



Minority Male Youth 2050

Project Description October 2011

The Boys Initiative

The Boys Initiative, a nonprofit organization, is a national campaign to address the issues of boys' underachievement and young men's failure to launch. This is best illustrated by trends in academic achievement: while they have been improving among girls and young women, they have been declining among boys and young men. The data demonstrate that this troubling gap occurs across all racial and ethnic categories, although there is a tremendous need in all categories for data that is disaggregated by gender. The Initiative was formally established in 2010 and since then has reached a number of its initial benchmarks (Appendix 1).

Underachievement is the product of a variety of factors that include education, social and economic status, risky behaviors, family support and cultural norms. Other factors include past discrimination, bullying and social isolation. There are many theories about why underachievement among boys and young men is on the rise, from the lack of opportunities in our new economy to the failure to adapt to it.

In terms of education, the growing achievement gap between the genders is both relative and absolute. In recent years girls have gained on boys in certain academic categories and in other categories have yet to catch up. In some categories they have begun to dramatically surpass men, such as in enrollment in a two or four year college^{1, 2} or in acquiring baccalaureate degrees³.

In terms of other factors that affect achievement, such as dropout rates, those among 16-24 year old males have been increasing dramatically⁴. In 2008, among 18-24 year olds who were incarcerated, 92.4% were male and 7.6% were female⁵. In 2008, before the Great Recession, the unemployment rate among 15-24 year old high school graduates was 46.9% for women and 53.1% for men⁶. Taken as a whole, the data suggest that the metrics for achievement for both genders are changing, but in opposite directions. As stated in a 2011 College Board report⁷, "...men, especially minority men, lag behind their female counterparts in college access, educational attainment and employment. Minority men outpace their female counterparts only in negative postsecondary outcomes: unemployment, incarceration and death."⁸

THE MISSION of The Boys Initiative is to publicize these declining achievement trends among boys and young men, to foster dialogue and debate about them, and to collaborate with stakeholders on solutions. We accomplish this mission by partnering and building coalitions with organizations and individuals that have a direct interest in assuring high achievement levels among our male youth: parents, teachers, policymakers, and health care providers, as well as organizations that represent the interests of girls and women and boys and men.

The Boys Initiative fulfills this mission through a number of activities that focus on solutions. One of the most important of these is providing an information and resource nexus. Another is fostering dialogue, collaboration and partnerships among stakeholder organizations and constituencies about what is known about the growing achievement gap and how it can be addressed. The Initiative collects data and information on the risk factors that contribute to lower achievement levels among boys and young men, and programs that have demonstrated success in raising achievement levels. Based on this information, the Initiative identifies solutions, or “what works” and facilitates replication of successful projects through its advocacy efforts.

The data bear out the long term nature of the problem:

- In 1948 86.7% of the male population over 25 was employed. Today that figure is 67.2%
- The median annual income for males 25 and over peaked in 1973 at \$42,288. By 2009 this had dropped to \$36,801.
- In 1925 the male incarceration rate was 149 per 100,000. In 2009 it was 949 per 100,000.
- 71.9% of men voted in the 1964 election. 55.7% of men voted in the 2008 election.
- In 1948 the share of total employment in service-providing industries was 41.1%. In 2009 it was 67.5%. Males tend to be the smallest shares of employees in most of these industries⁹.

Left unabated, these trends portend a dismal future for males.

Male Minority Youth 2050

Achievement is declining among all young males, regardless of ethnicity. With that said, the risk factors for underachievement are most pronounced among minority males. By 2020 the combined minority population in grades K-12 will exceed the white population¹⁰. By 2050 Hispanics will comprise a majority of the US population¹¹.

Yet today among all minority males, the trends in a number of areas, from education to employment, are alarming. In terms of education, only 28% of African Americans, 24% of Native Americans and Pacific Islanders and 16% of Hispanic Americans have at least an associate degree¹². In terms of sexually transmitted disease, the incidence rate among minority males continues to rise. In terms of family development, the number of unmarried mothers within the black population continues its upward trend. At the same time, the incarceration rate for minority males continues to rise, and economic opportunities for young minority males continue to contract.

By 2050 the US will cease to be a majority white country. As a result, minorities are becoming a more important part of our nation’s social fabric.¹³ As a recent Brookings report stated, “Initial results from the 2010 Census now make clear why the contributions (of minority populations) are so important. With a rapidly aging white population, the United States depends increasingly on these new minorities to infuse its youth population – and eventually its labor force – with needed demographic heft and vitality....Indeed, the new census results show that the nation, its states, and its major metropolitan areas are undergoing changes more rapidly than previously thought. Previous Census Bureau projections showed that the country would become “minority white” by 2042, and that the child population would reach that mark in 2023. Yet given greater-than-expected growth in Hispanic and other new minority populations recorded in the 2010 Census,

both dates may be pushed closer, with a minority white child population quite likely before the next decennial census.”¹⁴

Education

Education is perhaps the most important predictor of success. Among minority males, access to quality education, together with failure to complete, is leading to lost opportunities for both young men and society as a whole. A June 2011 College Board report¹⁵ on the educational experience of young men of color draws a disturbing picture: in the words of the report, almost half of all young men of color who graduate from high school will end up “unemployed, incarcerated, or dead”;

- In 2009, 51% of 12th grade African American males and 45% of 12th grade Hispanic males scored below the basic 12th grade reading level, in contrast to 36% of African American females and 33% of Hispanic females¹⁶;
- In 2009, 64% of 12th grade African American males and 51% of 12th grade Hispanic males scored below the basic 12th grade math level¹⁷.
- In 2008, the 16-24 year old dropout rate among African Americans was 12% for males and 9% for females; for Hispanic Americans it was 22% for males and 16% for females. The dropout rate for white males, while much lower than minority males, exceeded that of females, 7% to 6%¹⁸.
- From 1990 to 2008 the percentage of 18-24 years olds enrolled in Colleges and Universities **increased** 38% for African American women, from 24.7% to 34.2%, while it increased only **15%** for African American men, from 25.8% to 29.7%. Among Hispanics, the increase was 76% for women, from 15.4% to 23%, while for men it was only 49%, from 16.4% to 28.9% **for** women¹⁹.
- An August, 2011 Pew Hispanic Center study²⁰ found that the share of young Hispanics enrolled in college rose from 13% in 1972 to 27% in 2009 to 32% in 2010. Although the college enrollment rate of young Hispanics is at a record (32%), black (38%), Asian (62%) and white (43%) young adults continue to be more likely than young Hispanics to be enrolled in college²¹.

However, the study also found that Hispanic young adults continue to be the least educated major racial or ethnic group in terms of completion of a bachelor's degree²². In 2010, only 13% of Hispanic 25- to 29-year-olds had completed at least a bachelor's degree. In comparison, more than half (53%) of non-Hispanic Asian young adults have at least a bachelor's degree, and nearly 39% of white young adults completed a four-year degree. Among non-Hispanic black 25- to 29-year-olds, 19% have at least a bachelor's degree. The low college completion of Hispanic young adults partly reflects the lower schooling levels of Hispanic immigrants. Among native born Hispanic 25- to 29-year-olds, 20% had completed a bachelor's degree

Sexual Health and Sexuality

Within American society as a whole, apart from ob/gyn, sexual and reproductive health issues have not been adequately addressed. While greater attention to them has been paid in recent decades, the gap between what is known and what should be known remains wide. A 2006 report of The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute²³ explores the most recent data on the sexual and reproductive health of young men of color. Among other data, the following is notable:

- Among males ages 15-29, between 1999 and 2004, black non-Hispanic males reported the

highest rates of infection for chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis, three of the most common sexually transmitted infections²⁴.

- Between 1999 and 2004, chlamydia rates increased for all young men ages 15-29. Among 15- to 19-year-olds, rates increased most among black non-Hispanic males (by 37 percent)²⁵.
- Young black non-Hispanic men were overrepresented—and men of other racial/ethnic groups were underrepresented—among cases of HIV infection and AIDS in 2001. This overrepresentation is most striking among young men ages 13-19. Although black non-Hispanic males were less than 15 percent of this age group, they accounted for 59 percent of cases of HIV infection and 40 percent of AIDS cases diagnosed in 2001 among this cohort²⁶.
- In 2001, black non-Hispanic male high school students were the most likely (26 percent) to report having had sexual intercourse before age 13. In comparison, 17 percent of American Indian, 11 percent of Hispanic, and six percent of white non-Hispanic male students reported the same²⁷.
- In 2003, black non-Hispanic male high school students were the most likely (42 percent) to report having had four or more sexual partners during their lifetimes. White non-Hispanic male students were the least likely (12 percent) to report four or more partners, while Hispanic male students were half as likely (21 percent) as black non-Hispanic males to report the same²⁸.

In 2006 the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unwanted Pregnancy released an exhaustive study of programs throughout the US that focus on educating boys about pregnancy and other reproductive health issues²⁹. Among its findings were the following:

- Until recently, most efforts to prevent teen pregnancy, including relevant data collection, were focused on girls. With growing awareness of the importance of focusing on boys as well, additional attention is being devoted to this topic. But more is needed still. The same is true regarding program evaluation—only a few prevention efforts target boys specifically, and information is limited about what works for boys and why, even within the evaluation research on coed programs³⁰.
- (Educational) Message(s)...should be grounded in cultural and/or religious tenants that will resonate with the target audience. ...because research has found an association between teens' socioeconomic status and their attitudes about sex and pregnancy—particularly a relationship between poverty and increased incidence of teen pregnancy—those working with low-income youth should consider including services that can help prevent school dropout and joblessness³¹.
- ...programs with an added “cultural” component, meaning they included elements related directly to the values or customs of a particular culture, showed strong evidence of effectiveness among boys³².

In its preface to another 2006 report, The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute³³ stated:

During the past twenty-five years, a significant amount of attention has been devoted to the issues of teen sexual activity and pregnancy, especially in communities of color. Most of the attention has focused on young women—e.g., reasons why they get pregnant, the ramifications of pregnancy, and challenges that confront single mothers. Policies to curb teen sexual activity and pregnancy have been designed largely with young women in mind. Little attention has been paid, however, to the role of young men and the ramifications of their sexual and reproductive health and behavior, their views of young women and of themselves, and fatherhood³⁴.

Fatherhood

According to government statistics, 72 percent of African-American children are born to unmarried mothers. According to Children-our.investment.org, homes without fathers ultimately affect children in numerous tragic ways:

- * 63 percent of youth suicides are from fatherless homes
- * 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
- * 85 percent of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes
- * 80 percent of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes
- * 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes
- * 75 percent of all adolescent patients in chemical-abuse centers come from fatherless homes
- * 85 percent of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes

These statistics apply to all minorities in disproportionate numbers. Compared with 29 percent of whites and 17 percent of Asians, 72 percent of African Americans, 53 percent of Hispanics and 66 percent of Native Americans were born to unwed mothers in 2008, the most recent year for which government figures are available. The rate for the overall U.S. population was 41 percent.

The absence of African American fathers in the home is seen as a primary factor of the insidious deterioration of African American families. These missing men are thought to be at the root of family disorganization and dysfunction. This ideology is often adopted without taking into account the rampant inequity, racial discrimination and legal difficulties that often create insurmountable barriers to marriage and fatherhood. Policy intended to promote marriage often suggests that the reason so many African American men and women do not marry is due to personal choice, rather than poverty, unemployment or other economic or social barriers that inhibit marriage.³⁵

In June 2010 President Obama unveiled the White House's National Fatherhood Initiative (www.fatherhood.gov), which is intended to encourage active fatherhood across all racial/ethnic lines.

Apart from historical and cultural barriers to fatherhood among minorities there are practical barriers as well. Among these are a lack of access to preventative and primary health care services as well as preconception health and reproductive life planning options. This lack of access negatively impacts men's quality of life resulting in premature morbidity and mortality, unwanted pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Numerous policy barriers also exist in a range of areas that impact a father's ability to be involved in the lives of his children and family.

The Commission on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies³⁶ is an agenda setting body offering best and promising solutions and recommendations in these areas. Its 2010 report found that:

- Men are important to maternal and child health³⁷. A large body of research exists on a father's influence on child health and development, but little is known regarding the role of the expectant father in pregnancy outcomes³⁸.

- The report lays out a number of specific recommendations in the areas of policy barriers to paternal involvement, promoting best and promising practice in paternal involvement, and expanding research on paternal involvement and pregnancy outcomes that can serve to inform efforts to increase the involvement of minority unmarried fathers in the lives of their children.

As the foregoing illustrates, the problems for minority male youth are evident. More research on problems is not necessary before we begin to address them. As the College Board report stated, “The research (on minority males) is heavily slanted toward the identification of problems in the respective communities and the effects of these issues on the young men’s academic performance. *There is, on the other hand, a noticeable lack of solutions-based research, even in relatively well-developed corpuses such as that dealing with African Americans. This is a weakness that needs to be corrected* (emphasis added)³⁹. The report also states: “We are particularly interested in research that identifies and validates solutions rather than identifying the problems all over again.”⁴⁰

Finally, the report states: “The College Board is particularly interested in research, partnerships and collaborative efforts leading to viable solutions to the challenges that are currently experienced by young men of color.”⁴¹ As other cited reports demonstrate, reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and behaviors among men of color has been studied⁴², but detailed recommendations from a recent study on male parenting⁴³ await implementation.

THE MISSION of Minority Male Youth 2050, therefore, is to facilitate a cooperative endeavor among organizations and stakeholders in male minority youth. The purpose of the endeavor is to 1) exchange and collect information on solution-focused research and demonstration projects that enhance minority male achievement; 2) develop and support recommendations for research, best practices and “what works”; and 3) facilitate pilot projects and advocacy efforts based on 2).

To insure focus, the Minority Male Youth 2050 will initially concentrate on several factors that impact achievement. Among these are:

- family involvement and support;
- preconception and reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and behaviors;
- family planning and family formation; and
- health literacy and health self efficacy

THE GOALS of Minority Male Youth 2050, therefore, are to:

- 1) Identify and engage organizations and stakeholders that have been involved in male minority issues;
- 2) Assemble project descriptions and outcomes data on projects undertaken by them that relate to family support and reproductive health;
- 3) Analyze data and make recommendations on effective, scalable intervention models and “what works”;
- 4) Disseminate 3) and initiate advocacy efforts to enlist support for the recommendations among affected communities, potential funders, policymakers and the media;
- 5) Identify additional empirical data needs (for example, state wide data that is disaggregated by gender);
- 6) Develop and obtain funding for research initiatives to collect additional empirical data;

- 7) From the data that exists, develop scalable pilot projects;
- 8) Obtain funding for, undertake and publicize pilot projects; and
- 9) Evaluate projects and develop recommendations for Federal, State, Local and private sector initiatives to support replication efforts.

To accomplish these goals, in the first stages of the project the Minority Youth Initiative will:

1. Identify, recruit and assemble individuals with experience and expertise with minority male youth achievement projects and programs; (process initiated as of 10.06.11)
2. From this group, appoint a project steering committee; (process initiated as of 10.06.11)
3. In conjunction with the project steering committee –
 - a. define initial project focus areas (month 01-03)
 - b. develop first stage project plans, timelines and budgets; (month 02-03)
 - c. implement first stage project plans; (month 03-06)
 - d. develop subsequent stage project plans, timelines, and budgets; (month 02-06)
 - e. develop and implement fundraising plans and strategies. (process initiated as of 10.6.11)

In addition to identifying steering committee members, the Initiative has begun outreach to potential partners and funders. Among these are The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities and Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families.

Conclusion

"There is no lack of talent in communities of color or among the young men in these communities. It is our job to harness that talent..."

[The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color](#), June 20, 2011

Male youth in our country are achieving less, and their lives both as youth and as men are becoming less and less productive and fulfilling as a result. It is not only their futures that are at stake but the future of our nation. This problem affects all boys and young men, of all ethnicities, and the data reflect that. While addressing the problems among minority male youth is not the complete answer to this dilemma, it is a start, and a start with a population of our young men that will comprise the majority of our population in 2020. It is time we got to work, incubating and testing solutions. We already know what the problems are.

¹ The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color, A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, The College Board, June 2011, page 31

² *Ibid.*, page 53

³ *Ibid.*, page 62

⁴ *Ibid.*, page 18

⁵ *Ibid.*, page 45

⁶ *Ibid.*, page 41

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- ⁷ The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color, A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, The College Board, June 2011
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, page 50
- ⁹ The Impact of Economic Change on Male Achievement and Its Implications for the Education of Boys, Thomas Mortenson, May 2011, The Boys Initiative,
- ¹⁰ The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color, A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, The College Board, June 2011
- ¹¹ US Census Bureau, August 2008
- ¹² The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color, A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, The College Board, June 2011page 12
- ¹³ America's Diverse Future: Initial Glimpses at the U.S. Child Population from the 2010 Census, Metropolitan Policy Program The Brookings Institute, April 2011
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color, A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, The College Board, June 2011
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 16
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, page 16
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, page 18
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, page 53
- ²⁰ Hispanic College Enrollment Spikes, Narrowing Gaps with other Groups, Pew Hispanic Center, August 24, 2011
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, page 5
- ²² *Ibid*, page 5
- ²³ The Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young Men of Color: Analyzing and Interpreting the Data, Health Policy Institute, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, DC, May 2006
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, page v
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, page v
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, page vi
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, page vi
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, page vii
- ²⁹ It's a Guy Thing: Boys, Young Men, and Teen Pregnancy Prevention, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, February 2006
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, page 7

³¹ *Ibid.*, page 6

³² *Ibid.*, page 4

³³ A Shout Out from Youth to Our Nation's Leaders, The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute, 2006

³⁴ *Ibid.*, v

³⁵ Barriers to Marriage and Parenthood for African American Men & Women, Vikki O'Connor, Department of Child and Family Studies, Syracuse University, February 2006

³⁶ The Commission on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes: Best and Promising Practices for Improving Research, Policy and Practice on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, DC, 2010

³⁷ *Ibid.*, page 3

³⁸ *Ibid.*, page 82

³⁹ The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color, A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, The College Board, June 2011, page 31

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, page 82

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, page 84

⁴² The Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young Men of Color: Analyzing and Interpreting the Data, Health Policy Institute, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, DC, May 2006

⁴³ The Commission on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes: Best and Promising Practices for Improving Research, Policy and Practice on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Washington, DC, 2010

Appendix 1

The Boys Initiative
Minority Male Youth 2050
October 10, 2011
Appendix 1

Accomplishments 2010-2011

Over the course of the past year, The Boys Initiative has accomplished the following:

- In conjunction with experts in the field, engaged [consensus development](#) that led to the articulation of mission and purpose;
- Assembled a prestigious [Board of Advisors](#);
- Developed and implemented a start-up plan;
- Launched a [website](#) and daily [blog](#) , and established presence on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#);
- Raised visibility through the Initiative's [February 2011 launch](#) and initial outreach to media and related national organizations;
- Compiled comprehensive list of 1200 organizations, agencies and individuals that are an audience for The Boys Initiative's message or might serve as partners on specific projects or activities;
- Launched grassroots [National Affinity Network](#);
- Sponsored a highly successful [Washington DC briefing](#) and webcast, *The State of Boys in America*, in May, 2011 at which The Boys Initiative released a new report on the status of boys and men;
- Attracted significant [media coverage](#) and follow-up to the May 17 briefing;
- Engaged in outreach to a diverse range of organizations, government entities and individuals such as health and education related organizations and federal health and education agencies and officials; and
- Incorporated as a District of Columbia nonprofit organization and submitted application to the IRS for tax-exempt status as an IRS Section 501(c)(3) organization. (The Boys Initiative is currently operating as a project of Family Reunion, an IRS Section 501(c)(3) organization.)