Center, provided extensive and indispensable research assistance, especially in the creation of charts and maps in the report. Lisa Heuler Williams and Crystal Brzezinski also contributed important research assistance.

For further information about the UWMCED and to access all Center studies, please visit our web site: <http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/>

## ***Endnotes***

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<sup>1</sup> See, among others: William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Andrew Sum, "Labor Underutilization Problems of U.S. Workers Across Household Income Groups at the End of the Great Recession: A Truly Great Depression Among the Nation's Low Income Workers Amidst Full Employment Among the Most Affluent," report prepared for C.S. Mott Foundation, February 2010; Harry J. Holzer, "The Labor Market and Young Black Men: Updating Moynihan's Perspective," *Annals AAPSS*, 621 (January 2009): 47-69; Janny Scott, "Nearly Half of Black Men Found Jobless," *The New York Times*, 28 February 2004; Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, "Black-White Wage Inequality, Employment Rates, and Incarceration," *American Journal of Sociology*, 111:2 (September 2005): 553-578; Ronald Mincy (ed), *Black Males Left Behind* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2006); and Erick Eckholm, "Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn," *The New York Times*, 20 March 2006.

<sup>2</sup> See Marc V. Levine, *Stealth Depression: Joblessness in the City of Milwaukee Since 1990* (UWM Center for Economic Development, August 2003); Marc V. Levine, *After the Boom: Joblessness in Milwaukee Since 2000* (UWM Center for Economic Development, 2004); Marc V. Levine, *The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends, Explanations, and Policy Options* (UWM Center for Economic Development, March 2007); Marc V. Levine, *The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee: 2006* (UWM Center for Economic Development, October 2007); Marc V. Levine, *The Crisis Continues: Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee, 2007* (UWM Center for Economic Development, October 2008); *Race and Male Joblessness in Milwaukee, 2008* (UWM Center for Economic Development, October 2009); and *The Crisis Deepens: Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee, 2009* (UWM Center for Economic Development, October 2010). All studies are available at the UWMCED web site: <http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/>

<sup>3</sup> Austan Goolsbee, "The Unemployment Myth," *The New York Times*, 30 November 2003. For an analysis of the role of expanding disability rolls in under-reporting the official unemployment rate, see David H. Autor and Mark G. Duggan, "The Rise in the Disability Rolls and the Decline in Unemployment," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (February 2003): 157-205

<sup>4</sup> David Leonhardt, "Unemployed, and Skewing the Picture," *The New York Times*, 5 March 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Western, "Incarceration and Invisible Inequality," unpublished paper (May 2004), p. 6.



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<sup>6</sup> Paul Krugman, “Our Lost Decade Relationship,” blog, *The New York Times*, 20 June 2011.

<sup>7</sup> In previous reports in which we’ve analyzed the labor market for black males in Milwaukee and across the country, we’ve developed an indicator called “joblessness,” meant to be a conceptually compatible but improved version of the unemployment rate. Other distinguished researchers, such as William Julius Wilson, have used the identical indicator and called it “labor market exclusion.” As we’ve explained in previous reports, the “joblessness” indicator is, essentially, the flip side of the “employment-population” ratio – it is, in effect, the “non-employment-population ratio” (to coin a very awkward neologism). It is an effort to measure something of keen interest to economists: the degree to which, over time, working-age males are, in fact, employed. Unfortunately, some in Milwaukee policy circles sometimes confused the “joblessness” indicator with the official unemployment rate, and a few ill-informed local Milwaukee researchers and journalists used that confusion to make specious arguments about the statistic and the analysis surrounding it. For a thorough refutation of these claims, see Marc V. Levine, “Mismeasuring Joblessness: A Rejoinder to ETI/Murphy,” (UWM Center for Economic Development, August 2010). Nevertheless, in order to avoid any confusion, misunderstanding, or further journalistic polemics, this report will use the universally accepted and entirely non-controversial indicator of the “employment-population ratio” (employment rate) to gauge labor market conditions over time in Milwaukee and metro areas across the country.

<sup>8</sup> Most recently, for example, Larry Summers produced a chart for the *Washington Post* “wonkblog,” showing the falling male employment rate (or, as he put it, the rise in male joblessness) since the 1970s. “The near quadrupling of the share of men not working and the seemingly inexorable trend changes every aspect of about society. Cyclical and structural changes are combining in a perfect storm.” Access at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/economists-explain-2011-in-charts/2011/12/21/gIQAT3lg9O\\_gallery.html#photo=4](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/economists-explain-2011-in-charts/2011/12/21/gIQAT3lg9O_gallery.html#photo=4)

<sup>9</sup> Levine, *Mismeasuring Joblessness*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>10</sup> John Pawasarat, “Ex-Offender Populations in Milwaukee County,” (UWM Employment/Training Institute, 2009), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Levine, *Mismeasuring Joblessness*, pp.8-9.

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the role of deindustrialization in damaging the black male labor market in Milwaukee, see Levine, *The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>13</sup> In the central cities of these regions, the lowest black male employment rate was posted in Detroit (37.5 percent). For the prime working-age cohort in central cities, Miami’s rate of 44.0 percent was the lowest. Three central cities – Miami, Detroit, and Cleveland—reported employment rates among 25-54 year old black males below 50 percent. In the city of Milwaukee, the employment rate for this cohort was 52.4 percent.

<sup>14</sup> See, in particular, Marc Levine, *The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends, Explanations, and Policy Options*; Levine, *The Crisis Continues: Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee, 2007*; and Levine, *The Crisis Deepens: Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee, 2009*.

<sup>15</sup> *The Economist*, “Too many laws, too many prisoners,” 24 July 2010: 26-29.