

Louisiana's Racial Gap in Educational Attainment: 1990-2000

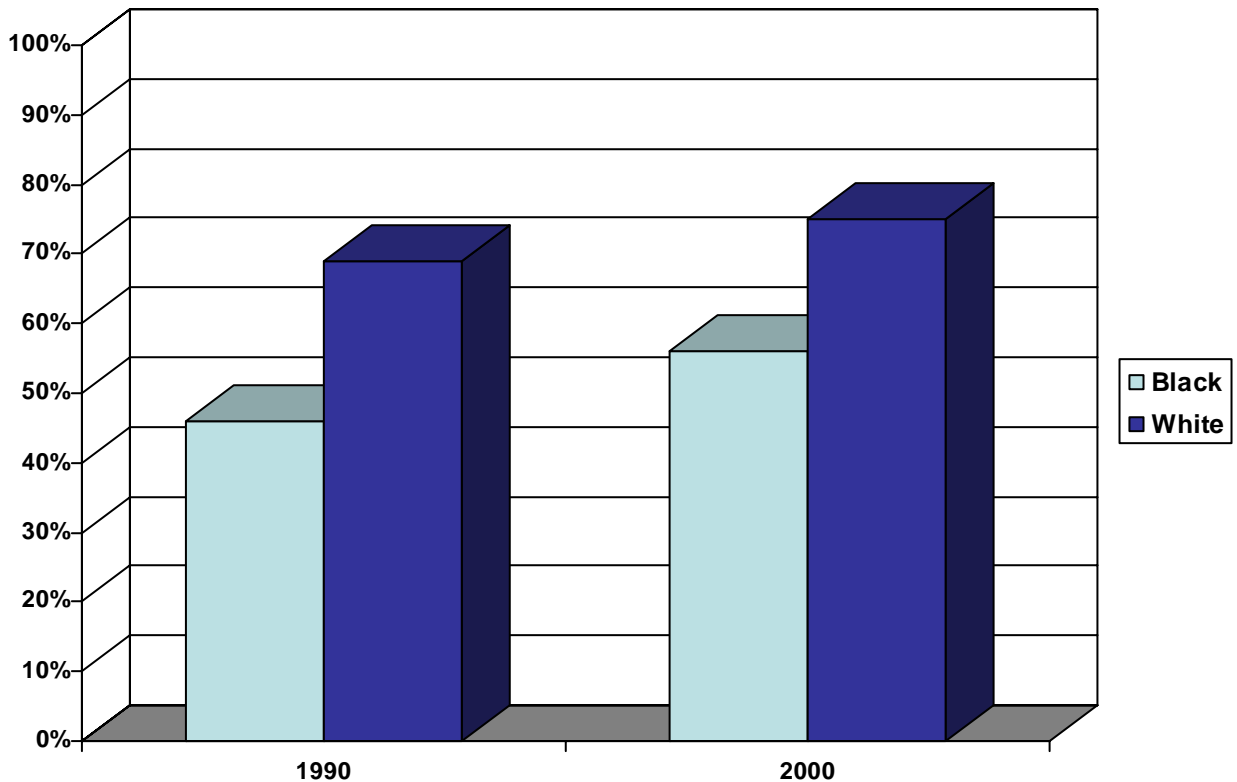
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The difference between black and white educational attainment rates is referred to as the racial gap. Louisiana has historically had a substantial racial gap in educational attainment, with white attainment rates exceeding black attainment rates. This report examines changes in the racial gap in educational attainment from 1990 to 2000. The racial gap is defined as the black attainment rate expressed as a percentage of the white attainment rate. For example, if the black attainment rate is 40% and the white attainment rate is 50%, the racial gap is $40/50=0.80$. A racial gap of 1.00 means white and black attainment rates are identical. For this report, we consider a racial gap lower than .95 to mean black attainment is substantively lower than white attainment (and a gap of 1.05 would mean black attainment is substantively higher than white attainment). Two equally important factors contribute to the racial gap: (1) The *level* of black attainment rates and (2) the *difference* between white and black attainment rates. Therefore, we report both in the pages that follow.

High School Attainment

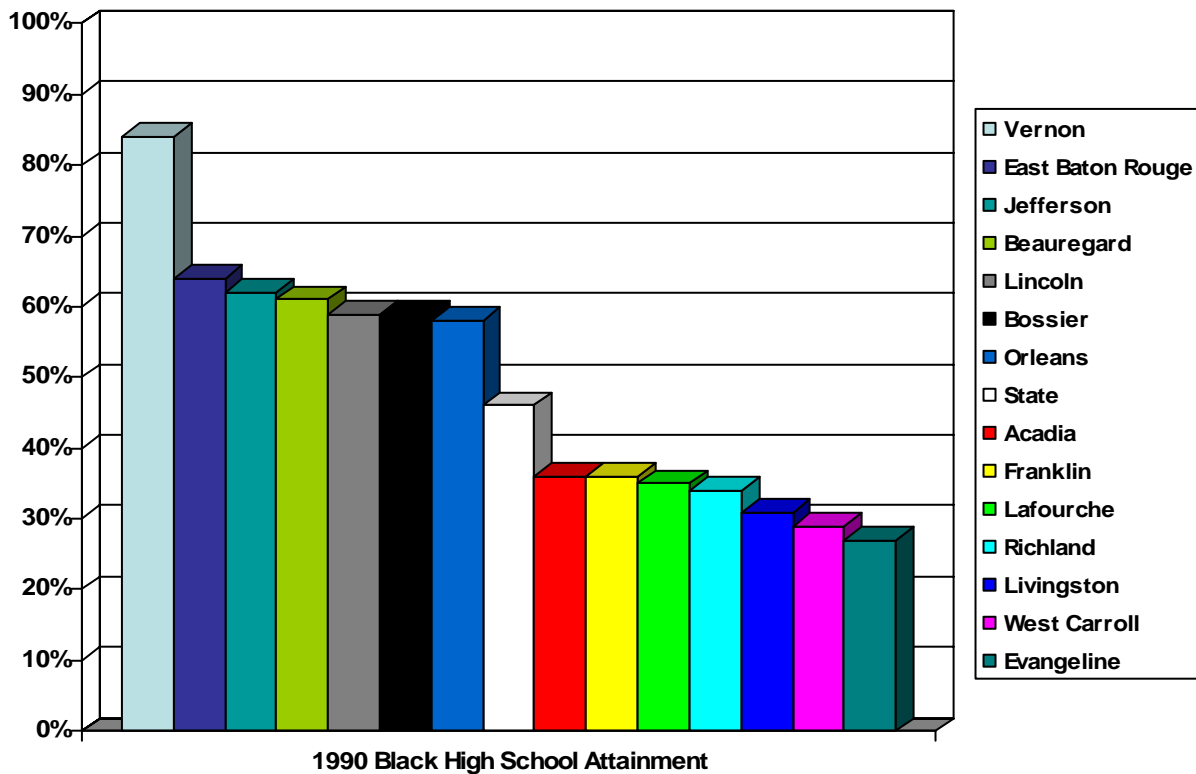
State

In 1990, 69% of white Louisianans over the age 25 had completed high school, compared to only 46% of black Louisianans, for a state-level racial gap of 0.67. This is a large racial gap indicating substantial discrepancies in high school attainment at the state level. The racial gap declined during the decade of the 1990s to 0.75, as black high school attainment increased 10 percentage points to 56% while white attainment increased only 6 percentage points to 75%. While these figures show a positive gain for the state's black population in the 1990s, the racial gap in high school attainment was still quite wide by the year 2000.



Parish Variation

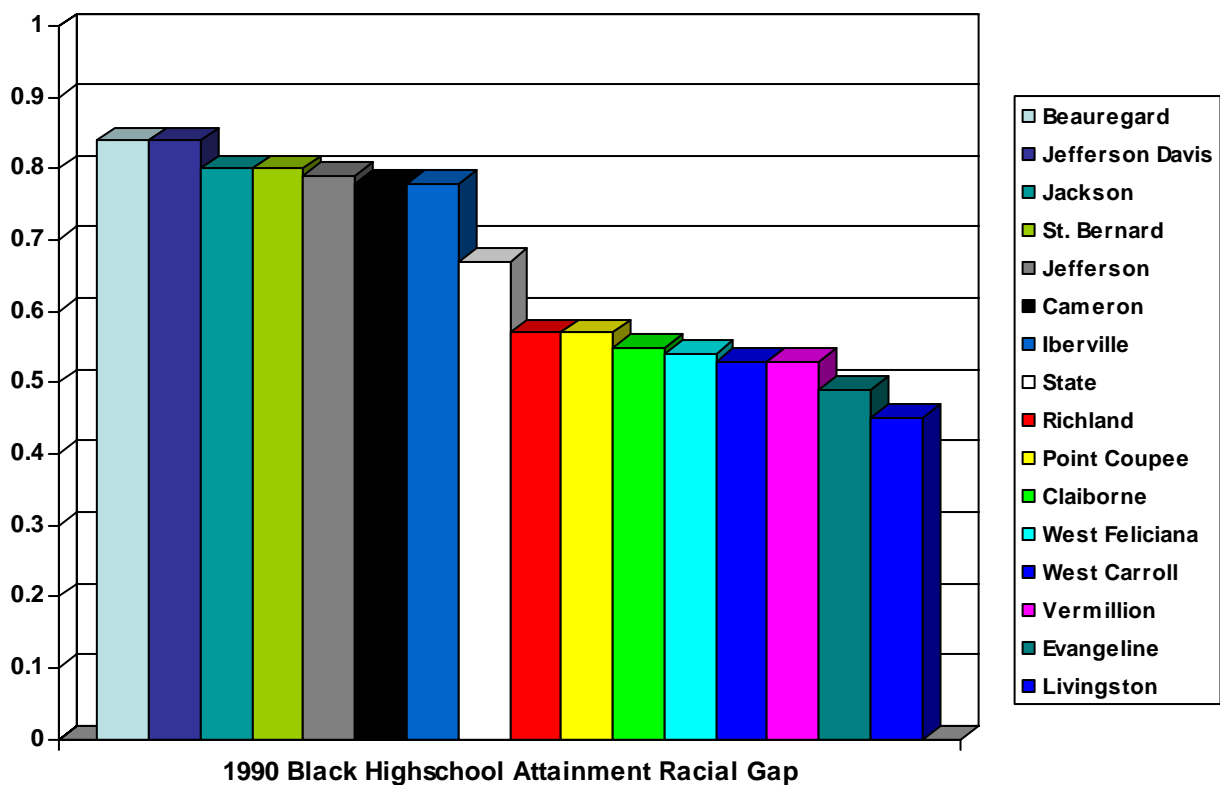
The racial gap in high school attainment varied across the state. First, black high school attainment varied across parishes in 1990. Seven parishes had



black high school attainment rates significantly higher than the state average (46% for blacks): Vernon (84%), East Baton Rouge (64%), Jefferson (62%), Beauregard (61%), Lincoln (59%), Bossier (59%), and Orleans (58%). Seven other parishes had low 1990 black high school attainment rates: Evangeline (27%), West Carroll (29%), Livingston (31%), Richland (34%), Lafourche (35%), Franklin (36%), and Acadia (36%).

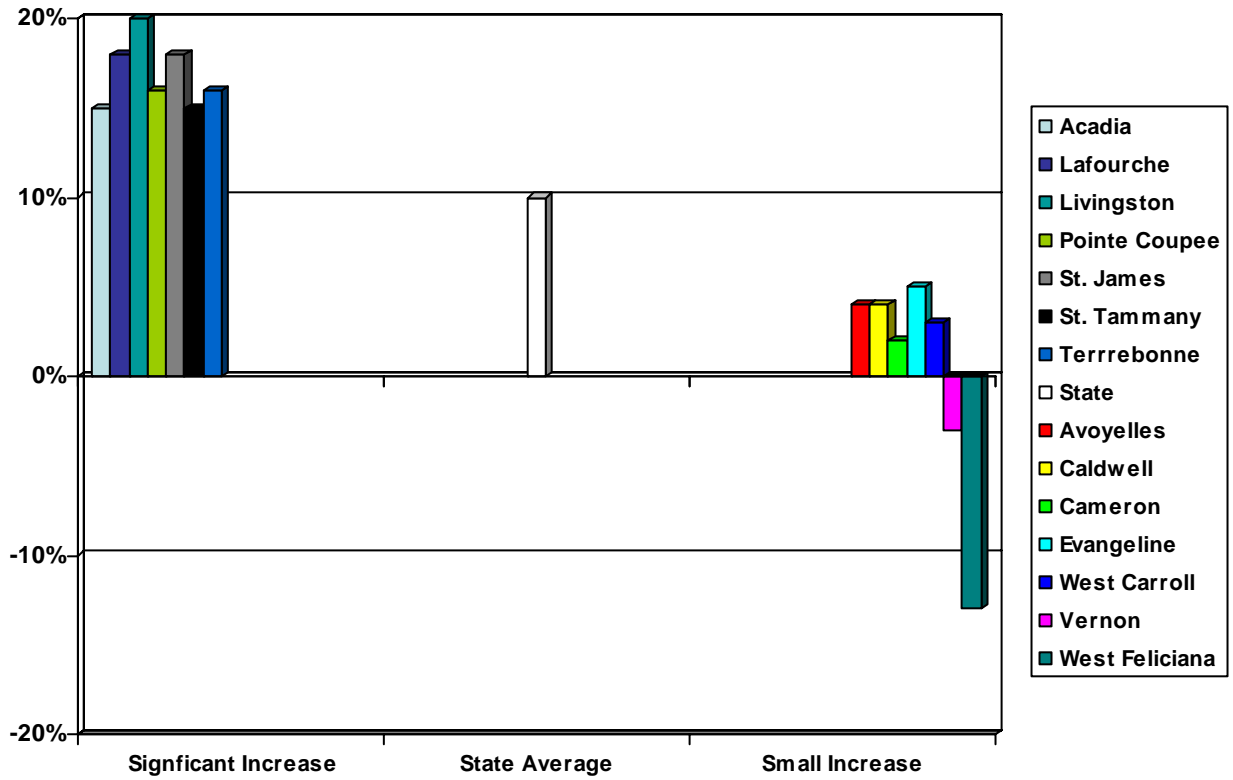
Second, the racial gap varied widely across parishes in 1990. Eight parishes had racial gaps much larger than .67, the state average: Livingston (.45), Evangeline (.49), Vermillion (.53), West Carroll (.53), West Feliciana (.54), Claiborne (.55), Point Coupee (.57), and Richland (.57). By contrast, eight other parishes demonstrated greater racial equity in high school attainment in 1990. Vernon Parish had a racial gap of 1.07, indicating more black than white adults

had completed high school. The following parishes had smaller, but still significant racial gaps: Beauregard (.84), Jefferson Davis (.84), Jackson (.80), St. Bernard (.80), Jefferson (.79), Cameron (.78), and Iberville (.78). The racial gaps for the remaining parishes were closer to the state average. With the sole exception of Vernon Parish, a significant racial gap in high school attainment was found throughout the state in 1990.



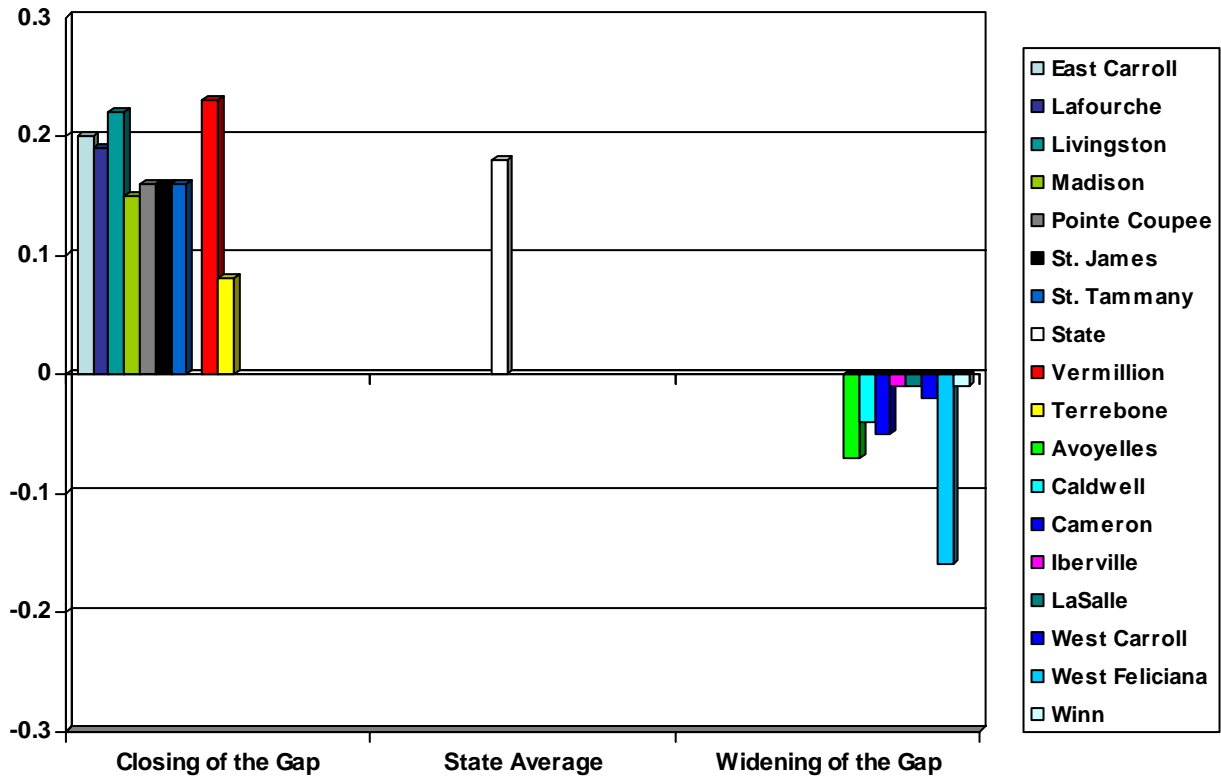
Third, Louisiana parishes were differentially successful in raising black high school attainment from 1990 to 2000. While black high school attainment rates increased ten percentage points on average (from 46% to 56%), the increases were much smaller in Avoyelles, Caldwell, Cameron, Evangeline, and West Carroll parishes. Black high school attainment actually declined in Vernon (from 84% to 81%) and West Feliciana (from 42% to 29%) which may be due in

part to high population changes in the institutions of Fort Polk military base in Vernon and Angola prison in West Feliciana, respectively. Seven parishes--- Acadia, Lafourche, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. James, St. Tammany, and Terrebonne---saw large black high school attainment rates increase by 15 or more percentage points.



Fourth, parishes differed in their ability to close the racial gap in high school attainment from 1990 to 2000. Again, at the state level the racial gap closed, from .67 in 1990 to .75 in 2000. However, eight parishes actually saw a widening of the racial gap in high school attainment (with a mean of -.05): Avoyelles (-.07), Caldwell (-.04), Cameron (-.05), Iberville (-.01), LaSalle (-.01), West Carroll (-.02), West Feliciana (-.16), and Winn (-.01). By contrast, nine parishes made strong efforts to reduce their racial gaps in high school attainment (with a mean of .18): East Carroll (.2), Lafourche (.19), Livingston (.22), Madison

(.15), Pointe Coupee (.16), St. James (.16), St. Tammany (.16), Terrebonne (.18), and Vermillion (.23).

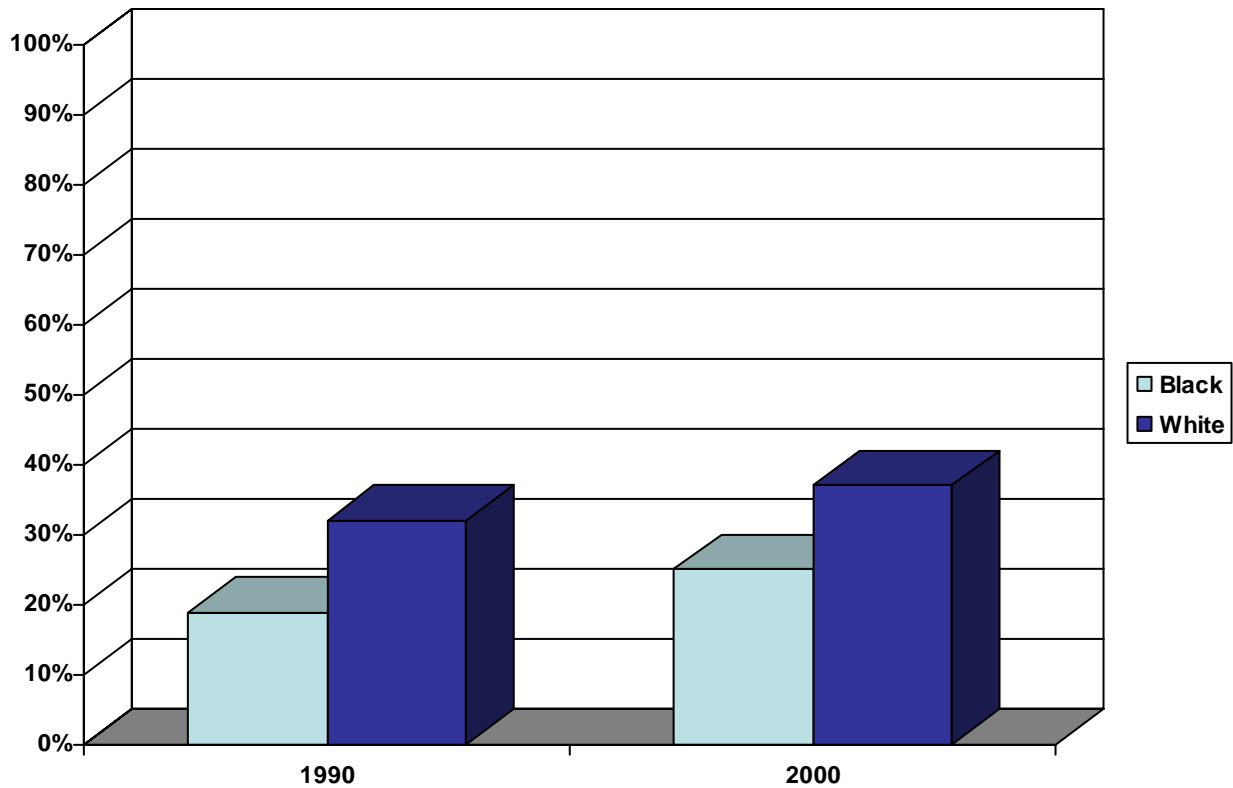


College Participation

State

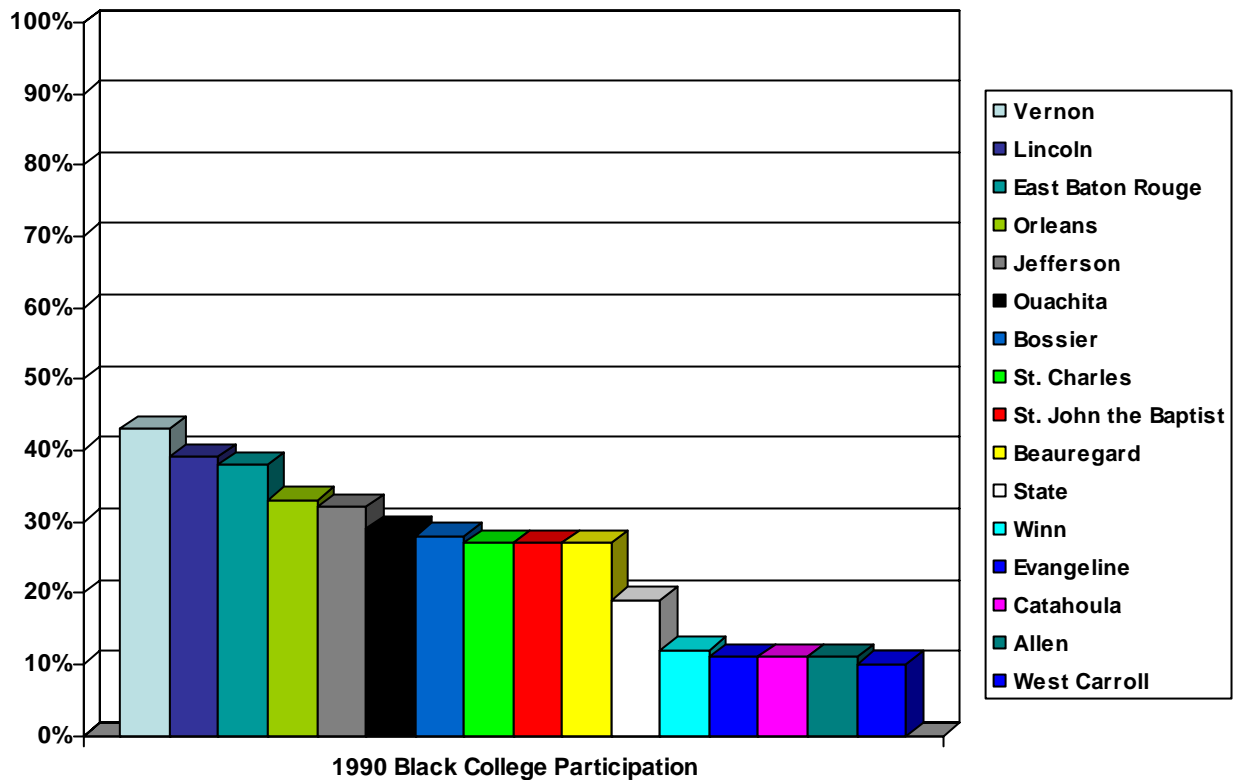
In 1990, 32% of white Louisianans over the age of 25 had reported attended college, compared to only 19% of black Louisianans, indicating a state-level racial gap of 0.59. Like the racial gap for high school attainment, the racial gap for college participation indicates substantial discrepancies between black and white participation. The same trend found in high school attainment between 1990 and 2000 is represented in college participation with the decline of

the racial gap to 0.68. This is due to a 6% increase in black college participation to 25% and a 5% incline in white participation to 37%.



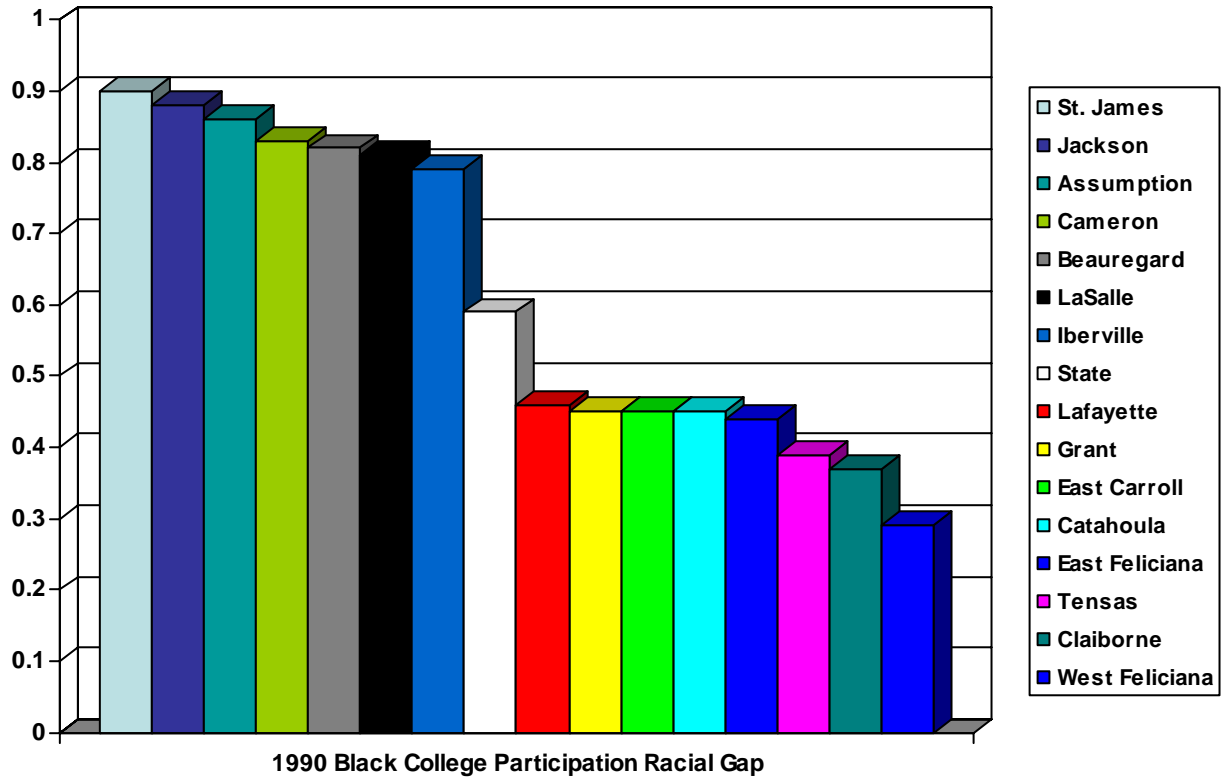
Parish Variation

Like high school attainment the racial gap in college participation also varied across the state. First, blacks over the age of 25 that reported college participation varied across parishes in 1990. Ten parishes had levels of blacks with college participation rates significantly higher than the state average (19% for blacks): Vernon (43%), Lincoln (39%), East Baton Rouge (38%), Orleans (33%), Jefferson (32%), Ouachita (29%), Bossier (28%), St. Charles (27%), St. John the Baptist (27%), and Beauregard (27%). Five other parishes had low rates of blacks reporting college participation in 1990: West Carroll (10%), Allen (11%), Catahoula (11%), Evangeline (11%), and Winn (12%).

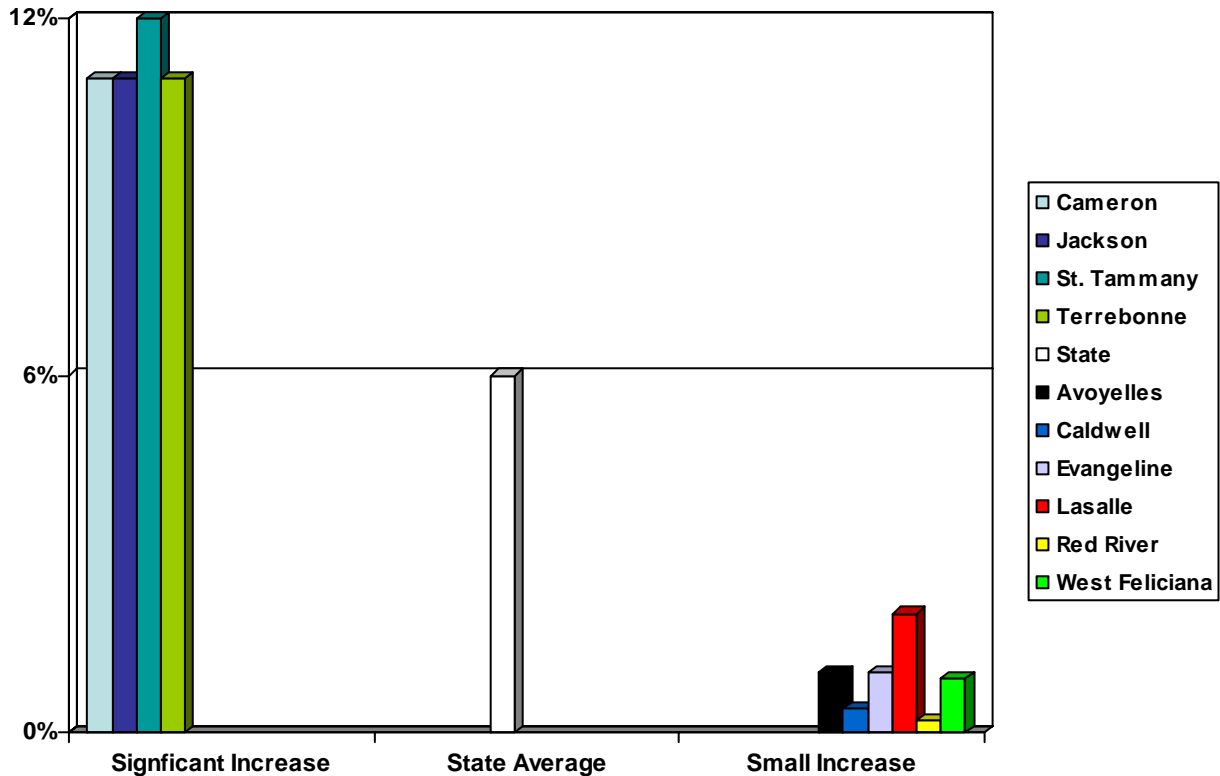


Second, the racial gap varied widely across parishes in 1990. Eight parishes had racial gaps much larger than the .59 state average: West Feliciana (.29), Claiborne (.37), Tensas (.39), East Feliciana (.44), Catahoula (.45), East Carroll (.45), Grant (.45), and Lafayette (.46). Vernon again indicated a higher rate of black attainment that white attainment in this area with a racial gap of 1.19. Seven other parishes had significant gap levels indicating more racial equity: St. James (.90), Jackson (.88), Assumption (.86), Cameron (.83), Beauregard (.82), LaSalle (.81), and Iberville (.79). Like the high school attainment gap for 1990, with the sole exception of Vernon Parish, a significant

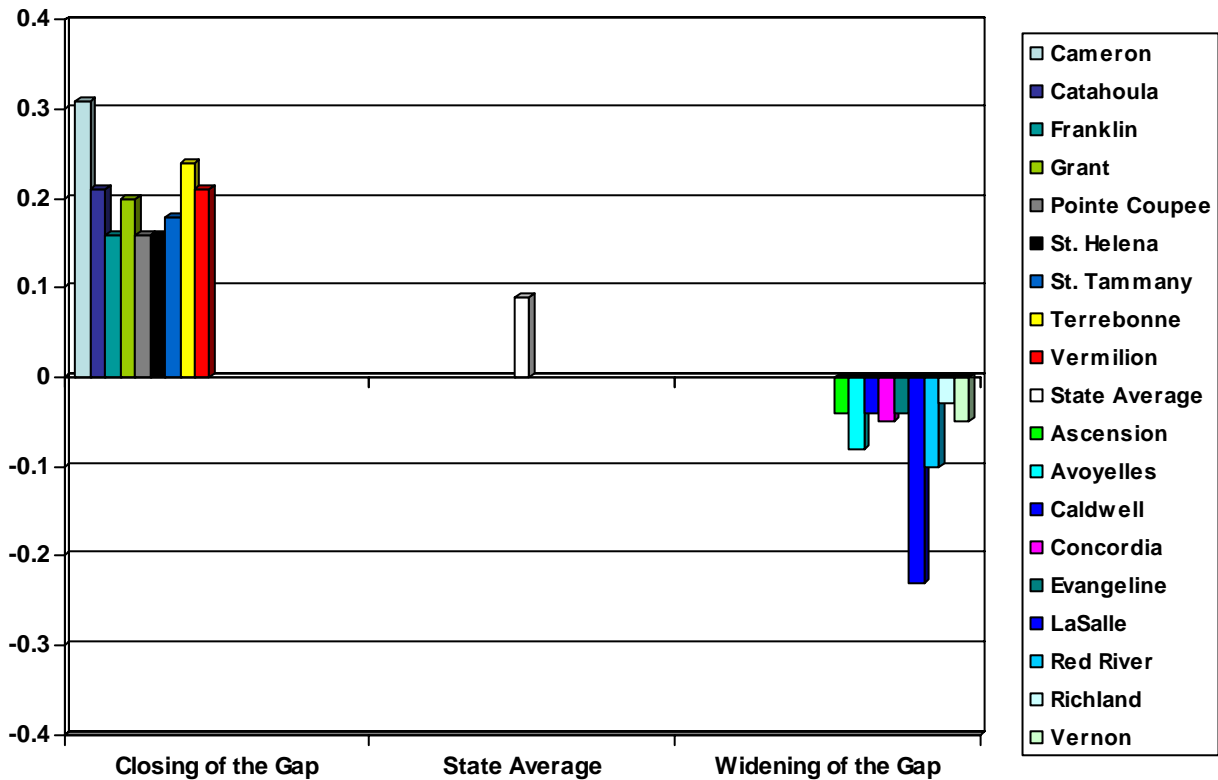
racial gap was found throughout the state on those reporting college participation.



Third, Louisiana parishes were differentially successful in raising black college participation from 1990 to 2000. While the rates increased 6 percentage points on average (19% to 25%), the increases were much smaller in Avoyelles, Caldwell, Evangeline, LaSalle, Red River, and West Feliciana parishes. Four Parishes---Cameron, Jackson, St. Tammany, and Terrebonne---saw large rate increases by 10 or more percentage points.



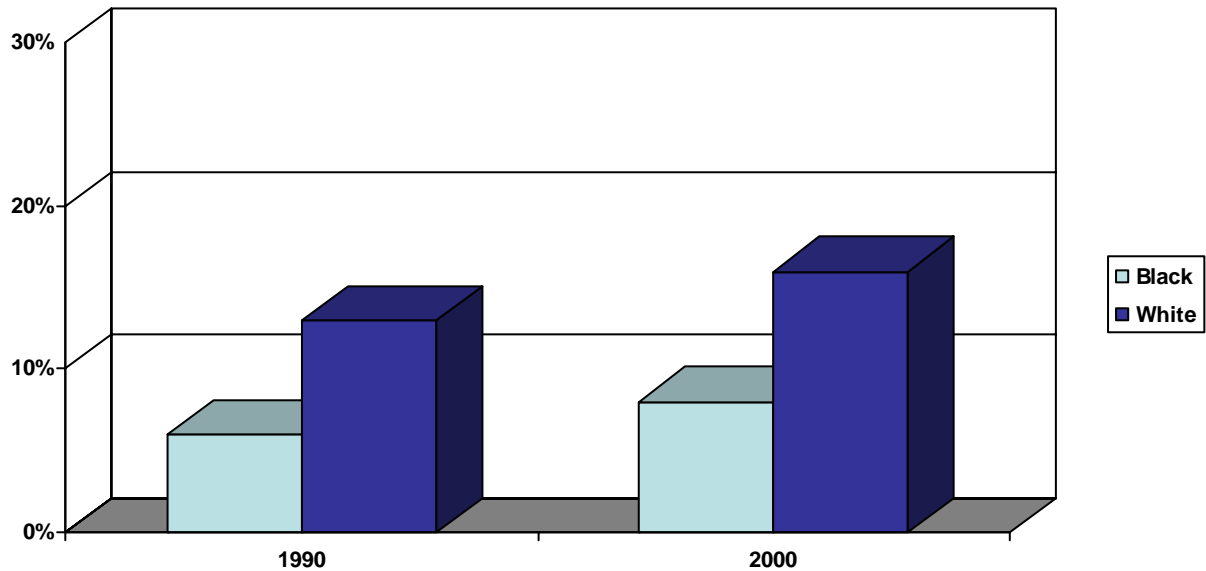
Fourth, the state level of the racial gap closed from .59 in 1990 to .68 in 2000. Yet, nine parishes saw a widening of the racial gap for college participation among Blacks (with a mean of -.07): Ascension (-.04), Avoyelles (-.08), Caldwell (-.04), Concordia (-.05), Evangeline (-.04), LaSalle (-.23), Red River (-.10), Richland (-.03), and Vernon (-.05). By contrast, nine parishes witnessed a reduction in the gap (with a mean of .20): Cameron (.31), Catahoula (.21), Franklin (.16), Grant (.20), Pointe Coupee (.16), St. Helena (.16), St. Tammany (.18), Terrebonne (.24), and Vermilion (.21).



College Degree Attainment

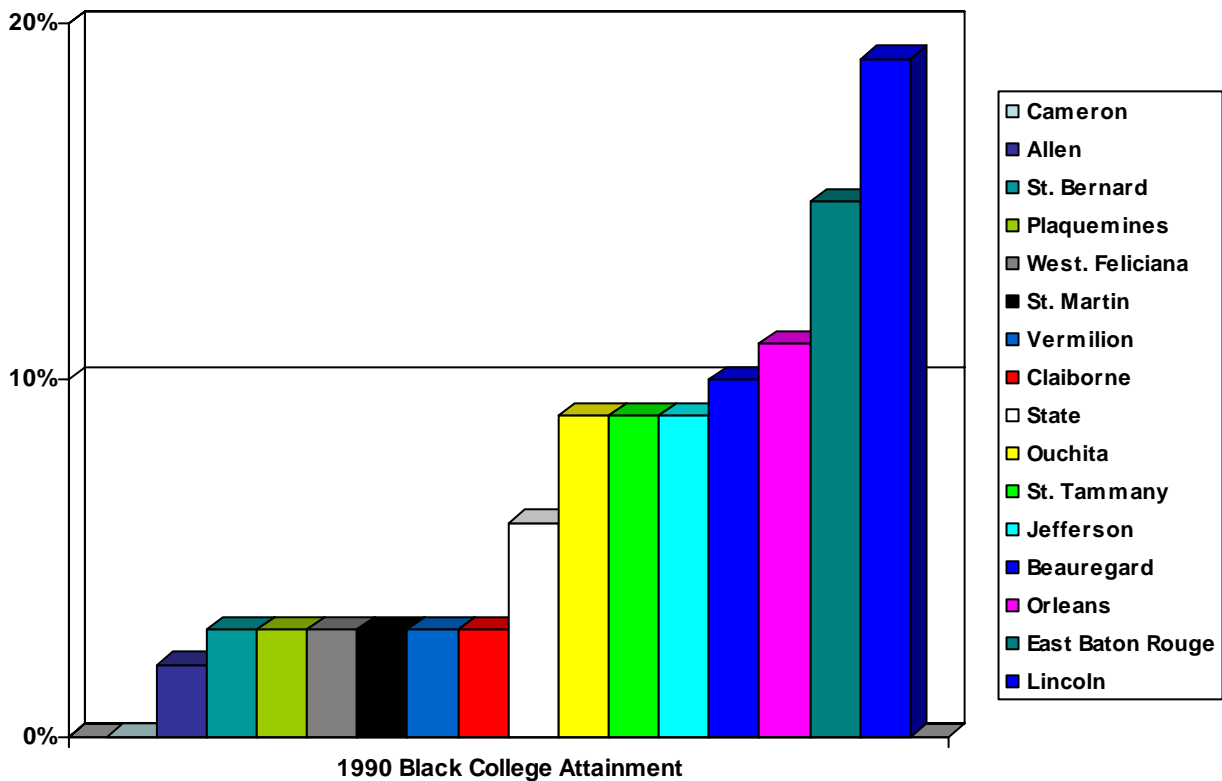
State

In 1990, 13% of white Louisianans over the age 25 had obtained a college degree. However, only half (6%) as many black Louisianans over the age 25 had reached this level of educational attainment in 1990. This led to a racial gap of 0.46. The same trend shown in the previous racial gaps between 1990 and 2000 is shown with college degree attainment. The racial gap lessened however slightly from .46 to .50. Black college attainment rose to 8% while white rose to 16%. This slight increase is still striking in the 2 to 1 ratio of whites versus blacks obtaining collegiate degrees.

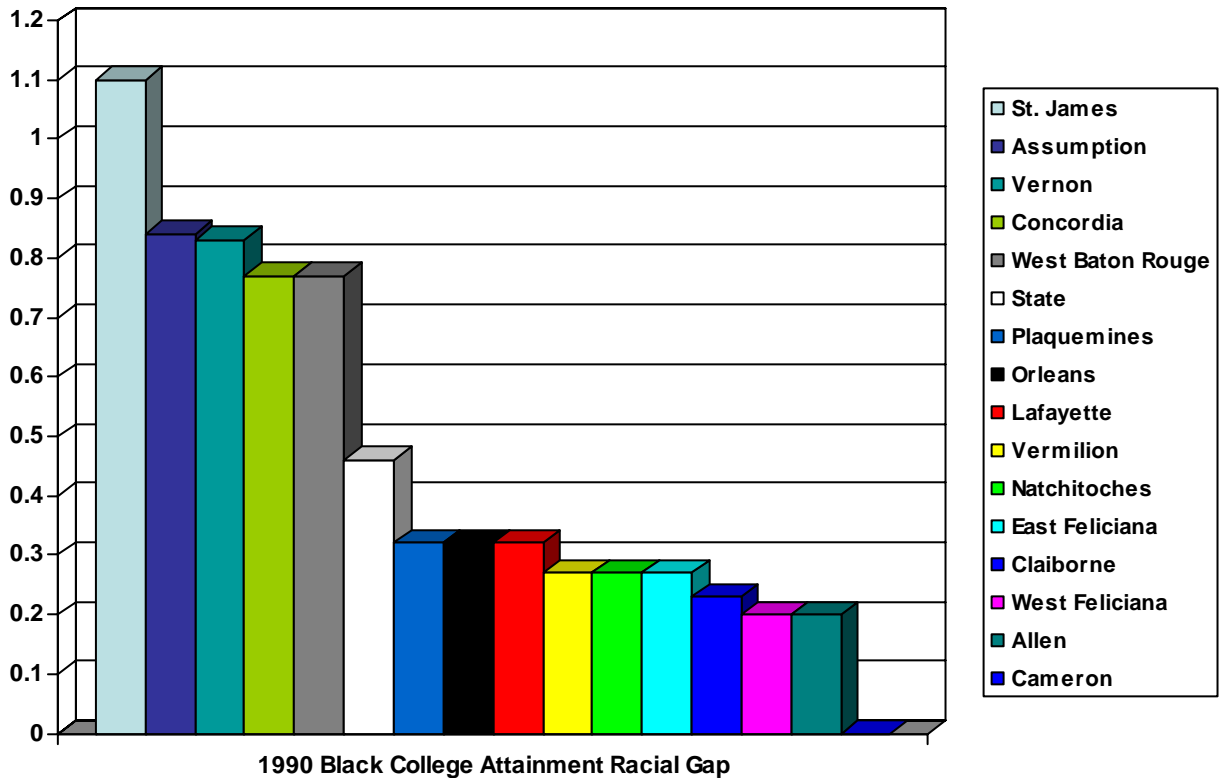


Parish Variation

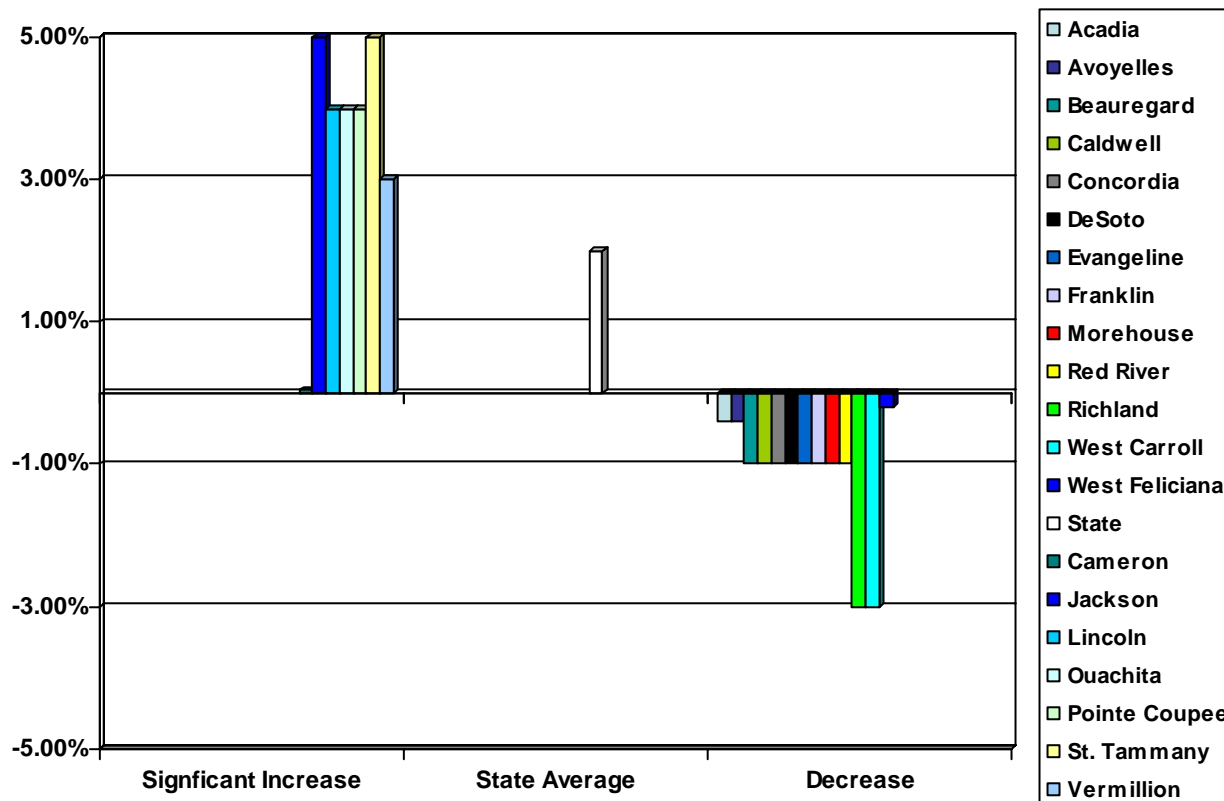
First, the state average for blacks 25 and over with college degrees for 1990 was 6%. Eight parishes had rates significantly lower than the state average: Cameron (0%), Allen (2%), St. Bernard (3%), Plaquemines (3%), West Feliciana (3%), St. Martin (3%), Vermilion (3%), and Claiborne (3%). Contrastingly seven parishes had rates significantly higher than the state average: Lincoln (19%), East Baton Rouge Parish (15%), Orleans (11%), Beauregard (10%), Jefferson (9%), St. Tammany (9%), and Ouachita (9%).



Second, only five parishes had racial gaps significantly smaller than the state average (.46) in 1990 in regards to college diplomas. St. James Parish had a racial gap of 1.1 indicating that more black than white adults had obtained college degrees. The remaining four parishes with smaller racial gaps were: Assumption (.84), Vernon (.83), Concordia (.77), and West Baton Rouge (.77). However, ten parishes had racial gaps significantly larger than the state average: Cameron (.00), Allen (.20), West Feliciana (.20), Claiborne (.23), East Feliciana (.27), Natchitoches (.27), Vermilion (.27), Lafayette (.32), Orleans (.32), and Plaquemines (.32).



Third, Black college attainment rates in Louisiana increased 2 percentage points from 6% to 8% on average between 1990 and 2000. However, 13 parishes saw decreases in adult blacks earning college degrees: Acadia, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Caldwell, Concordia, DeSoto, Evangeline, Franklin, Morehouse, Red River, Richland, West Carroll, and West Feliciana. Seven parishes---Cameron, Jackson, Lincoln, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, St. Tammany, Vermilion---saw large adult black college attainment increases of over 3 percentage points.



Fourth, on average Louisiana saw an increase of .01 towards closing the gap for college attainment. However, ten parishes saw a widening of the racial gap in college attainment between 1990 and 2000 (with a mean of -.01): Beauregard (-.01), Caldwell (-.02), Concordia (-.01), DeSoto (-.01), Evangeline (-.01), Franklin (-.01), Morehouse (-.01), Red River (-.01), Richland (-.02), and West Carroll (-.02). While nine parishes saw a reduction in the racial gap over this time period (with a mean of .04): Cameron (.04), Jackson (.06), Lincoln (.04), Ouachita (.04), Pointe Coupee (.03), St. Bernard (.03), St. Helena (.03), St. Tammany (.06), and Vermillion (.04).

