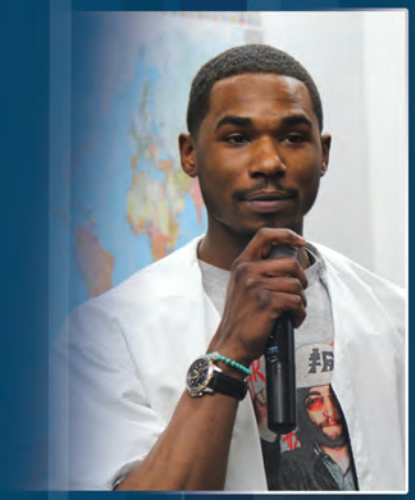
Gathering Our Voices:

The Lived Experiences of Black Fathers in the City of Toronto



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Black DADDIES CLUB

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Executive Summary

In May 2013, the Black Daddies Club (BDC), under the leadership of Mr. Brandon Hay, Dr. Lance McCready at the University of Toronto and Dr. Carl James at York University, embarked on a unique and necessary research project to collect information about the issues, challenges, roadblocks, opportunities and successes associated with Black fatherhood in the City of Toronto. The research project titled, *Gathering Our Voices*, was designed to address the paucity of information on the lived experiences of Black fathers in Toronto.

This research project sought to inform current literature on the issues, challenges, opportunities and successes associated with Black fatherhood in the City of Toronto from the perspective of Black fathers themselves, their partners, family members and friends. The project included the following key research questions:

a) What are the issues, challenges, opportunities, and successes associated with Black fatherhood in the City of Toronto from the perspective of Black fathers, their partners, family members and friends?

b) What are the implications of these perspectives for programs and services for Black fathers in the City of Toronto, as well as for future research and policy making in health and human services?

The project took a community-based approach, meaning all decisions concerning *Gathering Our Voices* including the design, data collection and analysis of findings were guided by community members in the form of a Community Advisory Board (CAB). The Board consisted of Black fathers and their allies in the City of Toronto. Community-based research involves a collaborative relationship between researchers and community members in which they share control of the research agenda through active and reciprocal involvement in the research design, implementation and dissemination. Community-based studies involve a research topic of practical relevance to the community and are carried out in community settings. Moreover, results of community-based studies are action-oriented and useful to members of the community. Towards these ends, the CAB met prior to the submission of ethics documents, again following the completion of the community forums, approved the guide for the one-on-one interviews, and then met to discuss the research findings.

In addition to the CAB, additional community perspectives were gathered throughout the research process. Eleven community forums were held in 10 different priority neighbourhoods across Toronto, each with a unique topic for discussion. A survey questionnaire was distributed at the community forums, followed by an electronic version that was widely distributed. Black fathers were a significant part of each of these data collection processes; however, in an attempt to dig deeper into the issues raised, and to ensure that Black fathers' voices were heard, eleven individual interviews were conducted with Black fathers representing a cross-section of ages, socioeconomic status, and marital status. Ethics approval for the study was granted by the University of Toronto's Research Ethics Board as well as York University's Research Ethics Board.

The results of the research project provided the following insights into the lived experiences of Black fathers in Toronto from the perspective of Black fathers themselves, their partners, friends and family members:

- Role modeling is an important component of fatherhood and manhood;
- It is difficult to find Black father role models within priority neighbourhoods in Toronto;
- Black fathers are uncritical of traditional notions of father, as protector and provider;

- A "good" Black father is one who provides financially for his children and is present in his children's lives;
- It is difficult to "feel like a father" when a man cannot support his family financially;
- Proper parenting requires the cooperation of both partners in custodial and non-custodial arrangements;
- The Ontario Family Court system is seen by Black fathers as being based on the idea that mothers are more important than fathers;
- The Ontario Family Court System is perceived by Black fathers as increasing the difficulties associated with fostering productive co-parent and father-child relationships;
- Black men and fathers are subject to a barrage of negative media imagery that impacts their ability to: access employment prospects, interact with their child's school and more smoothly navigate the Ontario Court System;
- Black fathers recognize the aspects of "the system" that make it difficult for them to function as they would like to, including racism, underemployment and racialized poverty; however, they do not extend this system analysis to the failings of their own fathers.

Background

FUNDING

Funding for *Gathering Our Voices* was provided by the City of Toronto's Access, Equity and Human Rights (AEHR) Community Funding Program. Although Toronto is known and respected as a welcoming city for newcomers from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds, there is need for continuing attention to equity to ensure that all people are able to participate fully in the social, economic and civic life of the community. The funding provided through the AEHR program is used by community-based organizations and residents to act on human rights, accessibility, equity, discrimination and hate crime concerns in their neighbourhoods and communities. By providing funding to community organizations, the City is able to promote access, equity and respect for human rights in ways that reflect the strengths of Toronto's diverse communities.

Sponsoring Organization: The Black Daddies Club (BDC)

At the age of 24, Brandon Hay, founder of BDC, discovered he was about to become a dad for the first time. Being raised by a single mother and without the presence of a consistent father figure, he was filled with anxiety and fear about his own ability to be a great father. Knowing of other men in his situation, he believed that a forum where they could share ideas, struggles and victories seemed like it could be an effective network for support. Thus, in 2007, Hay founded BDC in response to the lack of forums and spaces for Black men to discuss parenting issues and concerns facing the Black community as a whole. The main goals of the organization are to change the image of the "absent Black father" that is prevalent in the media and to assist young Black men to become better fathers. In so doing, BDC aims to support Black children, families and the larger community.

BDC's Mandate/Guiding Principles are:

1. Develop a continuous support system for Black men and fathers to share their challenges and/or experiences.
2. Work with Black fathers and the community at large to address issues facing Black fathers, children and families.
3. Work with the media to provide alternate images of Black fathers, and assist in the creation of our own media that depicts Black fathers in a positive light.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

John Howard Society of Toronto (JHST) – Toronto: North, South, East and West

John Howard Society of Toronto (JHST) serves as the financial trustee for BDC, including the AEHR grant for *Gathering Our Voices*. Amber Kellen, JHST's Director of Community Initiatives, Policy and Research, participated on the Research Advisory Committee for the project. JHST provides support services to adults in conflict with the law in order to facilitate positive change and achieve community reintegration. JHST is committed to making the community safer, as they support the rehabilitation and re-integration of those who have been in conflict with the law.

Centre for Urban Schooling at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto – Toronto: Downtown Core

Dr. Lance T. McCready, Associate Professor of Urban Education and Head of the Centre for Urban Schooling at OISE, facilitated the use of OISE as the home base for the *Gathering Our Voices* research project. OISE is recognized around the world as a leader in initial and continuing teacher education, graduate programs in education and education research. OISE is the largest and most research-intensive faculty of education in Canada, and one of the largest in North America. Guided by their commitment to equity and social justice, and mindful of their special responsibility to lead, OISE seeks to shape the way that the world thinks and engages in education. All Research Advisory Committee (RAC) meetings, in-depth interviews and facilitator training sessions were held on the OISE campus. Dr. McCready was an integral member of the RAC and provided the meeting space in-kind for the project.

York Centre for Education and Community (YCEC), York University – Toronto: North York

Dr. Carl James, Director – YCEC, Professor of Education and cross-appointed with the graduate programs in the Department of Sociology and the School of Social Work at York University, was an integral member of the RAC. YCEC is designed to support teaching and learning that is appropriate for students' diverse needs, considerate of their cultural experiences, and supportive of their aspirations. To accomplish these goals, the Centre facilitates collaborative research in education, both in classrooms and in other settings.

In addition to the JHST, OISE and YCEC partnerships, the research project required the support of a variety of service agencies, residential spaces and local small businesses in priority neighbourhoods in different regions across the City of Toronto. These spaces were selected by the CAB, and as such, were a vital tool in reaching the community of Black fathers where they were. These sites included:

Onyx Barbershop – Toronto: Downtown Core

Onyx Barbers offers professional grooming services for people of all ages and genders including facial hair line-ups, haircuts and designs. Onyx endeavours to be, "not just a barbershop, but a community", and as such, publishes a community blog on their website, and encourages community organizations like BDC to hold events within the Onyx Barbers space.

Redemption Reintegration Services – Toronto: Scarborough

Redemption Reintegration Services (RRS) works to provide young people who have come into conflict with the law with the programs and services that they need to become skilled, active and engaged members of the community. RRS focuses on youth as assets to society, and works to increase resilience, capacity and agency among this population. RRS has become a leader in reintegration, demonstrating that their approach (which teaches youth that self-ownership creates a sense of community accountability and nurtures positive growth) works.

East Metro Youth Services – Toronto: Scarborough

East Metro Youth Services (EMYS) is an adolescent mental health and addictions centre accredited by the Children's Mental Health Ontario. They have been serving young people and their families in East Toronto since 1974. They continuously strive to engage youth and young adults in reaching their personal best through:

- Enhancing their mental health.
- Investing in their future potential.
- Engaging in innovative collaborations with diverse families, communities and service partners.

Lawrence Heights Community Centre – Toronto: Lawrence Heights

The Lawrence Heights Community Centre is very active in working to promote the health and well-being of Lawrence Heights' residents. They do so by providing programming and activities for children and youth, as well as meeting space for various community organizations.

Fathers' Resources International – Toronto

Fathers Resources International offers a variety of specialized referrals, services and resources for separated or divorced men and fathers seeking assistance with a Family Law matter in Ontario, Canada.

Rexdale Community Hub – Toronto: Etobicoke

The Rexdale Community Hub provides innovative, client-centred, integrated health, social, legal, employment, and cultural services by working with the strengths of Rexdale's residents and surrounding community.

90 Mornelle Court Community Room - Toronto: Scarborough

90 Mornelle Court is a high rise building in Toronto that includes a community room for resident's personal activities as well as community events.

Jesse's: The June Callwood Centre for Young Women – Toronto: Downtown Core

Jessie's Centre is a multi-service resource centre for pregnant teenagers, young parents and their children. They have developed a variety of programs and services to meet the special needs of young families throughout the City of Toronto.

Artscape at Daniel's Spectrum – Toronto: Downtown Core

Daniel's Spectrum is a cultural hub in the Regent Park community of Toronto. It provides space for the artistic, cultural and social activities of the neighbourhood, and offers a place for experience, learning and innovation. Artscape, Toronto Community Housing, the Daniels Corporation and members of the local community partnered to develop this innovative 60,000-square-foot, purpose-built facility.

Palisades Recreational Centre – Toronto: Jane-Finch

Palisades Recreational Centre houses child care services and provides space for community events for individuals and organizations. It serves as a central organizing hub for the Jane-Finch community.

Young Potential Fathers Initiative at Ujima House – Toronto: Weston Road

The Young and Potential Fathers Initiative addresses the cycles of disengagement, lack of resources and lack of visible role models for young racialized fathers in Toronto's priority neighborhoods, with a specific focus on African Canadians. The initiative strengthens the capacity of individuals, families and the community at large to provide direct support to young fathers and their children.

Review of Literature

The issue of Black fatherhood, for the most part, has been treated in an alarmist fashion by Toronto's media - primarily when addressing their lack of presence in the lives of many of the perpetrators and victims of the highly publicized incidents of violence in Black communities in the greater Toronto area. This alarm reached a height during the 2005 "Summer of the Gun" when reporters and pundits launched a series of exposes aimed at "getting to the bottom" of the violence problem. More often than not, a picture emerged of Black boys and young men with no fathers in their lives, and the implication that the "crisis" of fatherlessness in the Black community was being ignored (The Globe and Mail, 26 Nov 2005, A26; Diebel, Linda, Toronto Star, 19 Aug 2007, A1).

Scholarly research has challenged the mainstream assumption that fatherlessness has a direct correlation to violence in Black communities by offering a critical view of the multiple intersecting factors affecting these single-parent, female-headed households. This research recognizes that fathers play a crucial role in the lives of their children and youth, but questions the view that the problems facing Black children, youth and families in underserved urban communities could be solved if more men took responsibility for parenting their children. The systemic challenges facing Black families living in large urban centres are complex, and therefore cannot be solved by any number of Black male role models (Lawson, 2012; James, 2012; Coley 1998; Marsiglio, 1987; McLoyd, 1990; Rivara, Sweeney and Henderson, 1985).

This is not to say that Black fathers are inconsequential toward the development and maintenance of healthy children and families. Research supports the notion that Black fathers and the absence of Black fathers has an impact on children. Much of the evidence for this concept comes from scholarship on Black families in the context of the United States. We take the position that this research, born and cultivated in a different national context, is relevant to our project situated in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Research on Black fatherhood in the United States provides insights into how Black fathers in Canada are coping with systemic forms of discrimination and structural conditions that affect their well-being and parenting practices.

Why are fathers important?

Coley (1998) found that girls and Black children were more positively affected by relations with fathers and father figures than were boys and White children. As well, divorced fathers were found to be more influential in children's achievement than never-married fathers. His findings suggest that a fathers' provision of warmth and control was related to better academic achievement for children, and also that the provision of control from non-paternal men predicted fewer teacher-rated behavior problems in school and more pro-social behaviours toward peers.

Rivara, Sweeney and Henderson (1985) and Marsiglio (1987) suggest that Black boys growing up in households headed by single, teenage mothers are more likely to become teenage fathers themselves. These studies also discuss the negative impact on educational aspiration and attainment that follows from teenage fatherhood and the cyclical proliferation of an environment in which teenage pregnancy is common, accepted, and perceived to be minimally disruptive to their lives.

What do Black fathers have to say?

At first blush it would seem that the alarm bells raised by Toronto's media are accurate and necessary. However, Reynolds (2009), points out that research concerning Black fathers operates from the perspective of the Black father as absent from parenting and unwilling to take responsibility for their children. Consequently, researchers know little about their parenting practices. A review of the literature on Black families reveals that research focusing on the family roles of Black fathers is exceedingly rare (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker and Lewis, 1990). Further, when the Black father has

been studied there has been more concern with his absence than his presence (Cazenave, 1979; Bright and Williams, 1996). This overwhelming emphasis on the absent Black father has dominated prevailing research and deflected attention away from the many custodial and non-custodial Black fathers who are actively involved on all fronts of their families' lives. As well, while these studies provide some insight into the experiences of Black fathers, they do not necessarily provide the information from the perspective of the Black father himself. In much of the literature concerning Black fatherhood, Black fathers are silent.

Some researchers have re-examined the roles of Black men in families and attempted to dispute the stereotypes of disinterest and lack of involvement in the socialization of their children. Cazenave (1979) and Taylor, Leashore and Toliver (1988) indicate that Black fathers see work as a means to effectively carry out their roles as husbands and fathers, but have also noted a trend towards more egalitarian, expressive and involved relationships. Other research has noted that Black fathers are more involved within their families and interact more with their children than their own fathers did. McAdoo (1979, 1988, 1993) and Mirande (1991) have argued that married Black fathers actively participate in the socialization of their children, have warm, nurturing relationships with their children, and share equally with their wives in child-rearing decisions. Mirande (1991) notes that overwhelmingly 99% of Black fathers see child care as a responsibility of both parents and 87% believe that their children have needs that, "... only they, as fathers could meet" (p.58). It is important to note that these studies involved married Black fathers or those in committed relationships.

Research from the United States also sheds light on the systemic and environmental factors that impact Black fatherhood and the manner in which these factors play out in the issues, challenges, roadblocks, opportunities and successes associated with Black fatherhood. Thornton, Chatters, Taylor and Allen (1990); Coley (1998); Marsiglio (1987); McLoyd, (1990); Rivara, Sweeney and Henderson (1985) each point to the effects of socioeconomics and sociodemographics on Black fatherhood, including the ways in which gender, age, marital status, region, and racial composition of neighborhood impact, personal goal setting, educational attainment and the manner in which Black parents racially socialize their children.

In light of the focus on absent Black fathers and the paucity of research that considers the perspectives of Black fathers themselves, this research project seeks to inform current literature on the issues, challenges, roadblocks, opportunities and successes associated with Black fatherhood in the City of Toronto from the perspective of Black fathers and their surrounding communities.

Methodology

APPROACH AND GOVERNANCE

Community-Based Research

Community-based research involves a collaborative relationship between researchers and community members in which they share control of the research agenda through active and reciprocal involvement in the research design, implementation and dissemination. Community-based studies involve a research topic of practical relevance to the community and are carried out in community settings. Moreover, results of community-based studies are action-oriented and useful to members of the community. As a community-based research project, Gathering Our Voices required the input of the community throughout the development and facilitation of the study. As such, the project team was structured in a way that ensured wide representation and input from community members. Figure 1 depicts the structure of the project team. It is important to note that for each of the committees depicted in the diagram, members of the public were permitted to attend at their discretion.

Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

The purpose of the RAC was to advise BDC in developing, implementing and monitoring the research project. Standing members of the RAC included the Research Coordinator, Research Assistants, Community Engagement Specialist, BDC Chair, and the University Lead Researchers. BDC members or other interested parties could attend RAC meetings on a voluntary basis.

The RAC performed the following functions:

- **a)** Advised BDC on the direction and priorities of the Research Project;
- **b)** Advised BDC on new or emerging research themes and opportunities;
- **c)** Assisted BDC in identifying resources to support research, and strategies to improve the effectiveness of the Research Project;
- **d)** Assisted BDC in identifying opportunities for research partnerships;
- **e)** Where possible, reviewed BDC's research proposals intended for external funding;
- **f)** Where possible, reviewed research reports authored or co-authored by Research Project staff for external audiences.

The RAC met on a bi-weekly basis, beginning Wednesday November 28, 2012.

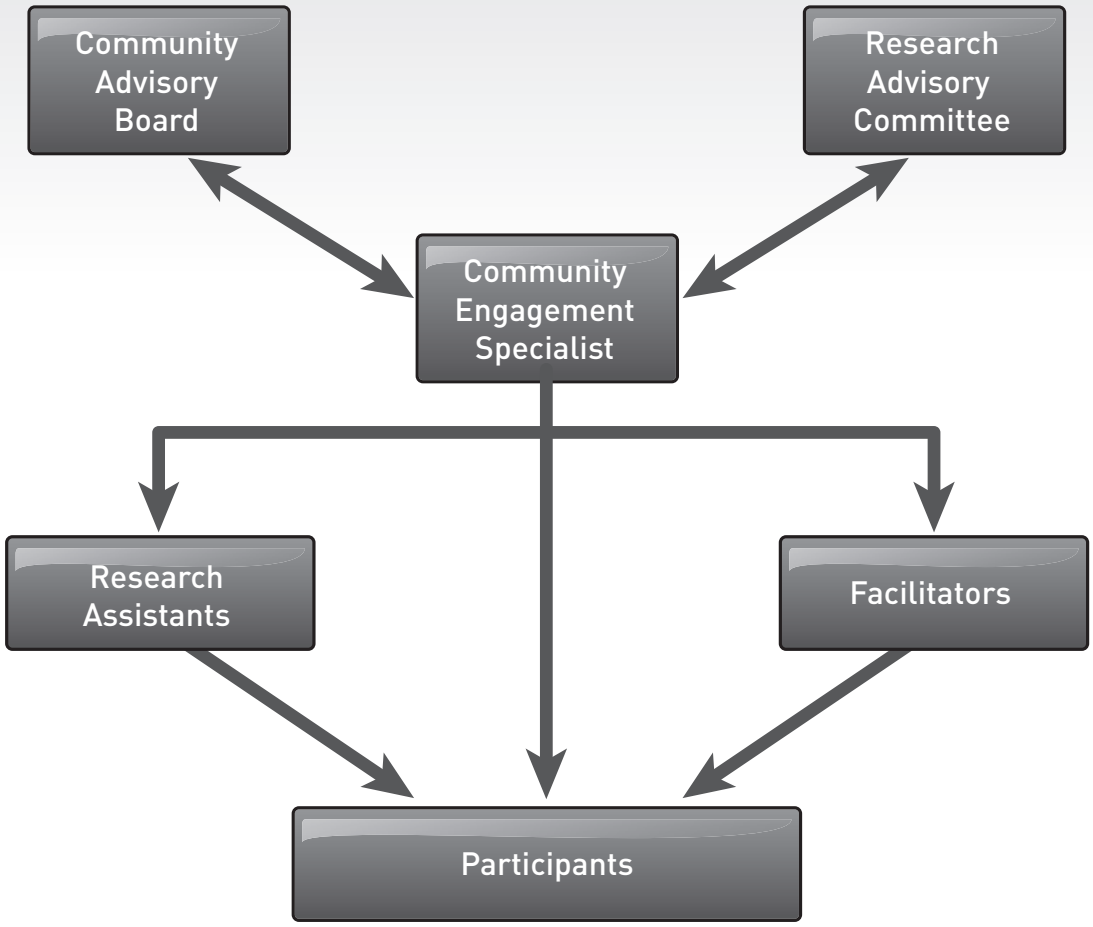
Community Advisory Board (CAB)

The CAB consisted of a wide cross-section of individuals from Toronto's Black community. Married and single fathers, men with no children, married and single mothers and women with no children, each with a unique interest in providing advice, guidance and support to the research project. The CAB met prior to the submission of the ethics applications in order to approve the methodology for the study. Following the completion of the project's community forums, CAB members helped to "tease out" themes that would inform the development of the one-on-one interview questionnaires. When all of the data had been collected and analyzed, the CAB met again to discuss the results and to help identify areas where further research potential exists.

Community Forum Facilitators

In order to further involve community members and to ensure vibrant discussions, a call was extended, to solicit experienced Black male facilitators to lead the community forums. The RAC recruited, interviewed and trained 10 facilitators, 8 of whom were fathers. Although each of the community forums was organized around a different theme, facilitators were provided with common questions and activities to open the discussions and to ensure that the conversations produced information necessary to answer the research questions. Appendix A contains a sample of the information that was provided to the facilitators ahead of the community forum events. During the training process, the facilitators assisted in choosing the overarching themes that would guide the community forums.

Figure 1 – Project Team Structure



DESIGN

To collect the data for this research project the RAC identified and implemented 3 forms of data collection in-line with the community-based focus of the project: Community forums, personal interviews, and surveys.

Community Forums

The data collection process included the facilitation of 11 community discussion forums in 10 sites located in priority neighbourhoods across the City of Toronto, including: Jane and Finch, Rexdale, Lawrence Heights, Regent Park, Mornelle Court, East Scarborough and Weston Road. Under the auspices of the Black Daddies Club's Black Family Values Tour, these forums took place across Toronto during the months of April and May 2013, and focused on various topics impacting the Black family in Toronto. These discussions were open to Black fathers and community members at large who had a stake in the issues affecting Black fathers.

To carry out the community forums, the RAC hired and trained 10 experienced, Black male facilitators and engaged in a process to determine the themes to be addressed at the forums. These themes were chosen as those that affect Black fathers specifically and Black community(ies) more generally. Appendix B contains descriptions of the themes that guided the community forum discussions as part of the *Gathering Our Voices* project.

To ensure that we had a representative sample for this research project, BDC partnered with 10 community organizations across Toronto, with each organization hosting one discussion. This meant that 2-3 conversations were organized in priority neighbourhoods across the city as described above and not focused on one region or jurisdiction. Each discussion featured 2 facilitators who guided the conversation based on the overarching theme and how it related to the experiences of Black fathers in Toronto.

All discussions, except for one, were tape-recorded. The events were also used as a vehicle to identify Black fathers who were interested in individual interviews which allowed the researchers to gain further insight into the experiences of Black fathers in Toronto.

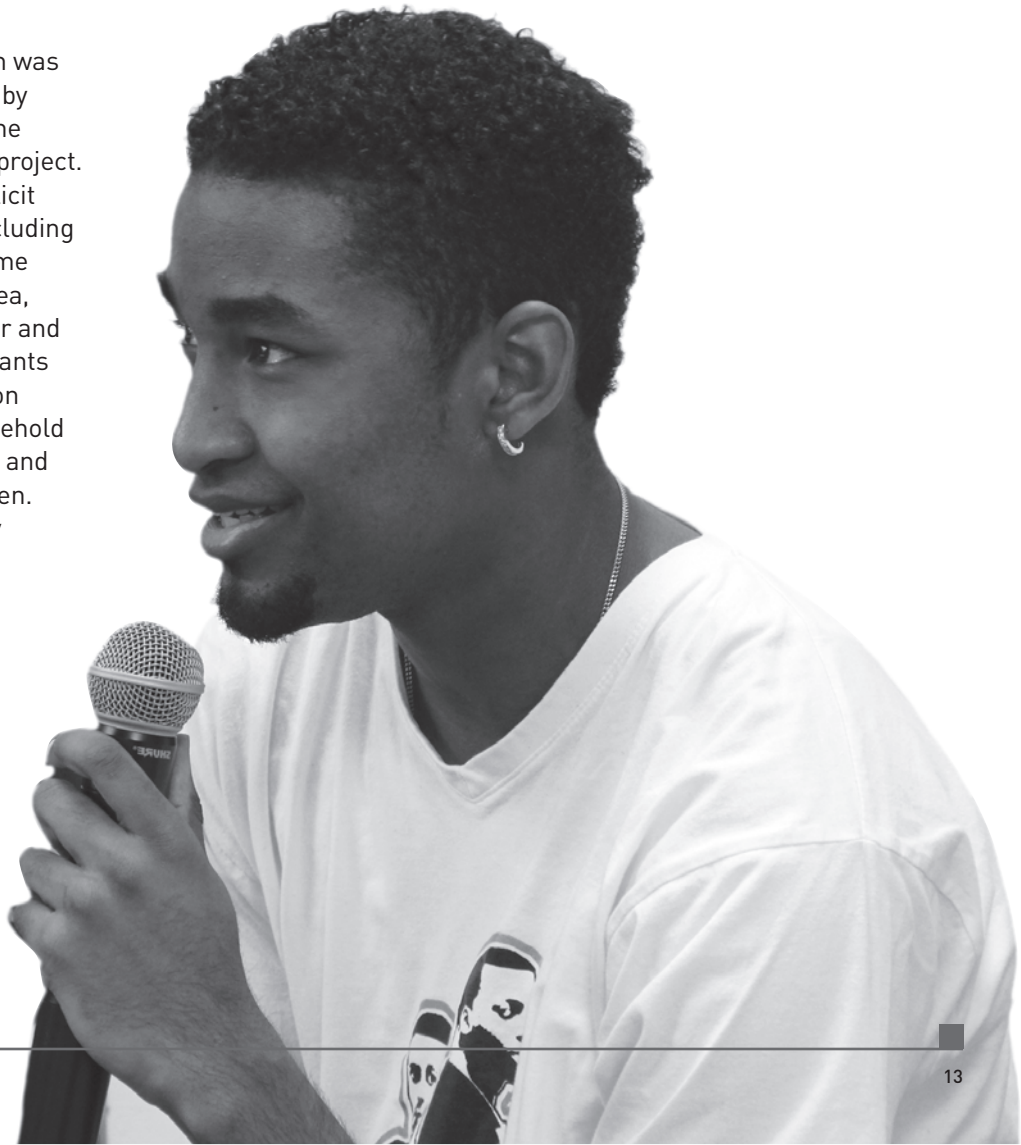
Interviewing

Individual, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 participants who represented a cross-section of Black fathers across Toronto. Candidates were selected in an attempt to satisfy a variety of criteria, including: Men born in Canada as well as in other countries; men of African/Afro-Caribbean descent; men aged 25 years and over residing in all areas of Toronto with custody of their child(ren) as well as those without; and men of all levels of education.

Interviews averaged an hour in length and the questions focused on fathers' relationships with their children, their understanding of fatherhood and the pressures associated with being a Black father in the City of Toronto. As well, fathers were asked to consider their perspectives, in a more personal way, on the major themes addressed in the community forums (refer to Appendix C for the full interview questionnaire).

Survey

The final form of data collection was surveys which were completed by participants in person and online throughout the duration of the project. Questions were designed to solicit baseline demographic data, including age, race/ethnicity, length of time living in the Greater Toronto Area, relationship status, and number and age of children. Survey participants were also asked about education level, employment status, household income, their housing situation and custody status with their children. Appendix D provides the survey questions that were distributed both in a paper based and electronic format.



Findings

SURVEY

We begin our discussion of the research findings with the results of descriptive analyses of the demographic survey. The survey was designed to gather information on the family structure and economic status of study participants as well as the issues perceived to be the most pressing for Black fathers living in Toronto. A total of 262 people responded to the survey – both paper based and electronic. Of those that responded, 65% were male and 35% were female. Eighty-six percent of the respondents identified themselves as Black or African Canadian/Caribbean.

Chart 1: Gender of BDC research participants

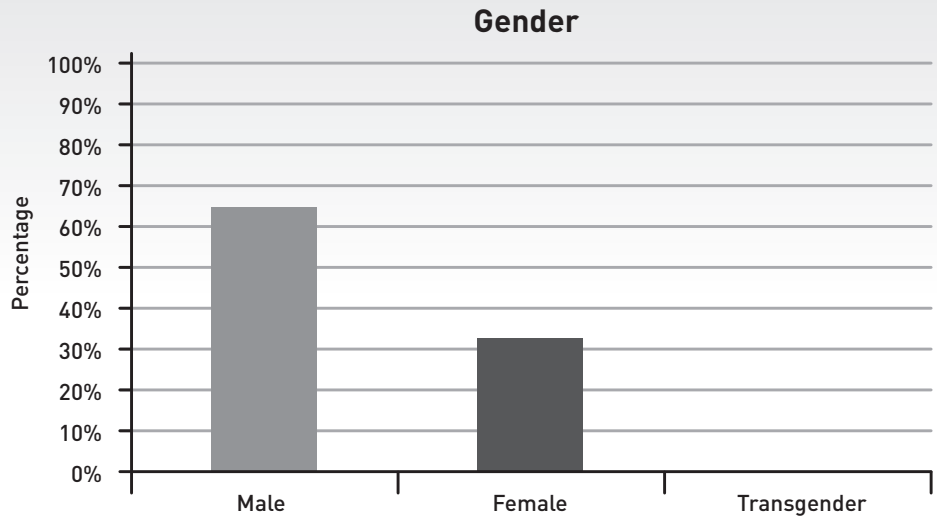
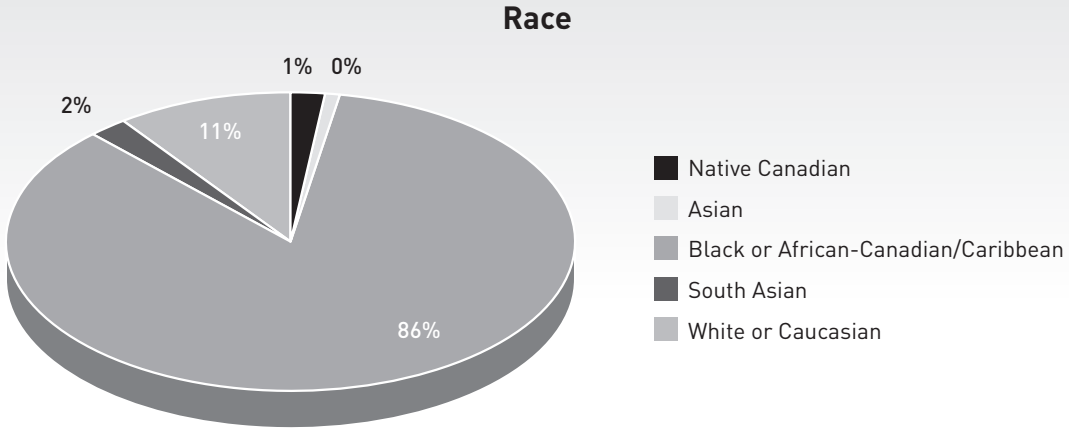
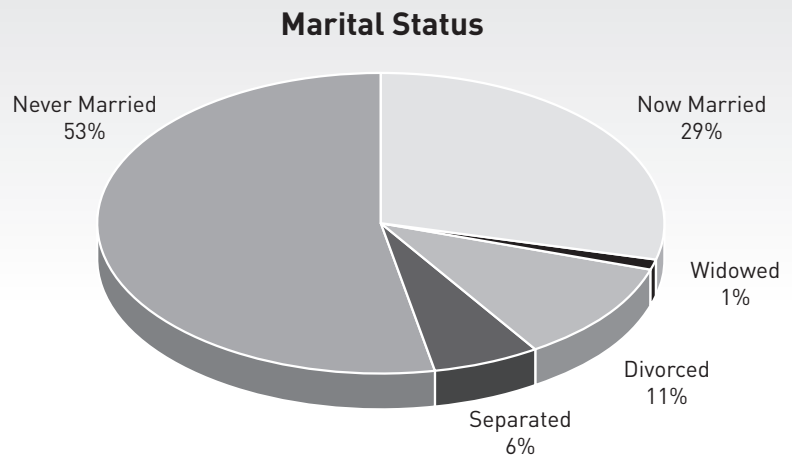


Chart 2: Racial composition of BDC research participants



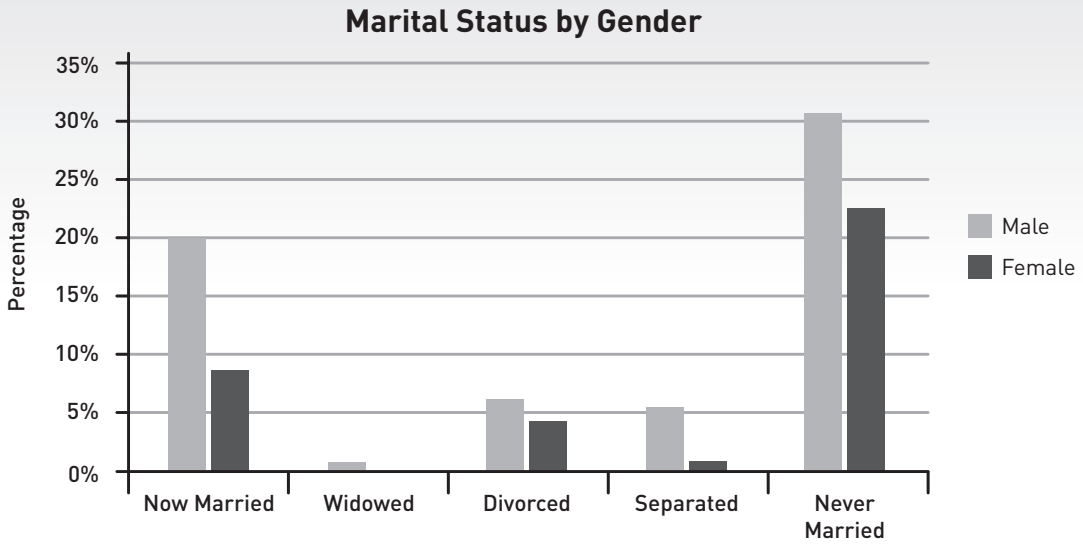
Overall, 29% of the respondents indicated that they were married, 53% that they were never married, 6% separated, and, 11% indicated that they were divorced.

Chart 3: Marital status of BDC research study participants



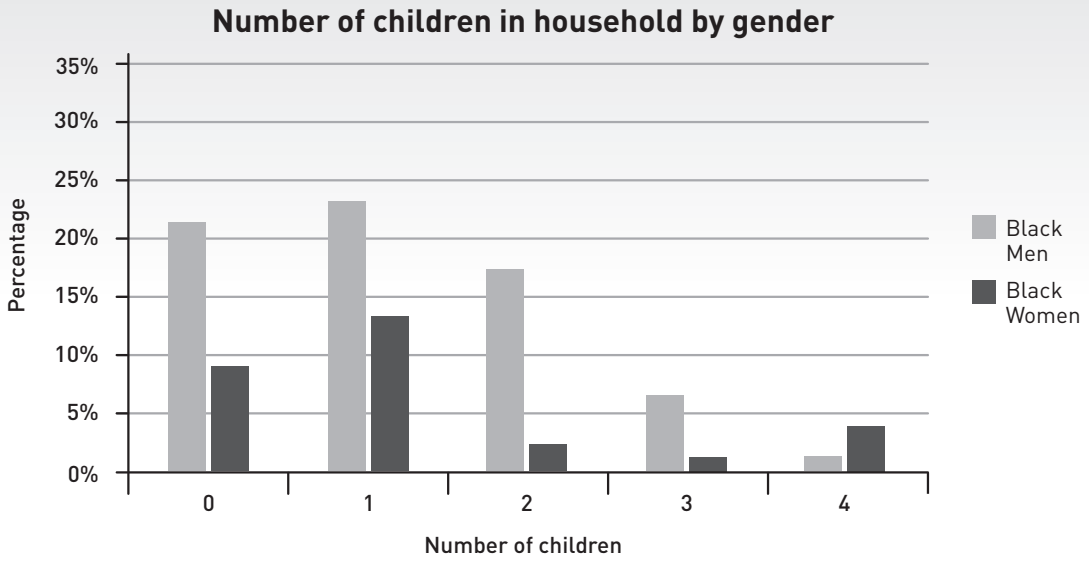
Among those who responded to the survey almost 20% of the male respondents indicated that they were now married, with 7% of the female respondents indicating the same. The largest proportion of the survey respondents indicated that they were never married with a little over 30% of the male respondents and more than 20% of the female respondents indicating the same.

Chart 4: Martital status of BDC participant by gender



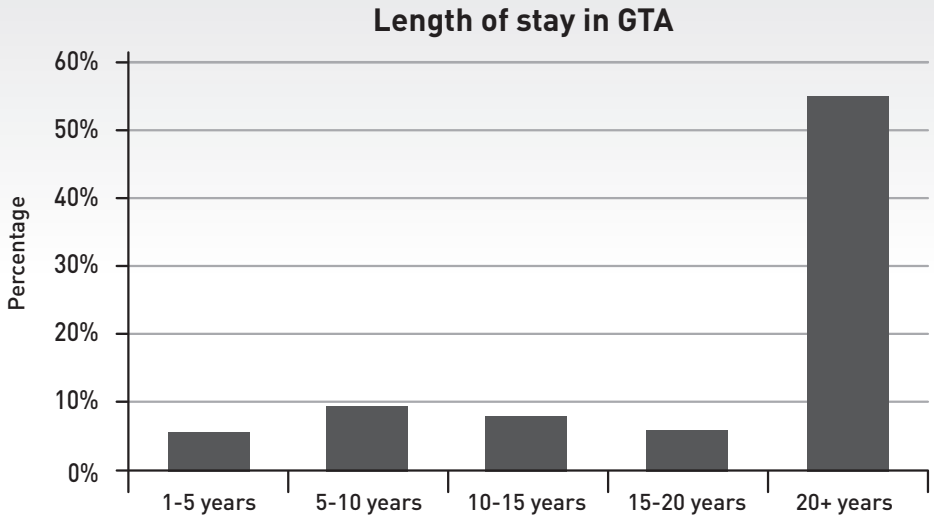
A large proportion (69%) of the respondents indicated that they still had children living in their household. Of those, 23% of Black men and 13% of Black women indicated that they have only one child living in their household, with fewer indicating that they have two children (17% Black men, 3% Black women).

Chart 5: Number of children in households of BDC research participants by gender



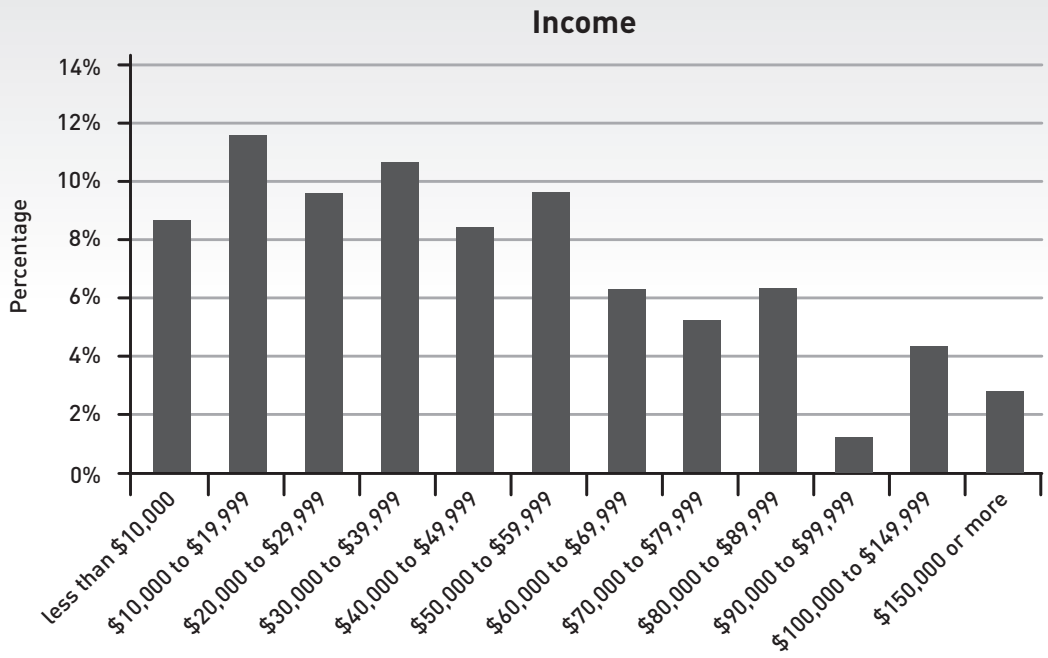
Similar to the paucity of information about the family structure of Black families, very little is known about the residential patterns and forms of community development of Black Torontonians. Almost 60% of the survey respondents indicated that they had been living in Toronto for 20 years or more.

Chart 6: Length of stay in the City of Toronto



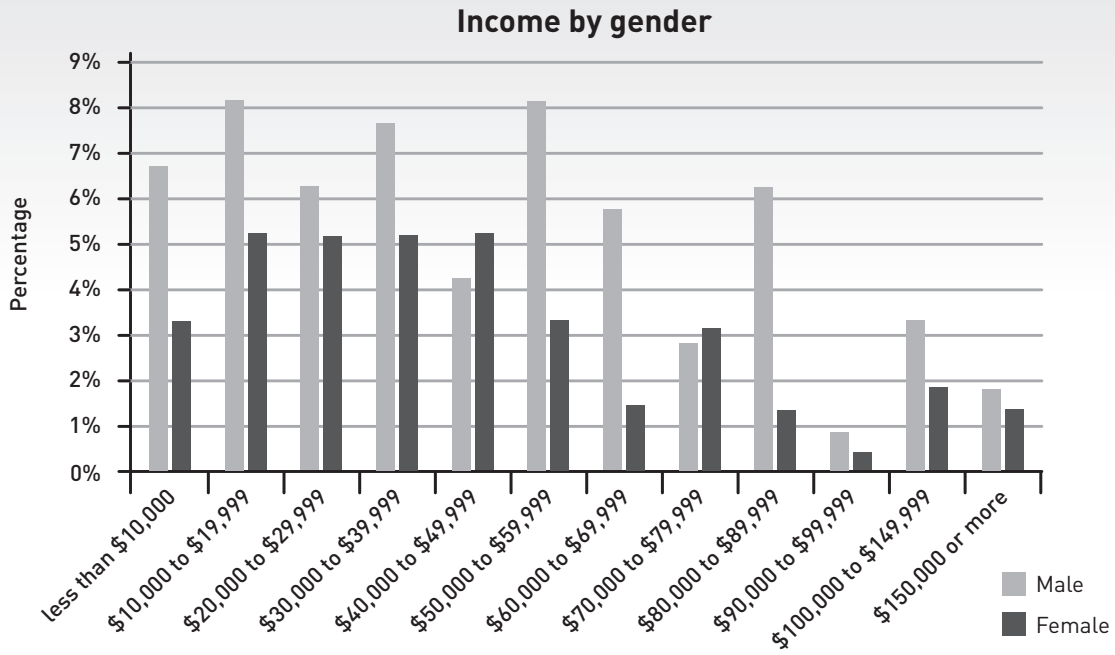
The earnings reported by the participants were almost evenly distributed across the income bands included in the survey. The majority of the respondents indicated that their yearly earnings were between $10,000 and $19,999. Fewer of the respondents reported earnings on the higher end of the income scale with less than two percent of respondents indicating that they earned between $90,000 and $99,999.

Chart 7: family income of BDC research study participants



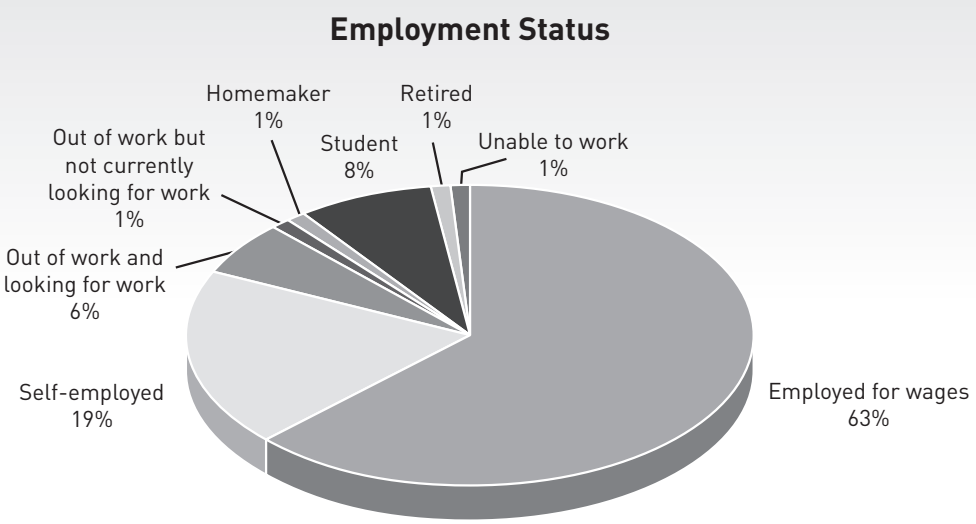
An additional analysis was conducted for income by gender. Overall, the male respondents were higher income earners with more than 8% of them earning between $50,000 and $59,999.

Chart 8: Income of BDC research participants by gender



Most of the respondents (63%) indicated that they were employed for wages. Others indicated that they were self-employed (19%), students (8%) or out of work and looking for work (6%).

Chart 9: Employment status of BDC research participants



Of the men who responded, over 35% indicated that they were employed for wages and slightly over 20% of women indicated the same. Almost 15% of the male respondents said that they were self employed as did 6% of the females.

Chart 10: Employment status of BDC research participant by gender

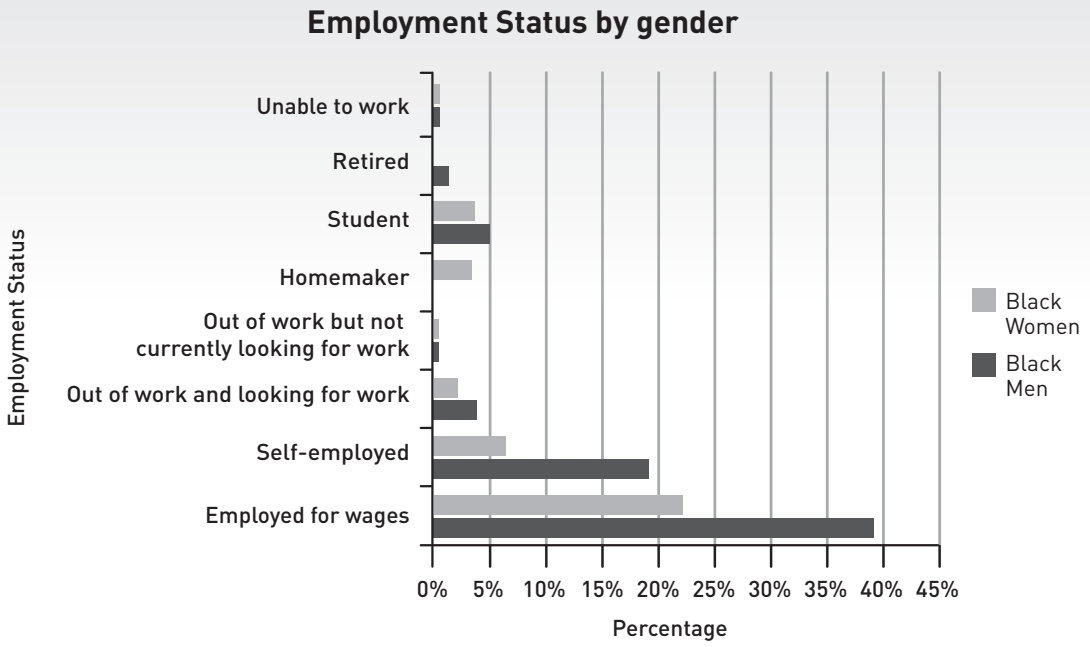
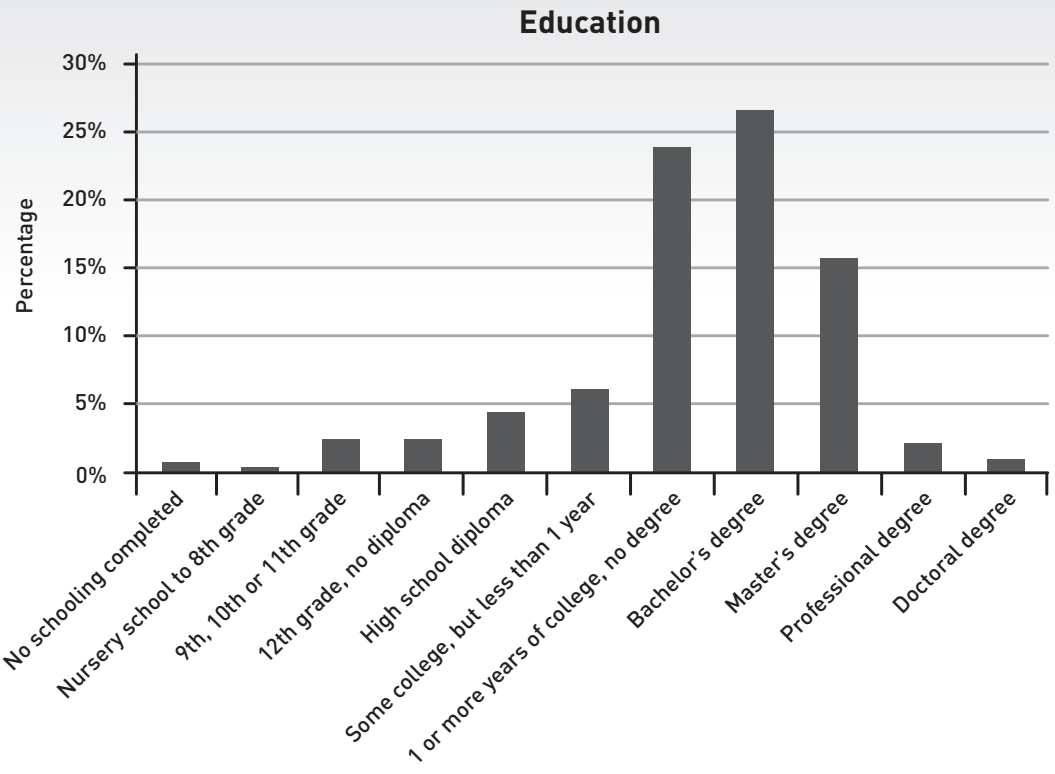
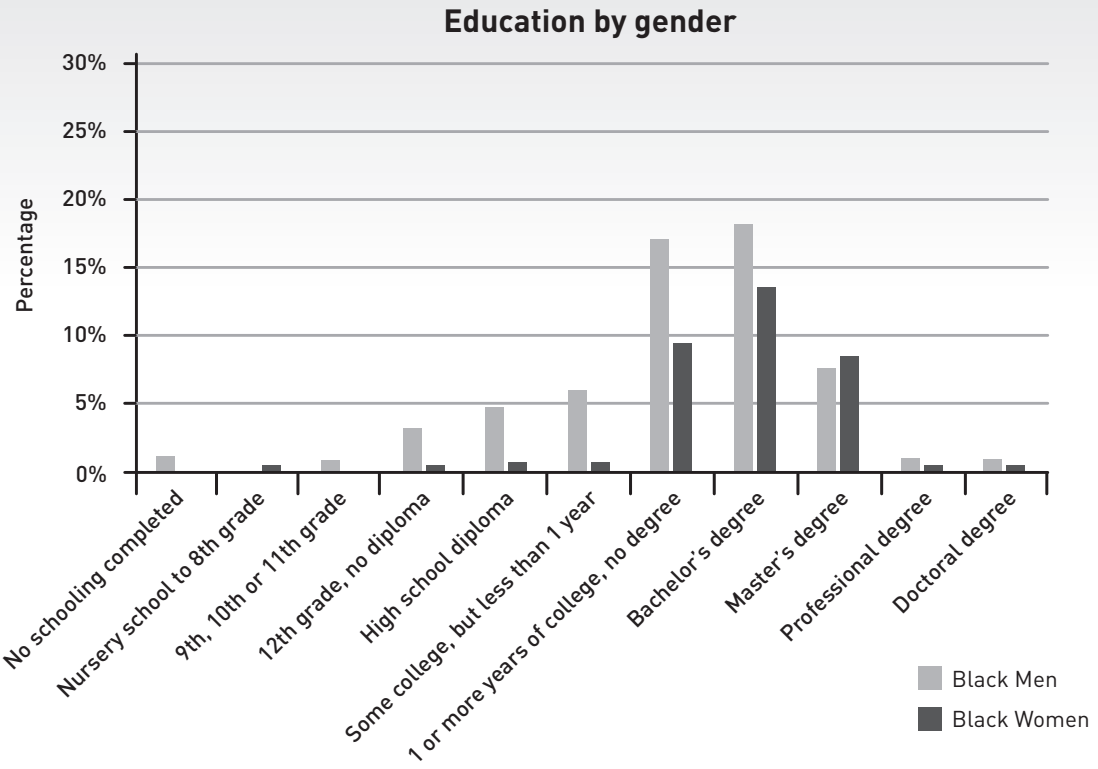


Chart 11: Education level of BDC research participants



In addition to income, the education level of the study participants was also assessed. Most of the participants indicated that they had a bachelor's degree (27%) or had completed one or more years of college (23%). Fewer participants indicated that they had Master's degrees (16%), professional degrees (2%) or doctoral degrees (1%). Further, 16% of those who indicated they had one or more years of college were male compared to the 9% who were female. Of those who indicated that they had bachelor degrees 18% were males and 14% were female.

Chart 12: Education level by gender



Survey participants were also asked to rank the most important issues facing Black fathers in the City of Toronto as well as the issues the city does a good job of addressing. Employment, money and education were among those issues identified as important by survey participants. Physical health, housing and family courts were issues that participants believed are best addressed by the City. As the sample for this survey was very small, no general conclusions can be made about the education, income or employment status of Black Torontonians. In order for more substantive and generalized findings regarding the issues and experience of Black males in Toronto to be determined, a more detailed survey with a larger sample size is required.

COMMUNITY FORUMS AND INTERVIEWS

Our analysis of field-notes, community forum and interview transcripts reveal overlapping themes. The themes from community forums and interviews are described together rather than separately here, as they provide insight into community perceptions of the realities of Black fatherhood in the City of Toronto. In this section, we refer to community forum attendees and the Black fathers interviewed as "participants." Most of the quotes provided are from in-depth interviews with Black fathers, although in some cases, specific quotes were captured from field-notes or audio records made during the community forums.

Role Modeling

Role modeling was a prominent theme in both community forums and interviews. Discussions of role modeling focused on three distinct, but interconnected ideas. First, participants communicated that in order to be effective fathers, Black men require positive Black fathering role models. One of the fathers interviewed said, "I think a father sets the standard... he sets the example and teaches you how to be a man." Other fathers who were interviewed shared their personal concerns about acting as fathers having never had the example at home. This is captured by a comment made by one of the fathers we spoke with. He said, "... my dad wasn't there for me so I missed out on a bunch of stuff that maybe I shouldn't have."

The second idea that emerged related to role modeling is that it is difficult to find Black father role models in a number of Toronto's priority neighbourhoods. Both community forum participants and the fathers we interviewed described the current state of affairs as being one in which older Black males who have grown up without fathers become the de facto role models for many Black boys and young men in these neighbourhoods who are also growing up without fathers. Participants felt Black fathers are needed as role models for young and potential Black fathers as well as to help end the cyclical pattern of expectation that views fathers as absent in the Black community. Further, both community forum participants and the Black fathers interviewed expressed frustration with the negative impact of media imagery that perpetuates the normalcy of absent Black fatherhood. This issue will be explored further in the section on media imagery.

Another subtheme of role modeling was the negative parenting practices of participants' own fathers, which ultimately served as a negative role model. One father we interviewed said, "[My father] was an example on how not to father – in the way manure can give birth to tomatoes. Sometimes the shit in your life can be alchemically transformed into something beautiful. So in that respect I would definitely say that he is a role model on the negative."

What does it mean to be a good father?

Another theme of the community forums and in-depth interviews was the meanings associated with being a "good" Black father. Interestingly, regardless of socio-economic status, age, employment or relationship status, the Black fathers who took part in Gathering Our Voices had traditional views of fatherhood. In other words they viewed fatherhood as primarily taking responsibility for and having obligations to their children. A comment made by one interviewee illustrated this point especially well. He said, "Fatherhood for me is about guidance and direction; about nurturing; about engagement; about communication; about discipline; about challenge; about collaboration... with the mother to make sure that we are on the same page, even though we disagree a lot but just trying to deliver a solid message about the importance of morals, values and education." Most participants took the position that it is the Black father's responsibility and obligation to impart life's lessons, to protect, and to provide. The following is a more in-depth discussion of key ideas related to traditional notions of fatherhood.

"GOOD" BLACK FATHERS AS ROLE MODELS

When asked, most of the fathers interviewed equated being a good father as being a good role model for their children. This seemed especially true for fathers with sons as opposed to daughters. For example, one father interviewed said, "A father is a caretaker for the bridge that is being built seven generations into the future; modeling what I would like to see in my children and exemplifying another way African manhood can be rendered... I think the best thing as a father is setting the standard... he sets the example and teachers you how to be a man." Other participants who were Black fathers wanted to teach their sons how to resolve conflict without being demeaning or dehumanizing. "Teach him how to respect people, politeness... patience," explained one father during an interview. Interestingly, fathers with daughters expressed a desire to model to their daughters how they should expect to be treated as young women by the men in their lives. One father reported in an interview, "I tell her she's beautiful. I give her flowers and open doors for her, so she doesn't fall head over heels for the first idiot who tells her she looks pretty."

"GOOD" BLACK FATHERS AS PROVIDERS

Overwhelmingly, participants maintained that a good father is one who is able to provide financially for his children. Men who, for whatever reason, felt they were unable to contribute as much as they thought was necessary to be a "good" father, expressed feeling unworthy of being able to take an active role in parenting his children. Referring to his girlfriend's family supporting him financially, an interviewee shared, "It's been good but sometimes I want money to put to something. That's the only thing you know [inaudible] ... sometimes I have to ask her to support me with this, help me with, you know, can you put money on that...I have to ask her and I just want to give it to her. I feel bad sometimes... all the time I feel bad." Many of the participants who were fathers felt pressure to provide financially. These fathers linked their desire to be good providers to their own experiences being raised in single parent households, while their own fathers were absent and unable or unwilling to contribute to their upbringing financially. A Black father interviewee said, "We never had a lot of money, we never had a lot of things but I see how much it mattered, when I was young, the societal pressures." As such, this has led to feelings of wanting their children to have access to opportunities that were never available to them.

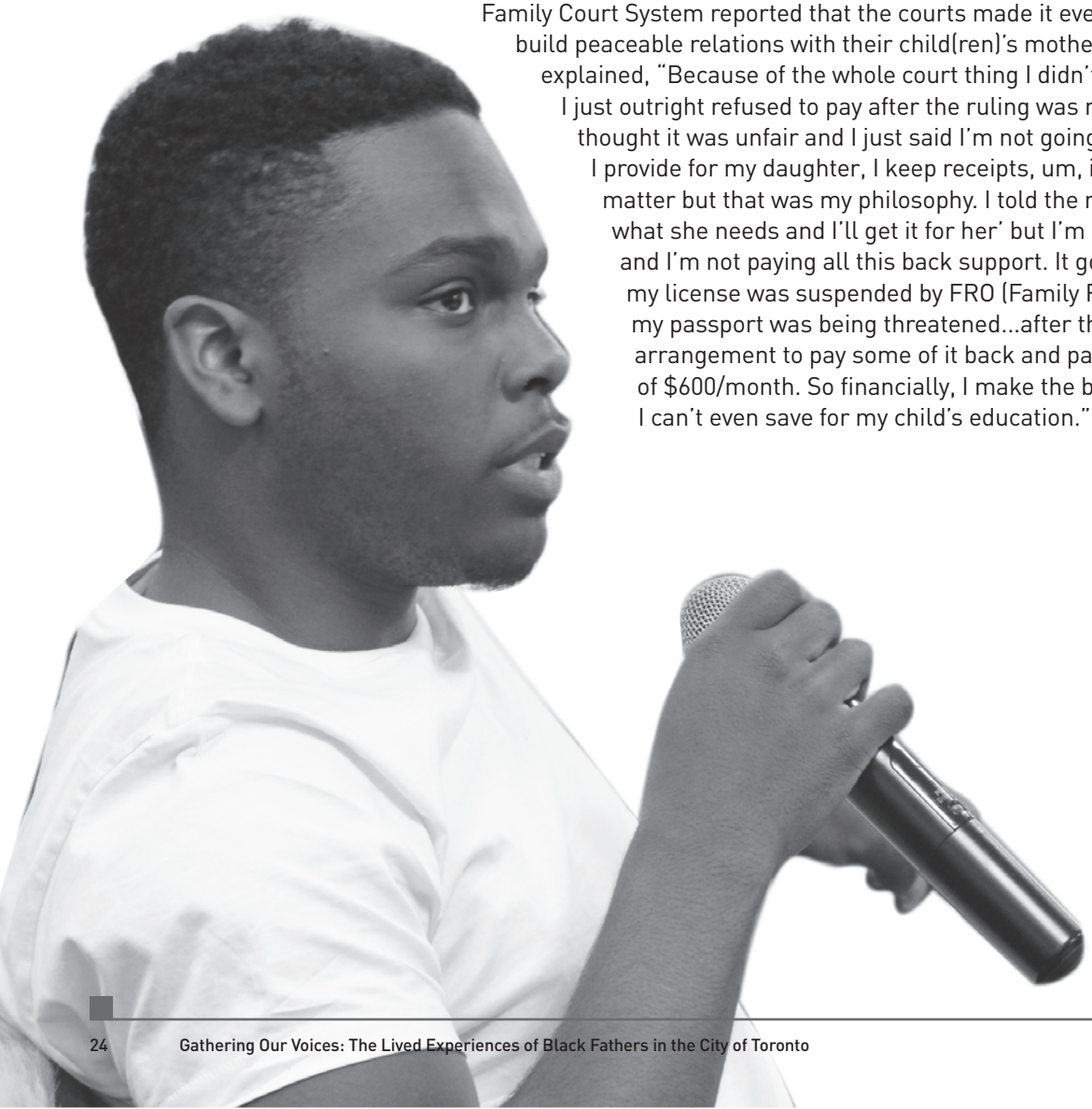
"GOOD" BLACK FATHERS AS PRESENT

While most fathers recognized the importance of providing financially for their children they felt it was equally, if not more important to be physically present during child rearing. The importance of being present and spending quality time with their children was linked to personal experiences of their own fathers being absent from their homes. One interviewee lamented, "Because my dad wasn't there for me I missed out on a bunch of stuff that maybe I shouldn't have. It hurts inside so I don't want to put him [referring to his own son] through the same kind of shit, so I want to be there for like his first baseball game in [the] park, me and him, kicking around the soccer ball or walking the dog. That's what being a father is, actually being there... I loved how my father worked, he worked non-stop, from morning lights until the sun goes down... he was a hard worker. I just didn't get the opportunity to bond with him as a son." Some participants viewed the opportunity to spend time with their children as one of the most enjoyable parts of fatherhood. Most were happy if they were able to make their own children happy and enjoyed the opportunity to be in their company and to learn more about them. They also enjoyed seeing their children grow and exemplify the values that they imparted to them.

Participant fathers, both custodial and non-custodial, expressed the necessity to be in their child(ren)'s lives. Participants reported using social activities such as going to the movies and playing games as a way to spend quality time with their children. For non-custodial fathers, quality time was usually spent on the weekends. Custodial fathers were typically more involved in their children's lives and able to participate in specific activities related to education and extracurricular programs. Some fathers expressed wanting to spend more time with their children. However due to a number of barriers, some financial, others interpersonal, they were unable to do so.

Participants recognized that being a good father often required the cooperation of their child(ren)'s mother. Custodial fathers reported the importance of co-parenting in an environment in which both partners were "on the same page", particularly around issues of education and discipline, as well as scheduling the family's activities. One father described the importance of being "on the same page" as his child's mother this way: "It was critical cause I couldn't do everything. I also had to work, I was also going to school, I was also doing community work, so in my absence, it wasn't a 50-50 relationship in terms of parenting. There were times when we had to do it together; there were times when we had to do it separately. At times she was doing it 100% at times, I was doing it at 0. Sometimes I was doing it at 100%, at times she was doing it at 0. To be able to bounce ideas off someone that had the same interest in your child, nobody can question that. Being able to do it together was important."

Non-custodial fathers spoke about the successes and challenges of building a peaceful relationship with the mothers of their children. This was necessary to avoid conflicts that could interrupt the time they have with their children. Participants who were involved with the Ontario Family Court System reported that the courts made it even more difficult to build peaceable relations with their child(ren)'s mother. One participant explained, "Because of the whole court thing I didn't pay child support. I just outright refused to pay after the ruling was made because I thought it was unfair and I just said I'm not going to deal with that. I provide for my daughter, I keep receipts, um, it probably doesn't matter but that was my philosophy. I told the mother 'just tell me what she needs and I'll get it for her' but I'm not paying support and I'm not paying all this back support. It got to a point where my license was suspended by FRO (Family Responsibility Office), my passport was being threatened...after that I made an arrangement to pay some of it back and pay a set amount of $600/month. So financially, I make the bare minimum... I can't even save for my child's education."



Barriers to Being a "Good" Black Father

While the vast majority of the research participants recognized the importance of being a good Black father, albeit in traditional ways, they also discussed a number of barriers to fulfilling that role. The most frequently discussed barriers included family court, employment challenges, educational attainment and interactions with their child's school. A more in-depth discussion of these barriers follows.

FAMILY COURT

Fathers, who were currently or had previously been involved with the Ontario Family Court system, overwhelmingly suggested that the system was designed on an antiquated philosophy that favors mothers over fathers. Aside from the prohibitive costs associated with the family court process, these fathers felt that the system was biased and participated in precluding them from being with their children. One father explained, "The second time, I'm not sure what sparked it, but we went to court again…I made the mistake of thinking that the court was about justice, just going in to prove my case, I wasn't trying to be malicious and knock her, [my daughter's] mom, or anything like that. I felt like I had a really good case… It ended up really nasty and it opened up my eyes to the struggles that fathers, especially Black fathers, go through because it's just set up against you. It didn't matter that my daughter was staying with me most of the time, that I had affidavits, that the statements she [the mother] was making were false. She said I never wanted to be involved, I never held my daughter, I didn't change pampers. But all her initial documentation from when she was first born was at my place, so I had proof she was there, I had thousands of pictures with her – but none of that mattered. In the end… her mom had the final say."

The message that was repeated to fathers throughout the community forums as well as by fathers during the interview process was to avoid Ontario Family Court if at all possible. Men discussed strategies towards putting the children first and opening lines of communication with their mother, prior to the involvement of the courts. This included reflecting on the ways in which the men's own behavior fosters relationship breakdown, and hence accepting some responsibility for the present state of affairs. Many fathers suggested that they would be willing to sit down in a counseling environment with their past partner in order to resolve some issues and to make some mutual decisions about the children instead of going to court. The difficulties around doing this expressed by research participants included the associated financial costs, the willingness of one or both parties to participate, the ability to focus on relationship issues with the partner rather than dealing with the realities of moving on separately, the capacity of the counselor to understand cultural issues and baggage, and the capability to deal with a partner who wants to change the terms once the agreement has been forged.

Men who do not have the option of avoiding court stressed the importance of understanding the system and securing a "good lawyer", as the most logical and effective steps towards achieving some success with their legal situation. One of the fathers interviewed asserted, "For me it's just overcoming the system, to get through and finally have him [referring to his son] full time. The system favours women for the most part. The system doesn't really even cater to the kids... they don't really check up on them. The main thing is to understand the system, the best thing I ever did got myself a good lawyer, sat down and learn what the laws were, what my rights were as far as myself, my child, and the economic situation... it got turned the other way – they recognized... and said you have supported your child... learning how the system works, learning what your rights are... it was main thing."

EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

All participants stressed the importance of having a decent job in order to be a "good" Black father. There was a tacit acceptance of the "father as provider" role, and securing employment that afforded fathers the opportunity to "provide" sufficiently was given the utmost importance. None of the fathers interviewed were satisfied with their employment status. Some were unemployed. However, those who were working did not describe their job as satisfying as a result of either their level of pay and/or what they perceived to be a lack of opportunity for advancement. One father offered the following clarification, "I may be full-time but it is just [a] paycheque to paycheque type of thing." "I have a job right now... I guess I'm employed... Yeah... yeah... it's a challenging job it's not easy, the paying is okay... I'm good for now... not forever but for now I'm alright."

Fathers who were dissatisfied with their level of pay expressed frustration concerning the impact this has had on their ability to properly provide for their children.

For non-custodial fathers, particularly those with Ontario Family Court-derived visitation agreements, the issue of "good" employment held far-reaching consequences, as their visitation was often tied to their ability to make support payments. Unemployed fathers found it difficult to provide financially for their children. Those accessing social assistance expressed dissatisfaction with the amount that they received as it was insufficient to assist them and to allow for them to support their children. Some indicated that they had been seeking employment for a number of years.

When pressed to discuss reasons for dissatisfaction with employment/ underemployment, participants suggested that in addition to the difficult labour market, the explained that Black men also had to confront racism in recruitment and hiring processes as well as on the job and in the workplace. Participants felt that the existence of employment discrimination put Black men at a disadvantage in an already difficult economic climate. In light of this, participants discussed two potential strategies to address the situation. These including accessing education as a tool for career advancement and advocating for the enforcement of employment equity legislation and affirmative action policies (discussed in the Implications section of this report).

The importance of education for economic advancement was enthusiastically endorsed by the vast majority of research participants. All of the fathers interviewed were either studying or planning to continue their studies as a means to acquire more gainful employment. These fathers described education as an important factor in building the skills and acquiring the knowledge needed to advance in the working world.

MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF BLACK MEN/FATHERS

One of the factors identified by participants as fostering racism in the workplace and in society at large was media imagery and biased portrayals of Black men and fathers. Participants suggested that Black men are represented as violent and dangerous which has serious implications for their chances of securing employment and being treated fairly. Further, many fathers discussed how these images impact the Black community in terms of how Black fathers view themselves as well as how they view and are viewed by their children, and the way that Black boys view themselves. "The imagery and representation of Black men in the media... they are negative... There is a conscious and subconscious impact because you start being afraid of your own shadow. It's also how others see it, there is an internal challenge that takes place but it's how other people see Black men. When

a Black man goes to look for a job or an apartment or goes to school, a stereotype just kicks in. What chance will they have to succeed in whatever they do? You have to go there with twice as much skills and determination to get to the same place as other people. It does have an impact and controlling that narrative and changing that narrative is essential because young Black men growing up and seeing that also there is an internalized degradation that takes place of self and identity."

Another father suggested that, "... part of the dehumanization process [in white supremacy] means you have to create a Black man... that fits into that context [being inhuman]. We are nothing but 'buck niggers' that spread seed. We do not have moral, ethical capability to remain by our children's side. That is a myth that has to be borne into a savage reality. Part of that is creating an environment where we cannot stay in some cases. You'll find in certain low-income areas where there are certain monetary rewards where the parent is benefited if the father is not in the home. That serves to buttress the idea that the absent Black father is a naturally occurring phenomena rather than looking at [it] in the larger context."

Participants suggested that addressing the negative portrayal of Black men and fathers in the media can have far-reaching impacts on their opportunities and those of their children. Recognizing that the likelihood of a swift transformation of media imagery is remote, participants again looked to education to provide a balanced perspective and to prepare children for the world they will encounter.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Black fathers who took part in this research project valued education not only for themselves but also for their children. They recognized the worthiness of education gained through the formal education system. Participants did, however, note the lack of culturally specific and empowering curriculum in the k-12 school system, and consequently, sought ways to teach their children about their heritage independent of the formal schooling system. Some fathers were concerned about their children not understanding their background and origin. They felt that knowing about their heritage would assist them in being more upstanding citizens. Further, participants suggested that in elementary school there was a real lack of representation of Black men in the administrative and teaching staff. As such, alternative programming was considered a necessity, in addition to changing the existing education system. One father made the decision to home school his children in order for them to have the kind of education that he believes they need to become productive members of society and to be comfortable with themselves and their identity.

Participants also recognized the school-to-prison pipeline that sees young Black males immersed in a cycle of criminalization, school drop-out and incarceration. They discussed the role the education system plays in this process. Participants suggested that systemic changes were required, but that Black fathers could have a significant role in disrupting said pipeline by increasing their involvement in their children's lives.

INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

Another issue with the existing education system that was identified by research participants, was the difficulty many Black fathers face in interacting with their child(ren)'s school. One father reported, "When I showed up there the first time I was treated like a criminal." Non-custodial fathers in particular suggested that they are excluded from school communications and find it difficult to gain access to their child(ren)'s school information.

LACK OF COMMUNITY/SPACE FOR BLACK MEN TO SHARE

Overwhelmingly, Black fathers expressed relief, support and excitement at the prospect of having an opportunity to converse and share their thoughts and experiences with one another. Fathers suggested that it would be highly beneficial to have a central place to access some of the pertinent programs and services as well as a space to build community. It was argued that a central meeting hub would be important both from a program and services standpoint, but also to assist in bringing the Black community together. A number of participants expressed concern over the lack of a sense of "community" amongst Black families. Several participants who are Black fathers expressed feeling a sense of isolation and loneliness. They perceived a lack of spaces where they could get help or advice. Participants felt that such a space could be tremendously beneficial to Black men and fathers and the larger Black community as a whole.

It is interesting to note that despite the tacit understanding that economic and racial discrimination has an impact on one's ability to be a "good" Black father, participants did not extend this level of system analysis to their own fathers. Instead, they described their fathers as poor role models and examples of the men that they did not wish to emulate, regardless of the race- and class-based hardships they faced.

Implications

Having considered the information gathered over the course of the research project, there were a number of program and policy considerations that are highlighted in the following section in two sub-headings: Programs and Services and Policy Recommendations. Following these discussions are a variety of areas that have been suggested as sites for future action to address some of the issues identified in the research.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

African-Canadian Community Centre

Over the course of this research project several participants indicated their desire for a program and service hub designed specifically for the Black father community in Toronto. A centre of this nature would need to address three key findings of the research project:

a) The lack of a cohesive "community" from which Black fathers can draw a variety of supports;

b) The reality that many of the programs and services that are available to Black community members are not widely recognized within the community, and/or not adequately resourced; and

c) Black fathers overwhelmingly support the idea of having a regular space to interact with one another and to discuss issues pertinent to Black fathers and fatherhood.

The following is a list of other program and/or service suggestions derived from the research data:

- Accessibility to culturally sensitive counseling and mediation for couples and appropriate referrals for counseling with a view to attempting to avoid the Ontario courts in the case of relationship breakdown

- Accessibility to culturally sensitive support for fathers going through custody issues, including advice about navigating the Ontario Family Court system
- Support with career exploration, job searching and skills training opportunities
- Assistance for fathers to properly engage and navigate their child(ren)'s educational institution

Research participants also suggested that increased support be provided to existing programs and services such as Black Daddies Club, Young and Potential Fathers Initiative, Fathers' Resources, Youth Unlimited, Rexdale Community Legal Clinic For Youth Initiative, The John Howard Society of Toronto, Redemption Reintegration Services and Breaking the Cycle.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The data gathered during the *Gathering Our Voices* research project provided a number of recommendations for policy makers at the municipal and provincial levels. They are organized thematically.

Anti-Racism Legislation and Focus on Front-End Initiatives

Greater attention within the different sectors of our society must be given to the *systemic* issues that prevent Black men from being successful fathers and members of their family. The fathers interviewed for this study identified general societal racism as a significant impediment. Therefore, we must understand the root causes as endemic to a system of racism. It is helpful to understand racism as Walcott et al. offer (2008); as a form of violence that gives rise to other kinds of social ills of which we can trace the obstructions that prevent Black men from being successful fathers and members of their family.

In light of this, we call for:

- Less focus on reactive systems (i.e. Children's Aid Society, Family Court, Police) that are unable to address obstructions for Black fathers at its core and instead argue that resources would be better spent on front-end or preventative initiatives and systems that purpose to support Black fathers and their families.

Framework for Addressing Media Bias

Through the course of the facilitation of this project, fathers identified media portrayals of Black men as inherently negative and stereotypical. The enduring theme that is presented in Canadian news outlets is that fatherless Black children are doomed to a life of poverty and violence (Diebel, 2007, A1). However, academic research has challenged the mainstream assumption that fatherlessness is a direct correlation to violence in racially and economically marginalized communities by offering a critical view of the multiple intersecting factors affecting these families (Coley, 1998; Dua, 1999; Brand, 1999; Bush, 2004; Lawson, 2012). This research has recognized that while fathers play a crucial role in the lives of their children, it takes a critical approach to the view that the conditions leading to youth violence are located exclusively in the fatherless home and that the problem could be solved if more men simply took responsibility for their children (Lawson, 2012). Instead, we need to understand how supports for Black fathers, like the eradication of Black youth violence, must be understood in relationship to poverty, social exclusion, alienation, marginalization, and lack of family well-being.

In light of this, we call for:

- Actively engaging media stakeholders to properly report on the realities of Black fathers through evidence-based data with the goal of providing better information to the public and moving away from alarmist depictions of Black men, communities, and families.

Family and Community Development

Through the course of our conversations with fathers and those with a stake in developing successful Black fathers, a consistent theme emerged in terms of calling for a stronger support system with the purpose of developing healthy relationships, parenting and problem solving skills within the families.

Several fathers identified Ontario Family Court as a barrier because it is perceived to be heavily swayed towards mothers, which keeps good fathers from their children. We must acknowledge the large amount of research that highlights the patriarchal nature of Canadian society and thus Canadian courts. Therefore, greater attention needs to be paid to addressing the patriarchal view that fathers are "breadwinners" and mothers are "nurturers" (Coley, 1998; Dua, 1999; Brand, 1999; Bush, 2004; Lawson, 2012).

As part of the redefining, Pon et. al. (2011), call for an overhaul of the training used for child welfare workers . Fathers identified deep concern with the Children's Aid Society (CAS) especially and how its staff deal with Black families and their children. Pon et. al. show support for this perspective by highlighting that child welfare must be seen in the larger context of racism in Canadian society. They point to the fact that Black children from urban cities in Ontario, like Toronto, make up 65% of children in CAS care but make up only 8% of the population. They highlight that the "anti-oppression" framework used by child welfare workers does little to address the institutional and historical nature of racism in Canada. This is because CAS is charged with policing families rather than supporting them. This is a reactive system which does not support families and thus, does not address issues at their root causes. Greater emphasis needs to be given to supporting Black fathers and their families to raise their children in healthy ways instead of opting for the quick extraction of Black children from their homes.

A large point of conversation for many participants in this research project revolved around the reality that Black men are much more likely to be targeted by police and courts than White men (Rankin et. al., 2002; Rankin and Winsa, 2012). Therefore, we call for an increased emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment in the criminal justice system. In short, incarceration should only be used as a last resort. Hence, resources to augment and enhance jail alternatives, diversion, and aftercare services need to be provided with a focus on providing fathers with the skills to re-establish themselves within their community and their family.

Greater supports also need to be given to the larger community where Black men and their families reside to sustain their ability to be active and supportive members of their families.

Therefore, we call for:

- Extending hours for public libraries within priority areas that are enhanced by increased programming for youth after school, and employing a study of when people use and would like to use the libraries;
- Updating libraries with more open access computers to service particularly racially and economically marginalized neighbourhoods (Freiler, 2004);
- Increasing the number of living wage employment opportunities in underserved communities;
- Developing more local community centres with sufficient staff and program staff (Freiler, 2004) with an eye to providing Black fathers and their families with increased supports;
- Providing affordable childcare in local communities and specifically in racially and economically marginalized neighbourhoods (Freiler, 2004) to break the gendered nature of the division of labour that places the childcare burden largely on women;
- Increasing transportation options in priority areas to facilitate travel to a greater number and type of employment opportunities;
- Encouraging economic development (through community benefit agreements) to complement the current emphasis on social infrastructure improvement in marginalized communities.

Curriculum Review and Alternative Educational Programming

Black fathers and those with a stake in developing successful Black fathers identified a need for a different kind of curriculum in schools around Black identity in order to support the creation of positive and healthy self-images. To this end, we call for:

- A complete overhaul of Ontario's public school curriculum to reflect Black and non-white contributions to the development of Canada and Western civilization in order to give Black fathers and families a sense of attachment to the education their children are receiving;
- The development of more alternative school programs such as the Africentric Alternative School to address the myriad of learning styles and needs that exist amongst youth of African, Caribbean and Black descent;
- The provision of stable funding for alternative educational programs to ensure that youth who have been pushed out of school are provided with mechanisms to achieve their diploma;
- Hiring of social workers to advocate for students/parents in schools;
- Overhauling or repealing the Safe Schools Act to cut off the school-to prison-pipeline evidence-based research found in identified by many fathers in this study as a major obstacle;
- Make school space available before and after classes for community programs to build a greater relationship between school and the community that children and youth reside in so that they can become more family-friendly spaces;

- Ensure families, particularly fathers, are involved in the schooling, engagement and, where necessary, discipline of their children and youth;
- Promote and provide student-centred educational approaches that are engaging and develop life and career skills inside and outside of schools;
- Offer youth opportunities for internship and mentorship in post-secondary schools and other educational spaces at an early age;
- Offer opportunities for youth to learn while they work.

Poverty Reduction and Access to Quality Employment Initiatives

Black fathers identified the lack of economic stability as a key factor in their ability to be successful. This is further evidenced by Picot and Hou (2011) in their 2011 Statistics Canada study, *Seeking Success in Canada and the United States: The Determinants of Labour Market Outcomes Among the Children of Immigrants*, which showed that racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately unemployed and underemployed. Their findings also showed that second-generation Blacks face a wage gap of about 10 to 15 per cent compared with other Canadians. Picot and Hou (2011) further emphasize the stark reality of racial and class inequality that typifies the Canadian labour market. In the last 20 years, we have witnessed the number of racial and ethnic minorities remaining disproportionately low in the labour market. High rates of unemployment, a double digit income gap, and a growing racially segregated labour market continue to make up the norm and occur regardless of educational level (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi, 2005; Al-Waqfi and Jain, 2008) . Therefore, we call for:

- Increased affirmative action programs across public and private sectors that seek to ameliorate the history of discrimination in Canada, as per section 15.2 of the *Charter Of Rights And Freedoms* by prioritizing race in these programs;
- Improved educational and employment supports for parents to improve their economic situation;
- Economic development that complements the current emphasis on social infrastructure development in marginalized communities;
- Strengthened income security and material supports for families;
- Partnership between the City and the Province with a focus on increasing income supports, minimum wage, and programs designed to promote labour market attachment through training, employment, and the economic integration of immigrants (United Way Toronto, 2004).

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The completion of the *Gathering Our Voices* research project identified a wide variety of areas requiring further research. These include:

- A more comprehensive demographic survey of Black fathers in Ontario
- A look into the experiences of Black fathers in the Ontario Family Court system
- Inquiry into the perceptions and practices of Black fatherhood within families
- An exploration of employment and family structure in the Black community in Toronto
- An study of the parenting experiences of Black fathers who are incarcerated
- A consideration of the images of Black fathers used in public school curricula and in various media

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