



2015 CHAMPION OF CHILDREN REPORT:

Boys of Color, Boys at Risk



KIRWAN INSTITUTE
for the Study of Race and Ethnicity



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INTRODUCTION

The past year has brought national attention to the violence and challenges facing too many young men and boys of color, and their families, in communities across the country. Our national dialogue has provided another opportunity to examine our legacy of racial inequity, at the intersection of gender, and how it continues to influence opportunities to succeed. As author and scholar Pedro Noguera reminded us at the 2015 Champion of Children Signature Event, the over-representation of boys of color in areas associated with failure is “rooted in our history and ...it’s hard to escape our history.”

Understanding our shared legacy and its impacts on our boys of color is necessary for us to move forward as a united community. We must deal directly with the fact that the outcomes for boys of color have been so dismal for so long, that we have gone through a process of what Noguera refers to as “normalization.”

“We’ve gotten used to the idea that certain groups of people will fail disproportionately, will drop out of school, will end up unemployed, will end up behind bars, and whenever we have an issue like that that we get accustomed to, then there is no sense of urgency. Which is one of the reasons why I think it’s almost a problem to call it a crisis. If it were a crisis we’d respond with urgency. Right now I’d say this is a problem that’s chronic, it’s pervasive, but it’s also one that we’re learning to live with, and ... part of the reason why is because we don’t see it as an American problem. We see it as a Black problem or a Latino/Hispanic problem, not an American problem. Until we realize that our whole society is imperiled when we allow a segment of our population to be endangered in these ways, we won’t marshal the resources needed to begin to change it.”

This year’s Champion of Children Report is a call to our community to reject that normalization. We cannot afford to allow so many of our systems to fail boys of color without jeopardizing the well-being of our community. “If you consider that by 2025, 1 in 4 children playing in playgrounds across the country will be Latino, we have to consider how tragic this actually is,” states Dr. Frederick Aldama, Arts & Humanities Distinguished Professor of English and University Distinguished Scholar at The Ohio State University, and Founder and Director of LASER. A demographic transformation is taking place in every space of significance—our workplaces, our schools, and our neighborhoods. In this report, we take the learnings from our last two Champion of Children reports and apply them to boys of color. From our 2013 report, we draw on the importance of neighborhoods of opportunity for success and the types of structures that foster healthy outcomes for children. From the 2014 report, we bring the understanding of how corrosive adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress are to both child development and the potential for success in every facet of life.



“There’s a stigma that follows African American males everywhere they go, from the day they are conceived and all the way throughout their educational experiences... and because of that, it affects African American males in a profound way. Every interaction, every perception has a psychological response, and for many, they begin to realize instantly when they enter certain domains in which people don’t necessarily think they can achieve at the same level. For some, it inspires. For some, it inhibits their academic journeys throughout the pipeline.”

–James L. Moore III, Ph.D.

Associate Provost, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Director, Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
EHE Distinguished Professor of Urban Education
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This report documents the many challenges facing our young boys of color, challenges that if left unaddressed, imperil their successful entry into adulthood and their ability to be flourishing, productive members of our community. However, it is also clear that such research does not fully capture the experience of all boys of color in our community. Indeed, there are contexts in which our young boys of color are thriving, where others have high expectations for them, and the boys themselves feel confident and capable. While the data and research we review this year are extremely challenging, this should be a call to action for our community.

As a community, we have some programs that are successfully placing boys of color on a path to success. We have begun to tackle racial disparities in infant mortality, changing the trajectory of at-risk children in our highest infant mortality neighborhoods before they are born by intervening with mothers and environments to support healthy delivery and development. We have also answered the call to be My Brother’s Keeper through a city wide initiative and a Franklin County pilot program. The Ohio State University’s Todd Bell Center for the African American Male is a nationally recognized organization for producing academic success for college-aged Black males. These important interventions provide great models, but as a community we must do more to expand and invest in our interventions.

We are also a community with significant capacity and resources. We need better alignment to ensure boys of color have the opportunities to excel and greater dialogue about expanding our promising programs to reach more of the community. In this report we also highlight what is essential for creating an environment where boys of color can thrive. Research tells us that taking the following steps as a community can have a tremendous effect on our boys of color:

- ◊ Ensuring healthy neighborhoods and healthy families
- ◊ Supporting strong and resilient families
- ◊ Embracing a new narrative of resilience and high expectations
- ◊ Investing in evidence-based mentoring programs and “coaching” to support our youth
- ◊ Challenging our implicit biases as individuals and within our institutions
- ◊ Repairing the pipeline to educational success

This is the time to act for Franklin County. We must work and invest to expand opportunities, provide mentoring and coaching, and reduce barriers to success to ensure boys of color (and all children) succeed and thrive in our community.

CHALLENGES: FAMILY, POVERTY & ENVIRONMENT

Education is a pathway to advancement, yet we still struggle to ensure equity in educational opportunity and success for boys of color. The Schott Foundation for Public Education has been tracking Black and Latino/Hispanic male educational outcomes in every state for 10 years. Its most recent report finds persistent and systemic gaps in educational outcomes and the educational resources available for these youth. The gap between White males and Black males continues to widen; for the 2012-2013 high school cohort, Ohio ranked 41 out of 50 states on Black male graduation rates (54% vs 84% White male graduation rate).¹ Ohio also recorded one of the largest gaps in Latino/Hispanic/White male graduation rates (22-percentage point gap).² These disturbing outcomes persist despite a national call to action—embodied by No Child Left Behind legislation—to address class and racial gaps in academic outcomes.

Much of recent educational policy focuses on in-school factors such as teacher preparedness or performance, or inferior classroom environments as the cause of achievement gaps, hence the push for accountability, testing, and other outcomes-oriented results. While in-school factors are critical, we must also acknowledge the powerful effects that out-of-school factors have on educational success, such as family stability environment and economic well-being. Research demonstrates that family and neighborhood effects account for approximately 60% of educational success.³

TABLE 1: CHANGE IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES BY RACE & ETHNICITY

	All families, 2000	Single-parent families, 2000	%	All families, 2011-2013	Single-parent families, 2011-2013	%	% change in number of families, 2000 to 2011-2013	% change in number of single-parent families, 2000 to 2011-2013
Total	263,601	51,413	19.5%	272,165	58,811	21.6%	3.2%	14.4%
White alone (non-Hispanic)	200,512	27,970	13.9%	189,739	27,901	14.7%	-5.4%	-0.2%
Black or African American alone	46,713	20,323	43.5%	55,693	24,174	43.4%	19.2%	18.9%
Asian alone	7,530	607	8.1%	10,790	1,083	10.0%	43.3%	78.4%
Mixed race	3,999	1,337	33.4%	5,151	2,020	39.2%	28.8%	51.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	4,608	1,139	24.7%	10,425	3,919	37.6%	126.2%	244.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (2000), American Community Survey 3-year estimates (2011-2013)

Note: Single parent families include any family household with a single householder (no spouse present) and related children under age 18

FAMILY STABILITY & WELLBEING

Boys of color are more likely to be in single-parent families, and the number of single-parent families have increased in the past decade. In the most recent American Community Survey for Franklin County, 43% of African American families and 37% of Latino/Hispanic families were single-parent families compared to 15% of White single-parent families. The number of African American single-parent families has stayed relatively consistent between 2000 and 2011/2013, but the rate of single-parent families in the Latino/Hispanic community in Franklin County has risen sharply, from 24.7% of families in 2000 to 37.6% of families in 2011/2013 (see Table 1). Although the impact of single parenthood on child development is still debated, single-parent households with limited income will face greater challenges, and research is clear that single-parent families (particularly the absence of fathers) is particularly detrimental to boys of color.

It is clear that macroeconomic factors have significantly impacted the current state of single parenthood in families of color. It is important to note that many of the problems plaguing Black families are often beyond individual control, such as impacts from economic change, and policies supporting mass incarceration. Research suggests that families are both a cause and a consequence of the declining economic opportunities of low-income men of color. Decade-long trends of wealth and income inequality have placed these families, and especially men, on the losing end of the spectrum. Research has indicated that economic and societal constraints such as racism, inadequate education, high unemployment, underemployment, and disadvantages in training, hiring, and job maintenance play a significant role in family functioning and marital stability today.



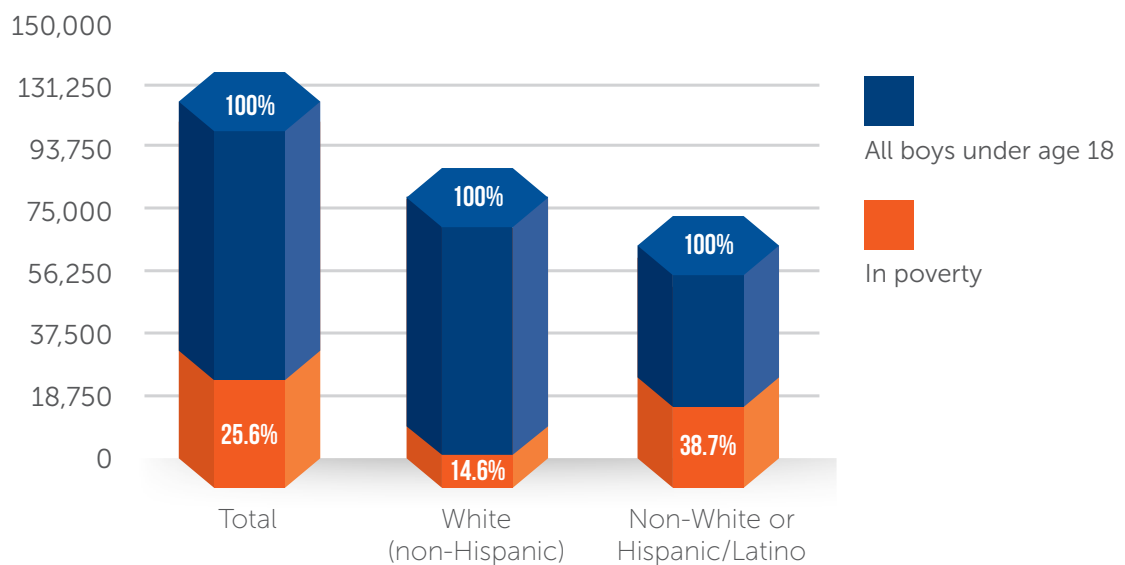
POVERTY & RESOURCES

Poverty, and the stress associated with it, has a significant negative effect on mental, emotional, and physical health. When it is consistent and unrelenting it becomes toxic and impairs the cognitive development in children. It is well-documented that children living in poverty are more likely to display delayed cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development.⁴ This has far-reaching consequences like lower lifetime earnings, more involvement in crime, and more mental health problems.⁵ Persistent poverty in early childhood is especially problematic. For example, one study found that children from poorer households (half the poverty threshold) performed worse on various standardized tests of IQ, verbal ability, and achievement than children from families with incomes between 1.5 and 2 times the poverty threshold. The poorer children scored between 6 and 13 points lower, a difference that could translate to being placed in a special education program or not.⁶ In the same study, children who lived in poverty

for at least 4 years scored 6 to 9 points lower on such tests than children who were never poor.⁷

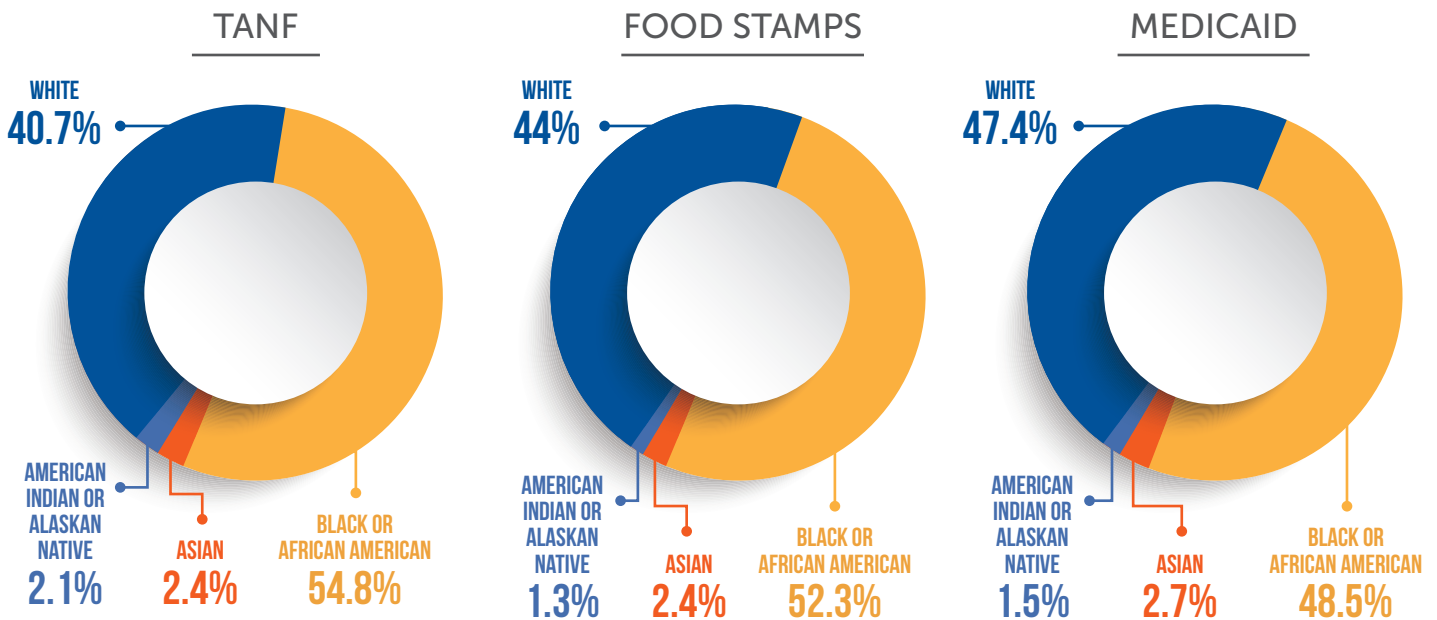
Although these issues are more likely to occur for children living in extreme poverty for lengthy periods of time, even transient poverty has been found to have negative effects on mental health.⁸ Socio-emotional problems fall into two categories: externalizing interpersonal problems⁹ and internalizing intrapersonal problems. Research suggests that transient poverty is linked to increases in aggression, hyperactivity, and destructive behavior in children in response to their disrupted and chaotic lives: "Volatile family incomes may make for volatile family lives... and in turn, emotionally and behaviorally volatile youth who are attempting to adapt to their changing developmental context."¹⁰ The effects of persistent poverty have been strongly linked to anxiety, depression, and fearfulness as children internalize their toxic levels of stress.

TABLE 2: POVERTY BY RACE/ETHNICITY, BOYS UNDER AGE 18, FRANKLIN COUNTY, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates

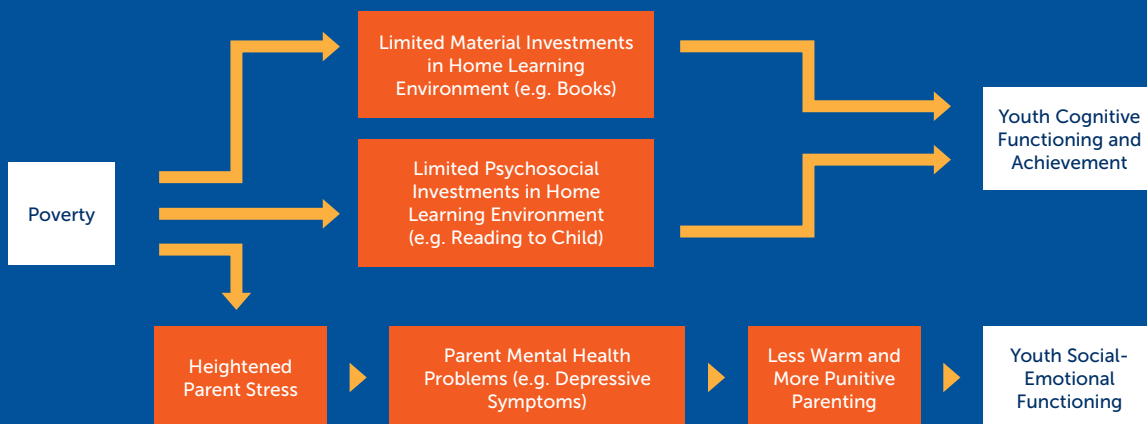
TABLE 3: FRANKLIN COUNTY JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES, 2013 ASSISTANCE (JANUARY-AUGUST)



Source: Franklin County Job and Family Services, 2013 data (January-August 2013)
 Note: Only included recipients with known races

Family income plays an important role in the psychological development of youth. Poor youth are less likely to have access to supports and resources that stimulate their socio-cognitive development and more likely to experience an abundance of stressors.¹¹ Research finds that “controlling for the two indirect pathways within the home environment explains at least half of the association between income and youth outcomes ...”¹² Poverty is a significant facing local families of color, particularly in the African American and Latino/Hispanic community (see table 2). In Franklin County, boys of color experience the highest poverty rates (38.7%) and African American families represent approximately half of all TANF, Food Stamps and Medicaid recipients in 2013.

FIGURE 1: FAMILY INCOME AND YOUTH OUTCOMES



NEIGHBORHOODS MATTER

Although poor children of all races suffer when exposed to negative neighborhood conditions, research shows that Black and Latino/Hispanic children are far more likely to live in areas of “high poverty” or “concentrated poverty” (20 or 40% or more of the residents live below the poverty line, respectively) than White children. Sixty-six percent of Black children born between 1985 and 2000 grew up in high poverty neighborhoods, compared to only 6% of White children.¹³ A study in 2008 showed that Black and Latino/Hispanic children were more than 12 times as likely as White children to be both poor and living in neighborhoods where poverty was the norm.¹⁴ As documented in our 2013 Champion of Children Report, African American children are more likely to live in neighborhoods where poverty rates are double what is found in the typical neighborhoods for White children in the Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Researchers have also found that prolonged exposure to extremely disadvantaged neighborhoods during childhood negatively impacts cognitive ability and primary and secondary educational outcomes, impeding access to college and economic mobility.¹⁵ The depths of this crisis, particularly for Black youth, are perhaps best revealed by a 2010 finding that the average Black male had performed below proficiency in every grade and every subject on the National Assessment of Education Progress for the past 20 years.¹⁶ Tables 4 and 5 show large gaps in reading and math proficiencies for Black and Latino/Hispanic youth in Franklin County.

High-poverty schools are indicative of neighborhoods in distress. Some studies estimate that U.S. students spend about 1,150 hours in school compared to 4,700 waking hours per year in their neighborhoods and with their families.¹⁷ We know that neighborhoods and family environments have powerful effects on educational outcomes, and we need to ensure that both of these environments are equipped with the resources that support and encourage scholastic success and positive life outcomes. Research documents that much of the variation in cognitive skills and behavior can be attributed to family or neighborhood effects and not in-school dynamics.¹⁸

For example, one study assessing verbal ability found that staying in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty has “a cumulative and negative effect on verbal achievement.” The effects were found to be roughly equivalent to missing an entire year of school.¹⁹ Other research suggests living in a low-income neighborhood may have a larger effect on test score gaps than coming from a low-income family.²⁰ Further, research shows that students in poverty do better when

TABLE 4: ODE TEST RESULTS: MATH

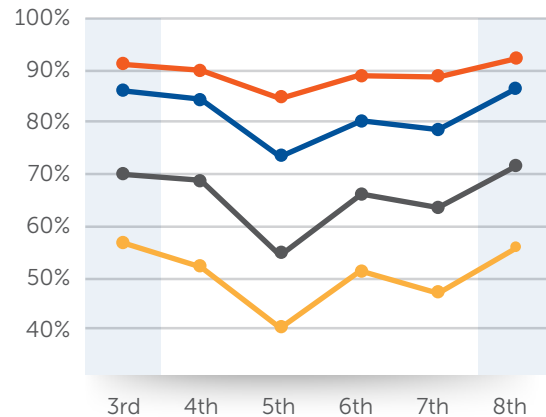
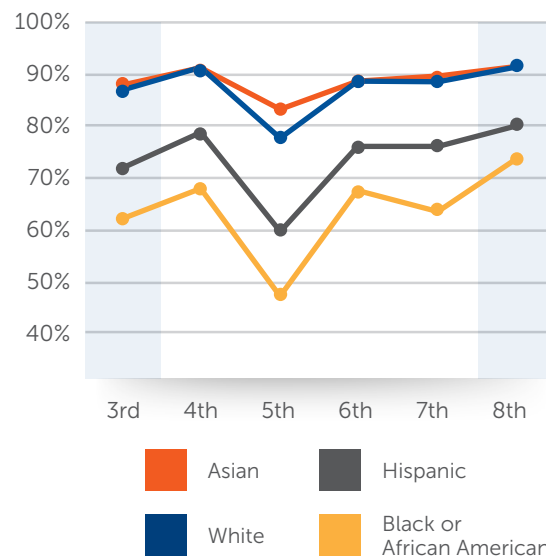


TABLE 5: ODE TEST RESULTS: READING



Note: Table shows the percentage of student who scored at or above proficient on each test
Source: Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Achievement Assessment, May 2014 Administration (preliminary outcome data)

attending a more affluent school (where less than 10% of the student body is on free and reduced lunch), scoring 8 points higher on math scores, or half a grade level, than middle-income students attending high-poverty schools (where free and reduced lunch rates are above 75%).²¹

Concentration of poverty impedes access to educational opportunity in a variety of ways. First, poverty limits the resources available to families and schools to promote child learning. According to one study, “high-poverty schools have to devote far more time and resources to family and health crises, security, children who come to school not speaking standard English, seriously disturbed children, children with no educational materials in their homes, and many children with very weak educational preparation.”²² And in segregated neighborhoods, the number of children experiencing such challenges is higher, thereby intensifying the problem and requiring even more resources to help those in need. Low-income students of color are also more likely to have less-qualified teachers, more likely to have teachers who completed an alternative certification program, and are more likely to be taught by substitute teachers.²³ As a result, students attending high-poverty schools, which are commonly students of color, are more likely to have lower academic achievement. School poverty has serious implications not just for students, but for districts, communities, and entire regions. This is not new. In fact, the 1966 Coleman Report (a study of inequality of opportunity in education) concluded that concentrated poverty inevitably depresses achievement on a school-wide and a district-wide basis—the effects are not contained within school walls.²⁴

TABLE 6: COLUMBUS KIDS PARTICIPANTS: INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY RACE

Family Income	White, Caucasian	Black or African American	Multiple Races	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Other Race	Parent Refused
< \$5,000	31.3%	48.9%	41.9%	29.1%	47.9%	42.5%	33.3%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	10.9%	14.4%	14.3%	5.5%	20.8%	17.6%	18.9%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	17.1%	15.3%	20.2%	22.0%	16.7%	22.7%	21.6%
< \$20,000	59.3%	78.7%	76.4%	56.7%	85.4%	82.9%	73.9%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	15.9%	15.8%	15.8%	22.8%	10.4%	14.2%	18.0%
< \$40,000	75.2%	94.4%	92.3%	79.5%	95.8%	97.0%	91.9%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	7.7%	3.2%	4.2%	7.1%	4.2%	0.9%	1.8%
\$60,000 +	17.1%	2.4%	3.5%	13.4%	0.0%	2.0%	6.3%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Columbus Kids, start of initiative (2010) through December 31, 2014

The disparities in the educational outcomes for Black and Latino/Hispanic male students are not just their problem or a problem of will or effort or an individual school’s problem, but our collective problem. Research has documented that the majority of the nation’s dropout problems are concentrated in segregated, high-poverty schools.²⁵ Residential segregation and concentrated poverty in schools matter for the educational achievement of all students, but especially for our young boys of color. As Noguera pointed out in his Champion of Children address,

“All the grit in the world without opportunity leaves you stuck. You need to think not just about effort, but how are we expanding opportunities, building connections... mentorship, access to jobs, access to college. These are the opportunities that change lives. And so those attributes, those social, emotional skills, I think are essential, but so is access to real opportunity.”

–Pedro Noguera

RODNEY'S STORY

At 6 feet 3 inches, Rodney can dunk a basketball with ease and knock out a few dozen push-ups without a struggle. But not everything comes so easily for the quiet 15-year-old from the Milo Grogan neighborhood.

Recently, Rodney's grades began to slide as the sophomore lost focus on school and became distracted by a chaotic home life that made it difficult for him to study and complete homework.

The staff at the Milo-Grogan Boys & Girls Club of Columbus (BGCC) where Rodney has been a regular member for 6 years noticed his academic decline through the Learning Circle Education System database funded, in part, by United Way of Central Ohio. When they approached him about the issue, he commented that he never had anyone at home pushing him to do better in school.

With the help of Club staff members, Rodney put together a plan to improve his attendance and grades. And he's now back on track, focusing on his ultimate goal of graduating high school and attending the University of Maryland. This was by no means the first time the BGCC staff had gently influenced Rodney's behavior or supported his dream of attending college.

When he moved into his aunt's house across the street from the Milo-Grogan Club at age 9, Rodney was painfully shy and struggling with a confusing family situation that left him missing his parents and not feeling entirely at home with his aunt. Over time and with the help of his mentor, "Mr. Mark," and others at the Club he began to recognize and develop the outstanding leadership qualities he possessed.

Rodney's accomplishments were recognized recently when he was named the BGCC's 2015 Youth of the Year. In addition to playing football and basketball for Centennial High School, he's a member of BGCC's Triple Play Sports Leadership Club and Torch and Keystone Leadership clubs.

"Rodney has a great deal of character and integrity. Like many teens who are dealing with a number of distractions, he just needs someone to help him stay focused on his goals and to keep him on track to succeed."

—Mr. Mark

IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS: AN INVISIBLE BARRIER TO OPPORTUNITY

Implicit bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that influence our decisions and behaviors without our conscious awareness. It differs from intentional bias because it is activated involuntarily without our awareness or intentional control²⁶ and may even conflict with our explicit or declared beliefs.²⁷

Throughout our lifetime, we are exposed to billions of direct and indirect messages about the world around us. In fact, neuroscientists believe that our unconscious brains can receive up to 11 million pieces of information at any point in time; however, on a conscious level, we are only capable of receiving up to 40.²⁸ This means that the vast majority of the information we receive each day is absorbed without us ever being aware. And many of the messages we receive about Black and Latino/Hispanic boys encompass harmful and pervasive stereotypes. These ubiquitous messages become embedded into our subconscious minds. Without the benefit of first-hand interracial friendships and interactions, perceptions of minorities are often based on popular culture and distorted images in the media, which can reinforce harmful stereotypes and deepen racial misunderstanding. Consequently, even when it is our intention to remain unbiased, we may unknowingly engage in discriminatory behaviors that adversely affect their life outcomes. As the next section outlines, these implicit associations work to create an invisible, but impactful, barrier to opportunity for boys of color.

THE LIFE COURSE FOR BOYS OF COLOR

CHALLENGES: PRENATAL ENVIRONMENTS ARE CRITICAL FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

In 2014, City Council President Andrew Ginther launched the Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force. The Task Force was launched in response to Ohio and Franklin County's extremely poor standing in regards to infant and maternal health, particularly for African American infants and mothers. Ohio has the worst African American infant mortality rate in the nation. In Franklin County, African American infant mortality rates (17.1) are more than double the rates found for White infants (7.5). Similar disparities are found in the rates of low birth weight and preterm birth for African American infants. Of the Franklin County's 8 neighborhood "hot spots" for high rates of infant mortality, 6 of these neighborhoods are majority communities of color.

Poor health of children has serious consequences for educational achievement. Lower birth weight babies often suffer from long-term disabilities, impaired physical and cognitive development, and decreased health overall throughout childhood.²⁹ Health problems can also diminish a student's attention span or cause the student to miss school and fall behind.³⁰ The impact of health status on school achievement is so important that researchers estimate 25% of the achievement gap in education is attributable to differences in child and maternal health.³¹

SCHOOL AGE: THE CHALLENGES OF NAVIGATING SCHOOL SYSTEMS, BIASES, AND PERCEPTIONS

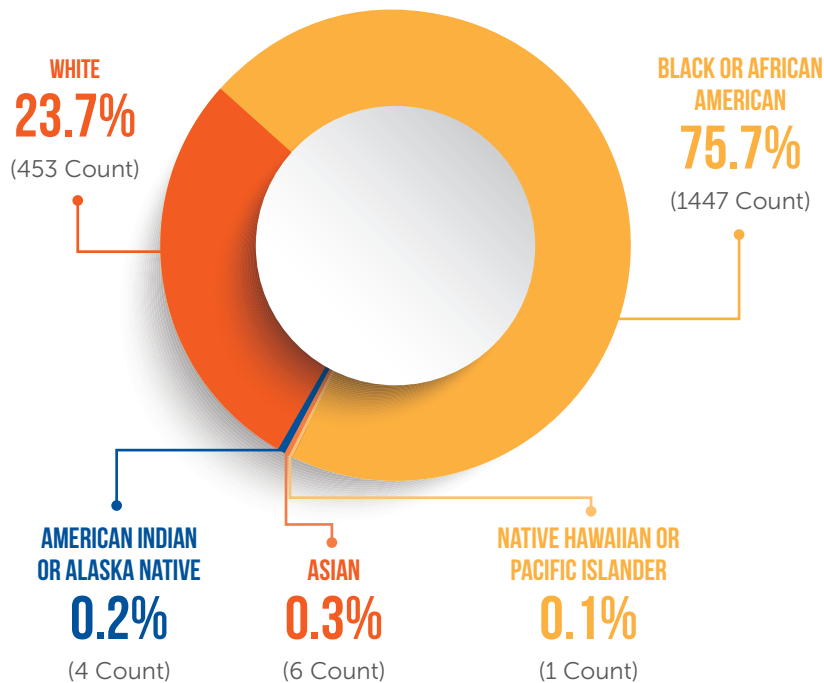
Understanding the school-to-prison pipeline

We have 50 years of research documenting the over-representation of racial minorities at all stages of the justice process (arrest, referral, conviction, and confinement).³² The Sentencing Project, which calculated state rates of incarceration by race and ethnicity, found that Black youth are incarcerated at six times the rate of White youth, while Latino/Hispanic youth are incarcerated at double the rate of White youth.³³

We also have 30 years of research documenting racial disproportion in discipline practices at schools.³⁴ Black students are expelled three times more frequently than White students.³⁵ Though they made up just 16% of students enrolled in 2011-12, they accounted for 31% of all in-school arrests.

And this disparity begins almost immediately. In preschool, 48% of preschool children who are suspended more than once are Black. Given these numbers, we really should be talking about a preschool-to-prison pipeline. Studies are documenting the link between racial disproportion in out-of-school suspensions and racial disproportion in the juvenile justice systems.³⁶ One such study finds that “racial disproportion in out-of-school suspensions, which cannot be explained solely by differences in delinquent behavior, is strongly associated with similar levels of disproportion in the juvenile justice system” and this persists after controlling for poverty, urbanization, and other factors.³⁷

TABLE 7: FRANKLIN COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER, 2013 CONTACTS



Source: Franklin County Juvenile Detention Center, 2013 contacts
 Note: Only male contacts with identified race were included in this sample.
 Contacts ranged from ages 9-23 but 98% were ages 10-18.

Implicit bias shapes expectations and discipline

Research in psychology documents a self-fulfilling expectation of delinquent behavior. Students who are labeled as defiant or problematic “are more likely to internalize these labels and act out in ways that match the expectations that have been set for them ... A large body of research has shown that labeling and exclusion practices can create a self-fulfilling prophecy and result in a cycle that can be difficult to break.”³⁸

As Noguera points out, schools most frequently punish the students who have the greatest need: *“often it is the needs of students and the inability of the schools to meet those needs that causes them to be disciplined ... Too often schools react to the behavior of children while failing to respond to their unmet needs or the factors responsible for their problematic behavior.”*³⁹ For example, research shows that children experiencing abuse or neglect,⁴⁰ children experiencing hunger or food insecurity,⁴¹ children who have internalized low expectations, and children who are unable to perform at grade-level expectations⁴² all are more likely to act out. There are better, more effective and nurturing responses to such situations, yet too many of our schools use punishment as the response. In Ohio, Black boys receive far more disciplinary actions than their peers (see Table 7).

Misperceptions of behavior

Research suggests that boys struggle more within traditional academic systems than girls, and this mismatch between learning styles and educational practice can lead to a disconnection, at an early age, of boys from school.⁴³ Noguera also pointed out the difference between girls and boys in soft skills in his speech: *“...it tends to be that girls are better at [school] than boys in general ways, because so much of education is about the soft skills. It’s about knowing how to listen, knowing how to work with others, knowing how to sit still, things that boys struggle with.”* Identity development of boys—the “boy code” to be tough, independent, strong that society often demands—further complicates the issues of academic underachievement, and perhaps particularly so for our young boys of color. For Latino/Hispanic males, the “machismo” archetype reinforces these messages.⁴⁴ As boys struggle to hide their academic vulnerabilities, a false bravado may be erected,⁴⁵ but ultimately the subsequent disconnection from schools can lead to the elevated rates of depression and suicide attempts evident in young Latino/Hispanic males.⁴⁶

Researchers discovered that Black males look to their surroundings and environmental context to construct masculinity. For instance,

a father noted that the manner in which his son presented himself changed as he grew. According to the father, his son “felt the need to project the image of a tough and angry young Black man...to behave differently—too nice, gentle, kind or sincere—meant that he would be vulnerable and preyed upon.”⁴⁷ According to researchers, this belief carries over into schools and influences the way in which Black male students experience and behave in school. For instance, Black male students express their thoughts in what has been described as a flamboyant and nonconformist manner, known as “cool pose.”⁴⁸ Although this is not inherently problematic, issues arise when this communication is misinterpreted by teachers. For instance, one study found that several “novice White teachers reported that they often perceived lively debates occurring between Black males as suggestive of aggressive behavior,” concluding that such behavior was disruptive and thus warranted sanctions.⁴⁹ However, to Black male students such communication is rooted in their construction of masculinity and is not a sign of defiance.

While many of these misperceptions are based on comparisons to what is commonly recognized as “good behavior” (i.e. quiet,

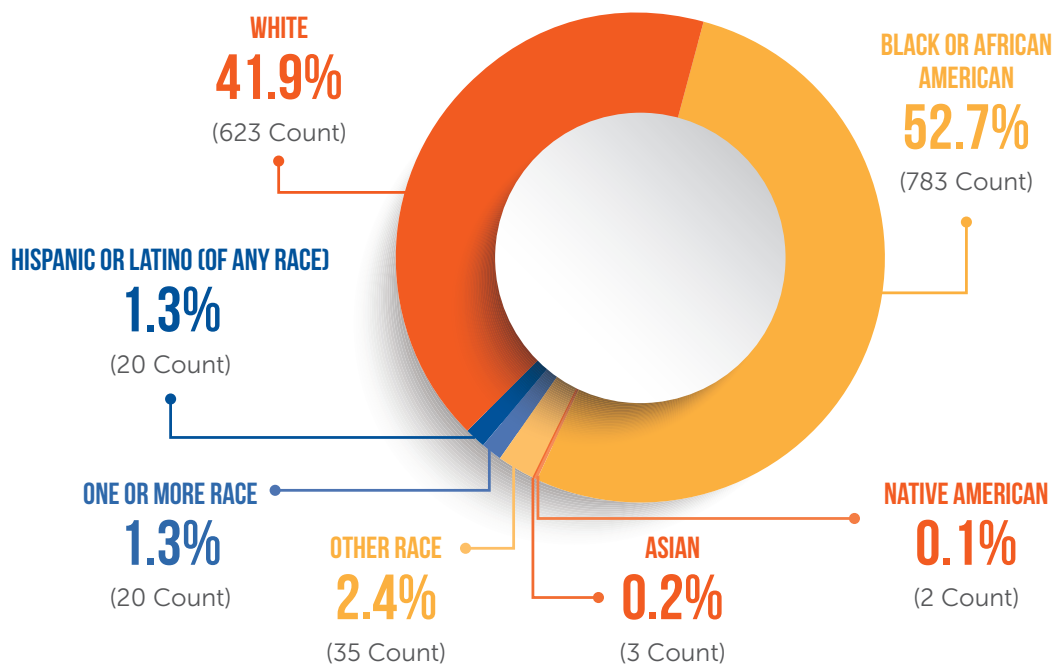


For both groups of boys, scholars note the stigma of “acting White” associated with academic success and peer pressure to reject the norms associated with such success. At the same time, they must confront the negative stereotypes associated with their behavior, their peer interactions, and their academic standings.⁵¹ Ultimately, “the stigma of acting White among minority males is a reflection of their lack of identification with traditional norms of academic success, which ultimately results in their devaluing of academics and education in the traditional sense (Osborne, 1999). Therein lies an enormous problem, that traditional norms of academic success have not worked for minority males. So, perhaps the true problem lies with the traditional academic structure itself.”⁵²

thoughtful, etc.), the teachers’ misperceptions are also partially informed by messages about Black males in the media that portray them as violent, disrespectful, unintelligent, and hyper-masculine.⁵⁰ In turn, teachers may rationalize that such behavior and exchanges are defiant and intimidating. As a result, Black male students are more likely to be disciplined.

TABLE 8: AGGREGATE NUMBER OF FRANKLIN COUNTY CONSUMERS WHO RECEIVED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN ANY COUNTY (INDIVIDUALS UNDUPLICATED WITHIN EACH YEAR) FOR CALENDAR YEARS 2011, 2012, 2013

MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG SERVICES, AGES 12-17



Source: Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Service

Innocence is not equally afforded every child

"A (White female) customer at the Browsers Welcome experiential learning site asked the shop owner if the young Black boys (of the More Than My Brother's Keeper program) were 'juvenile delinquents.' The field staff noted that the boys overheard the statement and it impacted them deeply. Working with the boys, they processed the event with them afterward, and the following reflection captured the participants' perspective after the incident: 'I am not a juvenile delinquent and will never go to jail.'"

—More Than My Brother's Keeper

One of the defining qualities of children is their innocence, yet extensive research documents that Black children are not afforded the same protections of "innocence" conferred on other children. In one compelling study, researchers looked not only at racial bias, but studied the effects of dehumanization, defined as "the denial of full humanness to others" which can lead to the removal or reduction of "social protections from violence"; in this case, protection from violence or severe adult-like treatment potentially being imposed on children.⁵³ Across a series of studies that largely focused on views of Black boys, research findings included the following:

- Perceptions of children's innocence varied by race and age. Generally speaking, Black children were viewed as less innocent than White children and people in general (race unspecified). Starting at age 10, Black children were regarded as significantly less innocent than other children of the same age.
- Participants overestimated the age of Black males (ages 10-17) when those males were presented as having committed either a misdemeanor or felony. When perceived as

a felony suspect, Black males were seen as more than 4.5 years older than their actual age. Black males were also viewed as more culpable than their Latino/Hispanic or White counterparts.

- Using a sample of police officers, researchers found that the implicit dehumanization of Blacks predicted the extent to which officers overestimated Black children's ages, perceptions of Black suspects' culpability, and the use of force (ranging from takedown/wrist lock to disarming a firearm or giving a choke hold) against Black children relative to youth of other races.

This research found "that these racial disparities are predicted by the implicit dehumanization of Blacks," predicting not just racially disparate perceptions but racially disparate police violence in real world settings.⁵⁴ Results suggest that "although most children are allowed to be innocent until adulthood, Black children may be perceived as innocent only until deemed suspicious."⁵⁵

"So many schools now across the country look more and more like prisons. We have so much focus on security, on regimentation, on control, so little focus on providing kids with an enriched education, where kids are stimulated, encouraged to read, encouraged to understand the magic and power of science and knowledge. That's what we should be doing. When you go to schools where that's happening, you know what we see? Success. And that lets us know the problem is not the children. The problem's the way we treat the children."

—Pedro Noguera

How framing impacts outcomes

The stories we tell ourselves and each other about our young boys of color matter. One study in particular examined the narratives parents, teachers, and Black boys themselves used to describe Black boys as it relates to educational achievement and the impacts these narratives can have.⁵⁶ The researchers found most of the narratives are negative, fatalistic narratives that undermine scholastic success and reinforce the broader narrative that these boys are beyond hope or in peril.⁵⁷ It also documents that the narratives aren't the same for Black girls. For example, parents

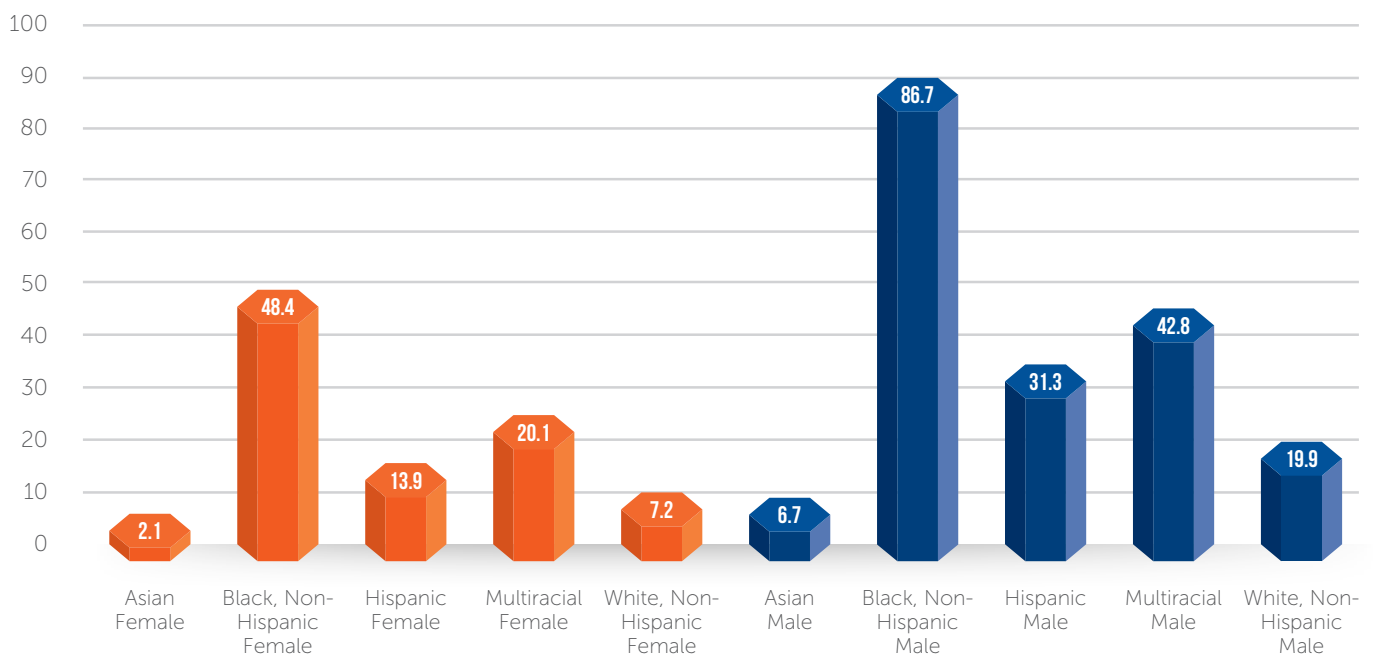
have lower educational expectations for Black boys (than girls) even after controlling for achievement.⁵⁸ Teachers were found to have biased perspectives—seeing boys as aggressive, problematic, and defiant, and are more likely to refer them to special education or discipline them without compelling evidence of serious infractions.⁵⁹ There is even evidence that the boys themselves may adopt these narratives, in an effort to preserve self-esteem or reflect an understanding that the school devalues them (based on early discipline experiences).⁶⁰ We'll examine each in turn.

“What we have to think about [are] the stereotypes and the larger narrative that is present in our society that results in placing so many boys of color at risk, at very early ages.”

—Pedro Noguera

TABLE 9: SCHOOL DISCIPLINE RATES IN OHIO: BY RACE & GENDER

Ohio: Disciplinary Actions per 100 Students (2012/2013) By Race and Gender



Source: Ohio Department of Education

PARENT NARRATIVES

Research documents that parents of Black boys may experience a heightened anxiety for their sons and the challenges they are likely to experience. They worry their sons won't be granted the benefit of the doubt in perceived instances of trouble, that they will be judged and punished more severely than peers, or that they will inevitably fall victim to "death or jail" despite their best efforts.⁶¹ This narrative of vulnerability was found to exist for Black sons and not daughters, and these differential expectations were based more on concerns of boys experiencing racial discrimination (whereas concerns regarding daughters were more about gender discrimination).⁶² These parental narratives and expectations have been found to result in lower expectations held by the boys themselves and were able to predict their on-time enrollment in college.⁶³ Because of heightened fears of racial discrimination, parents taught their sons to be vigilant, guard against engaging in stereotypic behavior, avoid those who do so, and behave in ways that counter negative stereotypes.⁶⁴ However, research indicates that *"parents of Black boys who encourage such vigilance may inadvertently cause greater anxiety in their sons along with a distrust of individuals of authority—leading to greater alienation*

*between Black boys and authority figures."*⁶⁵ It's important to note that these messages are not inherently harmful, but they should also be matched with messages of resilience and positivity: *"they may lead to worse outcomes if they are not accompanied by more positive racial socialization messages, positive racial identity of the child, and information about effective coping."*⁶⁶ For example, research found that "discussions of racial discrimination were negatively associated with grades when sons had low private regard (i.e. had a less positive view of the Black community)."⁶⁷ One study found that *"Black boys who received more positive racial socialization messages had higher academic performance than boys who received more negative or less frequent racial socialization messages."*⁶⁸ Other research found that *"Black boys who received more socialization around the importance of coping positively with racial barriers through means such as spirituality were less likely to have fears of falling prey to certain negative life experiences such as dying young or experiencing violence."*⁶⁹



“One of the things I notice when I go visit high schools and visit families, there are a lot of internal pressures, family pressures, for Latino/Hispanic males to get a job ... Get their GED; get a job to help support the family. There are external pressures on top of this ... the schools themselves, that see these young Latino/Hispanic males as their future being the guy that mows the lawn, the leaf blower, the guy that is working at the Budweiser factory or the call center. They’re not seen as college material ... even in schools that are well-funded, where the curriculum is available for students to excel, Latino/Hispanic students are falling through, pushed out and locked out.”

–Dr. Frederick Aldama

TEACHER NARRATIVES

There is a cultural divide between White female teachers and an increasingly diverse student body. For Black boys in particular, White female teachers may misunderstand many aspects of their demeanor, including behaviors, academic ability, emotional expression, and even style of walk, speech, or masculinity.⁷⁰ These misperceptions and biases have significant long-term implications for the educational trajectory of Black male youth. For example, Black boys have higher rates of discipline, expulsion, and special education instruction than any peer—which translates to more time isolated from a traditional classroom setting. One study found that “among students matched on sex, race, grade, and poverty status, those who were suspended at least once were three grade levels behind their unsuspended counterparts after one year, and five grade levels behind after two years.”⁷¹ Again, research in this domain documents that teachers may not perceive Black boys as naturally innocent as other children or given the benefit of the doubt (the “boys will be boys”) that White boys receive. Instead, “their early behaviors of disobedience in schools are thought to presage future trajectories of violence and prison sentences.”⁷²

These parental and teacher narratives seem to imply that Black boys are not aware of the forces at play affecting their academic success, or downplay their “social intelligence.”⁷³ However, research shows that this in fact is not the case, and that they are “familiar with the school and neighborhood factors that could render them vulnerable to underachievement, the criminal justice system, and violence.”⁷⁴ What this research suggests is that we need a new narrative to tell. As a community, we need to re-organize our frame and narrative from one of deficit/risk to one of support/potential. Indeed, “the school-related challenges Black boys face...reflect complex processes that are explained, in part, by the ways that Black boys are framed by important others in their lives and even by themselves. ... Solutions for Black boys lie in rethinking the risk narrative that we have applied to the case of Black boys.”⁷⁵ Given the outcomes in education we see for our Black and Latino/Hispanic male youth, this research suggests that “our collective perceptions of Black boys may keep them from performing at the highest level.”⁷⁶

“There are a number of contributing factors for why Latino/Hispanic males are not succeeding at the numbers that they should be in high school. One is low self-esteem. I’ve met so many Latino/Hispanic high school males that just don’t feel like they have any self-worth. They’ve been told time and time again that...they’re worthless. It could also be the larger social mirror, in which we exist in this country, that says ‘these opportunities are not for you’. Living with that on a daily basis, you see a very strong sense of low self-esteem.”

–Dr. Frederick Aldama

TIWUAN'S STORY

When Tiwuan was enrolled in the Big Brother Big Sister program, funded by the United Way of Central Ohio, at age 8, he was a shy boy with a big smile. The 7th of 8 children, he lived with his siblings and single mom whose numerous health issues prevented her from providing her children with the opportunities and experiences she felt would allow them to reach their full potential.

Tiwuan has experienced homelessness and poverty. He's lived in shelters, moved, and changed schools several times. He never had a relationship with his biological father, and he admits that he often felt pulled by the gang culture that surrounded him in his Linden neighborhood.

Despite these substantial challenges, Tiwuan clearly had the ability and capacity to do well in school and achieve success in life. But like many young men, he lacked a clear vision for his future. Fortunately, Tiwuan's Big Brother, Andrei, was by his side through his teen years, helping him see beyond his circumstances and encouraging him to ignore the negative influences surrounding him.

With Andrei's consistent support, Tiwuan learned that his environment does not define him. He developed a vision, set goals for himself and became focused on accomplishing those goals. A senior honor student at Linden McKinley High School, he was accepted into Franklin University's Post-Secondary Enrollment Option Program for his senior year of high school. Tiwuan is the first in his family to attend college, and he plans to become the first college graduate.

Tiwuan's determination and focus have made him a role model for his siblings and his friends, who call him the "Professor." He recently was named a Color Me Excellent award winner by United Way's Key Club, and he will soon be attending Wittenberg University. He has mapped out a plan for his future that includes becoming an accountant, working for a Fortune 500 company and becoming a Big Brother and role model for a boy like himself.

"Tiwuan didn't have a stable male role model growing up, so I wanted to make sure he had that. He's very motivated and very driven. He's had to go through many obstacles and hurdles in his life, and he's exceeded my expectations."

—Andrei

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report documents the many challenges facing our young boys of color, challenges that if left unaddressed, imperil their successful entry into adulthood and their ability to be flourishing, productive members of our community. However, it is also clear that such research does not fully capture the experience of boys of color in our community. Indeed, there are contexts in which our young boys of color are thriving, where others have high expectations for them, and the boys themselves feel confident and capable. In this section, we highlight what research suggests for allowing more of our boys of color to benefit from such experiences and documents the community programs that have helped pave the way.

"I am optimistic. We have wonderful people in this world, people willing to give their time, people willing to role model, to take their time to show someone younger than them the way forward. What we need to do is create infrastructures, especially for Latino/Hispanic-black males. We're losing a tremendous number of those in this country. In general, we need to bring awareness to the fact, the crisis at the moment that we are faced with in terms of Latino/Hispanic males not making it to the next step. And what does this mean for our country's future? Does it mean that a majority of our population will be living in and around the poverty line? So, yes we need to keep moving forward, at the same time, not be pessimistic and held back and be paralyzed by what we're seeing, but constantly be looking forward to this future generation to creating systems that allow for the full and total healthy growth of all of us in the country."

—Dr. Frederick Aldama

Embracing a new narrative of resilience and high expectations

The research presented on narratives shows that parents tend to view Black boys as vulnerable, leading to lower expectations; teachers tend to view Black boys as dangerous and unmotivated or incapable, leading to frequent disciplinary actions; and the boys themselves sometimes fall victim to others' negative expectations of them, leading to self-fulfilling problematic behaviors.⁷⁷

However, research on the narratives provided to successful Black boys shows that parents have high expectations and communicate them; actively seek out academic opportunities for their sons; impart the value of a good education; and impart coping mechanisms in the case of adversity, such as encountering negative stereotypes.⁷⁸ Research on teacher expectations has found that the presence of caring and committed teachers matters tremendously for the educational success of young Black boys; in

one study, the presence of such a teacher was cited as the most important factor within school by successful young Black male participants.⁷⁹ As for the boys themselves, contrary to the narratives of boys as victims of school systems and low expectations, research shows that Black boys embrace self-narratives of academic success and the power of education to uplift and provide individual opportunities.⁸⁰ Indeed, "these counter-narratives tell us that Black boys have the will, potential, and resilience required to thrive. It is up to scholars, educators, parents, and policy makers to acknowledge and foster these strengths in Black males."⁸¹

“The parents are the untapped resource that we’ve got to engage. We’ve got to get the parents to do their part because we’ve known for years, kids do better when the parents are reinforcing the value of education. ... Just showing the interest, and they’re more likely to if we’re building a real partnership with our parents, and empowering them as the advocates of their own children.”

–Pedro Noguera

Challenging our implicit biases

As a critical part of this process, acknowledging and mitigating the negative effects of implicit racial bias can help ensure the strengths and assets of Black and Latino/Hispanic males are fully realized and appreciated. Fortunately, our implicit biases are malleable. Thus, challenging these associations is the first step in creating positive action that is congruent with the egalitarian values most individuals possess.

For the sake of transparency, the deficits in research specifically addressing implicit bias toward youth populations, particularly for Black males, should be noted. Yet, several methods for reducing implicit bias on the individual level have emerged over the years. Of those, the following three strategies remain prominent in the empirical research: exposure to counter-stereotypes, increased intergroup contact, and engaging in perspective taking.

Repeated exposure to counter-stereotypes has the potential to alter our implicit associations. To illustrate, researchers have reduced implicit racial bias by exposing participants to positive Black exemplars and negative White exemplars. Additionally, photos of minority individuals in a positive light (e.g. dressed as a lawyer) reduced racial biases more than pictures of minorities shown in a negative context.

Increasing intergroup contact (i.e. meaningful contact with those of a different race, gender, or identity than oneself), has been shown to decrease a multitude of implicit in-group biases. Notably, this strategy was even proven effective within a student population. Youth who engaged in a cultural program that focused on the musical traditions of a racial outgroup were shown to exhibit less implicit racial bias.

Moreover, taking the perspective of outgroup members has shown to decrease implicit bias, even in the absence of personal contact with that group. One example is a study on a loving-kindness meditation series with an emphasis on perspective taking, empathy, and cognitive flexibility. The series decreased participants’ negative implicit biases toward homeless and Black individuals.

Finally, we are compelled to engage in an evaluation of our current institutional processes and policies with the intent of minimizing opportunities for implicit bias to operate. To accomplish this task, organizations and individuals alike can attend to the moments where one is most likely to rely on bias. These circumstances include time constraints, high cognitive load, and instances of increased subjectivity or ambiguity. By taking these steps to increase awareness and challenge implicit bias, one can begin the process of creating an environment that both reflects and benefits the larger society.

Repairing the pipeline

Because many of our communities remain highly segregated by race, the provision of diverse educational settings is one of the most important roles played by our schools, including public universities and colleges. A diverse student body is necessary to prepare students of all races and ethnicities to assume leadership roles and to participate fully in the civic life of their state and local communities, activities that will grow in importance as the nation's demographics continue to shift.

TABLE 10: RACE GRADUATION RATE GAP

District Name	2013 White 4-Year Graduate Count	2013 White 4-Year Non-Graduate Count	2013 White 4-Year Graduation Rate	2013 Non-White 4-Year Graduate Count	2013 Non-White 4-Year Non-Graduate Count	2013 Non-White 4-Year Graduation Rate
State of Ohio	93325	13613	87.3%	22338	10902	67.2%
Franklin County Public School Districts	6333	476	93.0%	3771	848	81.6%
South-Western City	895	96	90.3%	306	97	75.9%
Columbus City	572	158	78.4%	1775	543	76.6%
Whitehall City	66	8	89.2%	71	19	78.9%
Westerville City	710	44	94.2%	301	66	82.0%
Groveport Madison Local	161	22	88.0%	133	29	82.1%
Hilliard City	846	43	95.2%	213	23	90.3%
Reynoldsburg City	168	8	95.5%	186	19	90.7%
Worthington City	499	27	94.9%	131	12	91.6%
Canal Winchester Local	179	9	95.2%	61	5	92.4%
Dublin City	822	28	96.7%	238	17	93.3%
Hamilton Local	154	3	98.1%	28	2	93.3%
Bexley City	147	4	97.4%	32	2	94.1%
Gahanna-Jefferson City	399	16	96.1%	205	12	94.5%
Upper Arlington City	405	6	98.5%	37	1	97.4%
New Albany-Plain Local	230	3	98.7%	54	1	98.2%
Grandview Heights City	80	1	98.8%	NC	NC	NC

Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2013 4-year longitudinal graduation rates
NC=No count

White may also include some Latino students. Non-White includes African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and other ethnic minorities.

Early life barriers to opportunity produce grave and disparate outcomes. Research shows that since the 1980s, the average life outcomes of Black men and boys in the United States have steadily declined as the probabilities of their academic failure, chronic unemployment, and incarceration have grown at an alarming pace. They are increasingly isolated in segregated, high-poverty high schools, with less than half of all Black males graduating. Table 10 provides the graduation rates for White students and non-White students. In Franklin County public schools, there was an 11-percentage point difference in 4-year graduation rates in 2013. Due to widely unequal early educational experiences, many young Black males who do push forward in school underachieve relative to their peers in grades and on standardized tests—a reality that, in the absence of adequate encouragement and support, can diminish their college aspirations and chances of admission. In most subject areas, Black and Latino/Hispanic students who have the same AP readiness as their White and Asian peers are significantly less likely to experience AP course work. For example, in the 2012 graduating class, only 3 out of 10 of these students took an AP math course, compared to 4 in 10 White students and 6 in 10 Asian students.⁸² In Ohio in 2012, although Black students made up 13.4% of the graduating class, they represented only 7% of AP exam takers.⁸³

Early academic experiences such as these dramatically reduce the pool of Black male high school graduates who will even be eligible for consideration for college admission. As these sobering numbers reflect, Black males who persist to complete high school and apply for college admission are the exception,

not the rule. While the rates of college admissions by other groups have risen over the years, Black male admission rates have not. For example, in 2002, Black males comprised 4.3% of the total of all students enrolled in all institutions of higher education in the U.S., the same percentage that they accounted for in 1976.⁸⁴

These numbers show that the pipeline has essentially ended by the time we get to college and beyond. This means that we need to repair the pipeline now. Our preschools are already majority-minority. Indeed, by age 2, disparities in skills development (vocabulary, colors, shapes, numbers, etc.) between Black and White children are already evident.⁸⁵ By age 4, even though Black children are just as likely to be enrolled in an early childhood education program, the quality is lower than what White children experience. We know high-quality early care environments have lasting impacts on children's health. Efforts are underway to expand quality pre-K experiences for children in our community, but more investment is still needed to ensure all children have the access to high-quality early childhood education.

The challenges facing boys of color are great, but so is the potential for success. Working together, embracing new narratives of resilience, challenging our implicit biases, and rebuilding strong neighborhood connections can reduce the challenges and lead the way to a brighter future for all of us.







UNDERSTANDING OUR ASSETS: PROGRAM OVERVIEW



SNAPSHOT: THE BELL NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The establishment of the BNRC was approved in 2004 on the OSU campus and represents a joint effort by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Student Affairs, and interested individual members of faculty and staff. The Center is dedicated to fighting one of the most systemic ills facing young Black boys resident in rural and urban communities—lack of access to quality education.

A number of programs designed and implemented by the Center aim at creating a sense of community and connectedness for African American males at OSU and ensure their success in college and beyond:

1. The Early Arrival Program

The Early Arrival Program is designed to give incoming Black males a head start on their experience as undergraduates at OSU. A variety of activities including workshops, faculty presentations and student panels are utilized to facilitate successful adjustment to life as an OSU undergraduate student. The program begins a week before classes start and students are given information on study skills and have the opportunity to develop and form relationships with their peers, faculty, and staff. Thinking about their strengths and areas of improvement can give them a head start on their undergraduate careers.

2. Middle School Mentoring Program

Middle School Mentoring Program is a signature outreach program of the Center. It utilizes a group mentoring model. Undergraduate members of the BNRC serve as mentors to 7th grade African American males at Columbus City Preparatory School for Boys. Activities range from workshops and focus groups to social and cultural field trips. By cultivating relationships within local Columbus Public Schools, the BNRC hopes to address the needs of Black males early in their educational paths. By utilizing OSU students affiliated with the Center, the program seeks to create a “culture of excellence” for boys in the program.

The Bell Center is nationally recognized for its success in fostering educational success for African American males in post-secondary education. The university has experienced growing graduation rates for African American males (increasing by 24% in a 5-year period) and is a leader among Big Ten peers in African American male graduate rates.





"When we talk about mentoring programs, we just assume that if I expose this person to these kinds of things then competence—it'll just somehow fall out in the air. So when young men—particularly in some the most vulnerable schools in America—when they're not able to develop the academic skills that build their confidence and where they can naturally progress through the educational pipeline, then they have pitfalls. When I travel around the country, when I talk to superintendents, I say 'your curriculum must foster confidence and competence'."

—Dr. James Moore III





SNAPSHOT: MORE THAN MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

What Is More Than My Brother's Keeper?

In February of 2014, President Barack Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper Initiative to address overwhelming and persistent disparities in opportunity faced by boys and young men of color.

The President called for collective action, stating, "Broadening the horizons for our young men and giving them the tools they need to succeed will require a sustained effort from all of us." The Franklin County Board of Commissioners and the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services answered the call, funding this program in partnership with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity.

5 Milestones

1. Getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn
2. Reading at grade level by third grade
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career
4. Successfully entering the workforce
5. Keeping kids on track and giving them second chances

Why Franklin County?

Like the nation, Franklin County and the Columbus community have struggled to expand and secure pathways to opportunity for Black men and boys. Our community reflects the many systemic and structural challenges facing the Black community nationwide.

Targeted investments connecting young Black

men and boys with pathways to opportunity can equip them with the tools needed to strive for more than just survival on the city's South Side.

Such investments will empower them to lead engaged and fully participatory lives as equal citizens, with improved consequences for themselves, their families, their communities, and the Columbus, Ohio, region.

- 59% of Black males ages 6–14 in ZIP code 43207 live in poverty.
- The South Side of Columbus is considered a "hot spot" for youth gun violence incidents in which the victim was an Black youth.
- Only 2 out of 3 male students at South High School graduate on time, and 11th grade proficiency for Black males in social studies (54% proficient), math (62% proficient), and writing (75% proficient) lags state averages.



Indicators of an “At-Risk” Child

More Than My Brother’s Keeper identified a cohort of 35 “at-risk” Black males, ages 10–14, in the South Side community to begin the pilot program in the early fall of 2014. The following factors can be considered important indicators of an “at-risk” child:

- ⦿ Behavioral problems in and out of school
- ⦿ Lack of a two-parent or structured family dynamic
- ⦿ Resides in a poor and/or unsafe community
- ⦿ Is part of a low-income household
- ⦿ Struggles to succeed academically

How the Program Works: Building Genuine Pathways to Opportunity

The program emphasizes a collective impact approach that involves a triangulation of community resources, including:

1. Community assets
2. Key stakeholders, including local non-profit organizations and civic associations
3. Existing programmatic interventions, including City Year, Boys & Girls Club, and CD4AP

In addition to the triangulation of community resources, this program seeks to impact the lives of these young men through 15 months of experiential learning opportunities. These programs include:

- ⦿ Browsers Welcome
- ⦿ Resolve Fitness

- ⦿ Bikes 4 All People
- ⦿ Nationwide Children’s Hospital
- ⦿ A Digital Storytelling Capstone Project

Finally, mentoring is a critical component of this pilot. Each participant has at least two mentors, with whom they meet consistently throughout the week. This highly interactive approach provides the participants with opportunities to expand their perspectives, creating new avenues for brilliance and creativity to flow.

Engaging Families

Drawing in part from other highly interactive programs that acknowledge that child health and success derives from a holistic understanding of family health and stability, More Than My Brother’s Keeper aligns support services for participants where they live, a crucial aspect for the program’s success. Each parent/family member of a program participant is invited to engage in a complementary developmental program. By leveraging a comparable, intentionally designed curriculum, parents and family members are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they require to successfully accompany their boys during this process.

“I’m not trying to be racist, but I feel like because you’re White you want to hurt me, because White cops kill Black kids all of the time.”

—More Than My Brother’s Keeper youth reflection



What We Hope to Achieve: Changing the Trajectory of Lives on Columbus's South Side

Aligning this program with the national initiative, the team seeks to improve the trajectory of the lives of these young men and prepare them for increased opportunity in their futures. The program will be tracked and evaluated based on qualitative and quantitative data, including personal feedback from the participants themselves. With parental permission, we are committed to tracking the effectiveness of the program and the success of the child beyond the program's completion in January 2015.

Outside of the specific impact on the participant, More Than My Brother's Keeper is designed with the potential to be replicated for different neighborhoods and demographics. While the program will be deeply engaged with the unique assets of the South Side, it provides a framework of programming and engagement that can be tailored to the unique assets of other communities in Franklin County.

"They [the field and program staff] are nice, and they have taught me to never give up on things because I have a lot of potential."

—More Than My Brother's Keeper youth reflection



The Scope of Needs


Some of the most significant challenges facing the youth and their families include housing instability, food insecurity, and the risk of violence. For example, one family has been displaced from their housing 3 times in the first 4 months of the program. Housing instability has resulted in communication challenges with the families because of inconsistent phone access. Additional housing challenges include lack of furniture, pest issues, and mold from water damage.

Explicit and implicit racial biases have produced tremendous anxiety for the youth. Youth participants demonstrate that many authority figures have repeatedly asserted (or assumed) negative stereotypes about them. This burden leads to youth expressing statements such as “I’m just a bad kid,” or an inability to name something good about themselves. Participants also show significant fear regarding the police, even internalizing national events such as recent police shootings impacting young Black men.

Progress to Date

Early qualitative measures suggest substantial impacts to not only youth participants, but to families and field staff directly working with participants:

- Parents have reported participant’s grades have improved and reduced behavioral challenges.
- Parents are using the program as a behavioral incentive and are structuring their family schedules around the program.
- Parents engage program staff to help with a variety of needs.
- Field staff have indicated the boys are calmer and demonstrate fewer behavioral challenges.
- Participants have identified the program as demonstrating that “someone cares” about them, giving them hope and confidence, building relationships with other boys, building their skills, keeping them away from issues of “the street” and expanding their view of the world.



“We have a great time. We get to come home and tell our parents, ‘I built an arcade and a mother board at Nationwide.’ I like the feeling of being able to do new stuff and have real opportunities. It’s great to have an opportunity to be around friends and have a good time. It’s a good feeling, a really good feeling. It makes you feel good and confident about yourself.”

–More Than My Brother’s Keeper youth reflection



SNAPSHOT: LASER

LASER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Latino/Latin American Space for Enrichment and Research (LASER) was founded in 2009, with support from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at The Ohio State University. The goal of the program is to empower Latinos to access higher education and new opportunities once in the system of higher education.

To achieve its goal, LASER has created a mentorship program between graduate students and Latino/Hispanic undergraduates as well as between undergraduates and Latino/Hispanic high school students. The mentorship program begins in the 9th grade and runs through college and professional schools. To ensure that Latino/Hispanic students access new opportunities while at college, LASER aims to create a strong presence for Latino/Hispanic and Latin American studies at The Ohio State University through programming initiatives that build bridges between the OSU community and the community at large. To date, 202 high school students, 100 undergraduates, and 40 graduates have participated in the program.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS:

1. The Total Mentoring System:

As part of the mentorship system, LASER Ambassadors—young Latino/Hispanic men at OSU help with outreach efforts within the greater Columbus Latino/Hispanic community. Ambassadors provide information about the LASER High School Scholars program, the LASER mentoring of undergraduates and information on Latino/Hispanic Studies Minor and Latino/Hispanic Studies courses at OSU. Their role is to help create publicity, visit high schools, and make contact with incoming Latino/Hispanic undergraduate students. Mentoring is the biggest aspect of LASER. Undergraduates are paired with graduate students, graduate students with young professors, and young professors with tenured professors.

2. Midwest Space for Enrichment and Research:

The Latino/Hispanic Role Models Day is organized every spring. It brings 170 Latino/Hispanic high school and middle school students together at the OSU campus, where students engage with role models from the community, visit the campus, and experience a dynamic keynote speaker.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS:

1. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) Workshops:

9-11th grade students learn what kind of financial aid to expect. Most of the program participants are 1st generation college students.

2. College 101 Workshops:

Talk about the difference between 2- and 4-year institutions, what grant loans mean, and the differences between public and private institutions.

3. Common Application Night:

Share about smaller institutions looking for diversity and explain how to enroll in university and receive credit while in high school.

4. Scholarship Workshops

5. Summer Camps:

Teaching skills and providing experiences that can make participants stronger candidates when applying to college, internships, and jobs.





SNAPSHOT: DIPLOMAS NOW IN COLUMBUS

DIPLOMAS NOW PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Diplomas Now is a dropout prevention program targeted at at-risk high school students. The program, which started in 2009, is a partnership of 3 experienced national non-profits:

1. Johns Hopkins University's Talent Development Secondary, a school reform model that improves instruction and performance.
2. City Year's in-school, "near peer" AmeriCorps members who provide full-time academic and behavior support to students.
3. Communities In Schools in-school case managers to support the neediest students.

FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM

- ◊ Teacher teams who share students in common
- ◊ Extra adults to provide support
- ◊ Small learning communities
- ◊ Extra-help classes in math and English
- ◊ High school readiness and college prep classes

HOW DIPLOMAS NOW WORKS

The decision to drop out of high school does not happen overnight. It is usually a long drawn out process which can start as early as middle school. To strategically identify students who exhibit early warning indicators (EWI) of falling off the graduation track, Diplomas Now teams hold regular EWI meetings to discuss student progress, assess collected data, and set a support plan in motion. Where the plan isn't working, it is modified until it works. For the neediest students, Diplomas Now forms support groups and connects these students to community resources such as counseling, healthcare, food, and clothing.

OUTCOMES TO DATE

At South High and Linden-McKinley STEM schools in Columbus, Ohio, students are posting huge performance gains on the Ohio Graduation Test. These schools were identified as struggling performance-wise before Diplomas Now became operational on those campuses. In 2014, Lindsey-McKinley posted its best results in at least 3 years, with gains in reading, math, writing, science, and social studies. The success story is similar at South High. Passing grades improved significantly in reading and writing, passing rates improving by 31.8 percentage points (to 73.6%) and 29.6 percentage points (to 71.4%), respectively. Black students narrowed the achievement gap with their White peers by 4.5 percentage points in reading, 10.7 points in math, and 6.8 points in social studies. Diplomas Now is also operating in Mifflin High School.



SNAPSHOT: MBK MAYORAL CHALLENGE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Building upon the national My Brother's Keeper initiative, President Obama announced a call to action as part of his "mayoral challenge" across the nation. Mayor Michael Coleman accepted the president's challenge, launching the city's "My Brother's Keeper" effort in 2014. The goal of the mayor's challenge is a "call to action to create and implement a plan to address opportunity gaps for boys and men of color in the community. The City of Columbus' goal for this work is to issue a report with recommendations to address at least 2 areas that our community can rally around to better support African American male youth."

The effort has included a citywide forum in late 2014 and 4 youth community forums across the city, being held at the time of publication of this report. Also included in the efforts will be the convening of a citywide youth summit to be held in the fall of 2015. The task force established for the city will utilize input and collective energy from these coverings to build a policy and action strategy to support African American male youth achievement in 2016 and beyond.



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