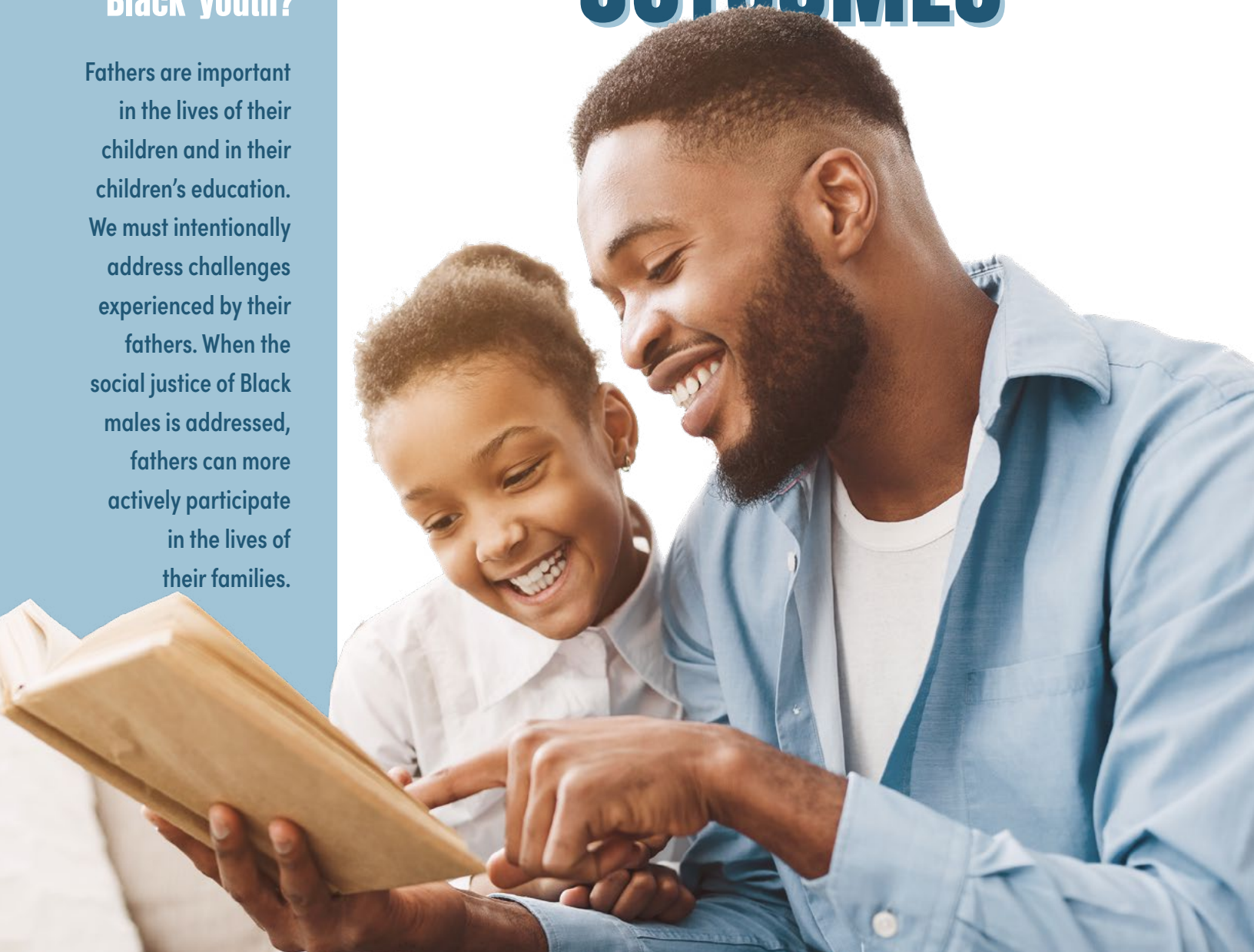


ISSUE BRIEF 1.1

How do we
positively
impact
the educational
outcomes for
Black youth?

Fathers are important in the lives of their children and in their children's education. We must intentionally address challenges experienced by their fathers. When the social justice of Black males is addressed, fathers can more actively participate in the lives of their families.

FATHERS, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND YOUTH EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES



Moynihan Institute™
FOR FATHERHOOD RESEARCH AND POLICY



**FATHERS
INCORPORATED™**

Introduction

CONSIDER THIS SCENARIO...

Michael is a Black father who struggles to keep a job. He attended school in an impoverished area but did not finish high school. In fact, he spent a few years incarcerated. He is no longer with the mother of his children but he is actively involved in their lives. He really wants his children to do well in school so he is attempting to help. Consider his background. Michael is not certified as a teacher. He does not know his parental rights in the education system and does even know what to ask or demand. He is 23-years-old and has 5-year-old son. Imagine Michael at an IEP meeting. Imagine him sitting at a conference table with 3 teachers and the guidance counselor: 3 white women and 1 white man. Imagine his nervousness as he tries to follow the conversation. He doesn't understand some of the terms or the process. This father likely feels lost. All he wants to do is help his son do well in school.

This is a fictional depiction. However, it represents many Black fathers who find themselves trying to overcome barriers to obtain good jobs, obstacles to gaining quality education and difficulties that come with the stigma of incarceration while assisting their children in school. These issues of social justice must be intentionally addressed for Black fathers if they are to help change the educational trajectory of their children.

Social justice is defined as “justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.”¹ Using this definition, social justice organizations are primarily viewed as those that provide direct service to ensure this redistribution for marginalized groups in society. However, in understanding the work of social justice broadly defined, it stands to reason that there are more organizations engaged in this work than meets the eye. Fatherhood organizations, for example, often fit this category. They intentionally address issues of injustice that plague fathers and negatively impact families. As the impact of injustice in the Black community is exacerbated, many of these programs seek to equip and empower Black fathers, in particular, so they can lift Black

families, specifically. Had our hypothetical father, Michael, been part of a fatherhood initiative, he might have gained the necessary skills and tools needed to combat societal injustices and help his children navigate the educational system.

Studies are clear that Black males face a myriad of social justice issues in the United States. Racial discrimination, lower educational attainment, low-wage jobs primarily in the service sector and mass incarceration are but a few outcomes that disproportionately impact males of color.² These outcomes are the result, in part, of an unjust system that disadvantages people of color. In turn, children of color experience the tougher odds their fathers face including toxic stress and depressed academic achievement.³



¹ Social Justice. (2019). In Oxford Online Dictionary. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/social_justice

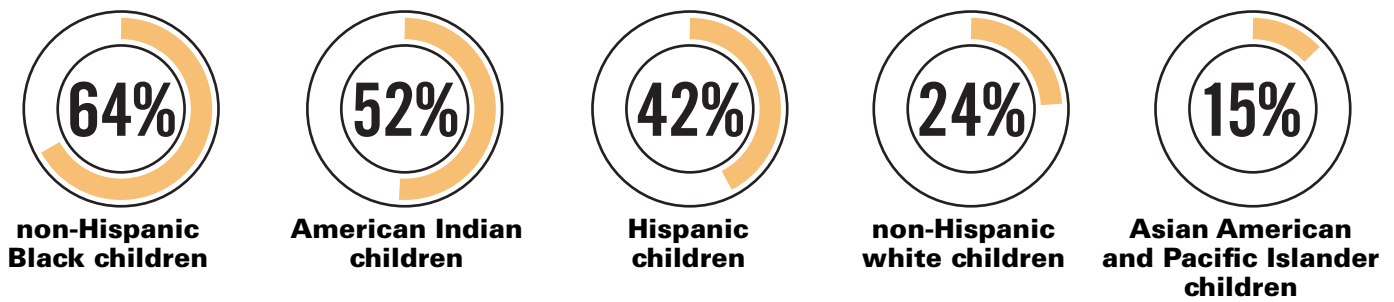
² Chetty, R.J, Hendren, N., Jones, M., Porter, Sonya. 2018. “Race and Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective.”

³ Morsy, Leila; Rothstein, Richard. 2019. “Toxic Stress and Children’s Outcomes: African American Children Growing up Poor Are at Greater Risk of Disrupted Physiological Functioning and Depressed Academic Achievement.” *Economic Policy Institute*

According to Kids Count Data, African American, Latino, and Native American children are more likely to live in single-parent families. The 2019 data show that 64% of non-Hispanic Black children, 52% of American Indian children, 42% of Hispanic children, 24% of non-Hispanic white children, and 15% of Asian American and Pacific Islander children reside in single-parent families (Kids Count Data Center, 2020). Children

growing up in single-parent families and for whom both parents are not engaged typically do not have the same economic or human resources available as those growing up with two engaged parents. Moreover, children raised in single-parent households (when both parents are not engaged) are more likely to drop out of school, to have or cause a teen pregnancy and to have challenges into adulthood.⁴

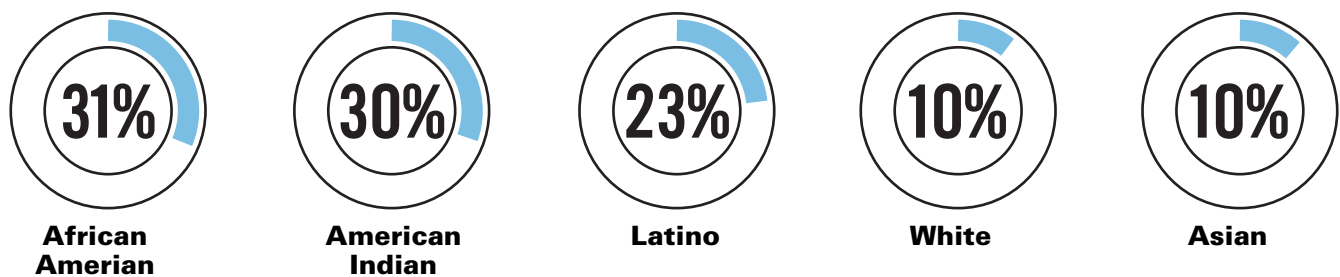
Children living in single-parent families



Racial inequities and systemic racism continue to play out for children’s families, rendering them more economically vulnerable. 2019 Kids Count data show that 31% of African American, 30% of American Indian, and 23% of Latino

children live in poverty compared to their white (10%) and Asian (10%) counterparts (KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2019). Youth who are raised in poverty are more likely to experience toxic stressors and have low academic achievement.⁵

Children living in poverty



The impact of these structural factors on indicators of child well-being like school performance, emotional health, and behavioral

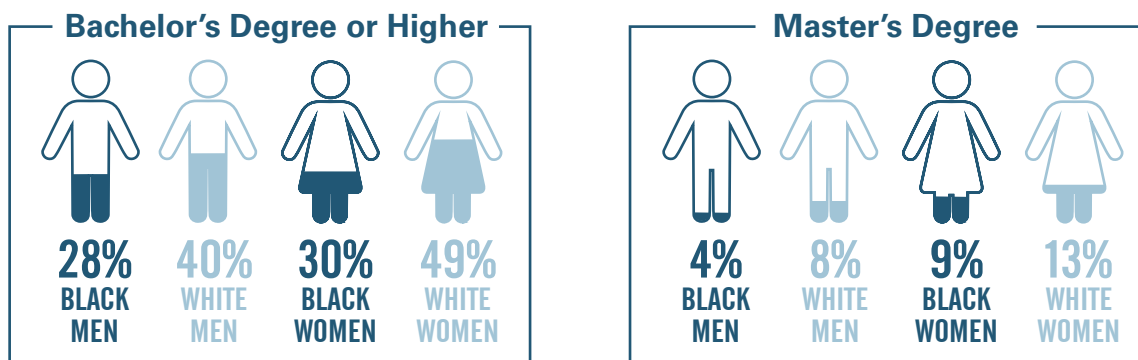
risk-taking show disproportionate negative impacts on children of color.⁶

⁴ Kramer, Stephanie. 2019. “U.S. Has World’s Highest Rate of Children Living in Single-Parent Households.” Pew Research Center.
⁵ Morsy, Leila; Rothstein, Richard. 2019. “Toxic Stress and Children’s Outcomes: African American Children Growing up Poor Are at Greater Risk of Disrupted Physiological Functioning and Depressed Academic Achievement.” *Economic Policy Institute*
⁶ Cite here. _____

Barriers to Social Justice for Black Fathers

EDUCATION

Access to education is important to economic success. However, it remains a barrier for Black men. According to 2019 National Center of Education Statistics, only 28% of Black men ages 25-29 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30% of Black women, over 40% of white men, and nearly half of white women. The gap is even greater at higher education levels: only half as many Black men have a Master's degree (4%) as Black women (9%), white men (8%) and white women (13%).⁷



Black fathers have to be educated to help their children in school. Doing so will increase their parenting capacity. Parents who understand school terminology and the processes through which they must go to complete their education will, in turn, be able to assist their children's journey through school. Moreover, increasing parenting capacity among Black fathers provides them with access to the economic and social capital needed to handle the rigors of parenting [and the financial responsibilities associated with] children in school.⁸

EMPLOYMENT

Men need financial stability as a part of a larger system for being successful fathers. Like other opportunities, financial stability is highly connected to education, participation in the labor force and access to jobs with decent income and benefits.⁹

Data suggest that Black workers still earn less than their white counterparts. When examining the intersectionality of race and gender, data show that white men have substantially out-earned white women and Black workers (across gender) since 1980 (Current Population Survey, year). For both Black and white workers, men earn more; but the gender gap is much smaller for Black workers. Black men earn \$378 less per week than white men and \$125 less than white women. On average, they earn about \$60 more per week than Black women.¹⁰

⁷ Reeves, Richard; Nzau, Sarah; Smith, Ember. 2020. "The Challenges Facing Black Men and the Case for Action." The Brookings Institution.

⁸ Perry, Armon. 2012. "Man Up: Integrating Fatherhood and Community Engagement." *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*.

⁹ Braswell, Kenneth; Buchet, Stacey; Wilbon, Matisa. 2020. "The Blueprint: Reimagining the Black Father." The Moynihan Institute.

¹⁰ Reeves, Richard; Nzau, Sarah; Smith, Ember. 2020. "The Challenges Facing Black Men and the Case for Action." The Brookings Institution.

Related, the labor force participation rate for Black men aged 20 and over is 5.6 percentage points lower than for white men, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Black men have the highest unemployment rate of civilian non-institutionalized Black and white men and women over age 20.¹¹ Prior to March 2020, Black men consistently had among the highest unemployment rates of Black and white workers. Despite falling unemployment rates mid-year 2020, Black men’s unemployment rose and remained high with 12.6% of Black men being unemployed, compared to 6.5% of white men.¹²

Unemployment among Black males impacts the entire family. This may be an added barrier that affects fathers’ ability to assist children with both the financial and academic aspects of their child’s school experiences.¹³

INCARCERATION

Finally, Black men face a much higher chance of being incarcerated, according to data from the Bureau of Justice. Black men are overrepresented among prisoners. Although they are 6% of the population, they make up 32% of the prison population.¹⁴

Incarceration presents many challenges for those returning home to include:



Unemployment



Lack of Housing



Little access to Social Services

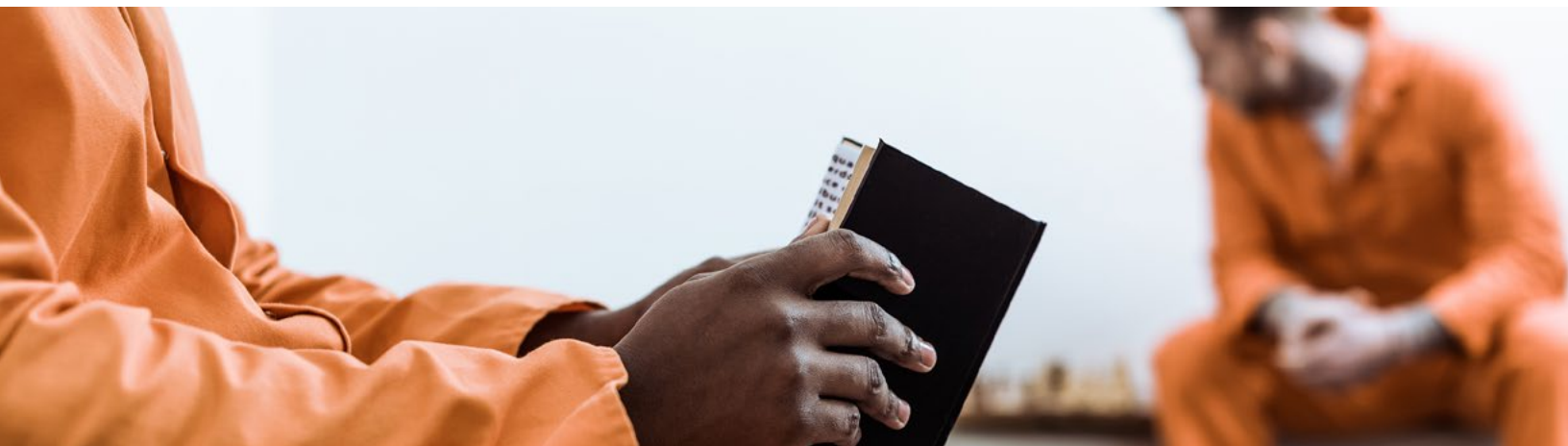


Strained Familial Relationships



Depression and Mental Health Challenges

For Black fathers, these challenges extend to their children’s education. Struggling with day-to-day challenges associated with reentry likely exacerbates their ability to help their children maneuver through school.



¹¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2020). *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2020-21 Edition*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea04.htm>

¹² Reeves, Richard; Nzau, Sarah; Smith, Ember. 2020. “The Challenges Facing Black Men and the Case for Action.” The Brookings Institution.

¹³ Braswell, Kenneth; Buchet, Stacey; Wilbon, Matisa. 2020. “The Blueprint: Reimagining the Black Father.” The Moynihan Institute.

¹⁴ Reeves, Richard; Nzau, Sarah; Smith, Ember. 2020. “The Challenges Facing Black Men and the Case for Action.” The Brookings Institution.

Youth Educational Outcomes

How do we positively impact the educational outcomes for Black youth? We must intentionally address the challenges experienced by their fathers. When the social justice of Black males is addressed, fathers can more actively participate in the lives of their families. Research suggests that involved fathers are more likely to engage in the academic intervention of their children and that results in the following outcomes:

- ✓ Fathers' involvement has been shown to have a stronger influence on the children getting high grades than does mothers' involvement.¹⁵
- ✓ Children do better in school when their fathers are involved in their school, regardless of whether their fathers live with them or live apart.¹⁶
- ✓ Children whose fathers participate in school activities, meetings and events also enjoy school more, are less likely to have behavior issues and are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities.

In conclusion, fathers are important in the lives of their children and in their children's education. However, that role is often mitigated by societal injustice. As we embark upon the one-year anniversary of the death of George Floyd it is incumbent upon us to not simply remember but to truly reflect upon and dismantle a system that consistently impedes the well-being of fathers and their ability to positively impact their children.



¹⁵ R2000. "A Call to Commitment: Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning." Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/calltocommit/intro.html>

¹⁶ Elony, Alony. 2019. "Kids Do Better Academically When Fathers are Involved." Parentology. Retrieved at <https://parentology.com/study-on-benefits-of-dad-involvement-with-kids-academics-and-health/>

CALL TO ACTION

Below are recommended fatherhood initiatives that would impact both fathers and their children.

- Reframe the conversation of fatherhood work as important to the work of social justice.
- Address barriers to education for fathers so they are able to attain higher levels of education.
- Provide job training and opportunities for good jobs that would provide economic stability, structure and success.
- Assist fathers reentering society from being incarcerated by eliminating barriers to financial and social resources, including social service assistance and the right to vote.
- Indirectly impact youth outcomes, including academic achievement, by directly addressing key issues that are barriers for father success.
- Provide fathers with the necessary education and tools to navigate the educational system on behalf of children.



Involved FATHERS are more likely to engage in the academic intervention of their children



DR. WILBON BIO

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MOYNIHAN INSTITUTE BIO

The Moynihan Institute for Fatherhood Research and Policy provides descriptive and explanatory research and policy positions on issues that impact Black families from the perspective of fathers. MIFRP also utilizes the historical work of Moynihan as a base to research and introduce policy that will positively impact Black families, with the father as the focal point within the family.

This is part of a 4-part series of briefs supported by RedefinED to highlight the intersection of Responsible Fatherhood, Social Justice and Education.