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THE RICHLAND COUNTY STATE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY REPORT

The North End Community Improvement Collaborative

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NORTH END COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

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Acknowledgements

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Lastly, we would like to dedicate this report to the memory of former NECIC Community Organizer Geneva ‘Kay’ Smith, who passed away on Sunday, December 8, 2019.

Executive Summary

The North End Community Improvement Collaborative (NECIC) is an asset-based community development organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life and economic landscape of Mansfield's North End, which includes census tracts 6, 7, and 16. Governed by an eleven-member board of directors diverse in age, race, gender, and profession, NECIC reflects the demographics of the area that it primarily serves. NECIC began its operations in 2007.

The organization's work is guided by the Community Economic Development Plan, which provides a roadmap for the future development and livability of the neighborhood. NECIC successfully championed the plan, having its goals and target areas supported legislatively in February 2011 by Mansfield City Council and again in March of 2018.

The Richland County State of the African American Community report consists of two parts. Part 1 is a data collection and analysis effort that provides a snapshot of the various aspects of African Americans' lives. It consists of twelve chapters:

1. Introduction	2. Demographics
3. Poverty, Income, and Prosperity	4. Employment
5. Business Ownership	6. Occupations
7. Education	8. The Family Unit
9. Poverty and Children	10. Mass Incarceration
11. Civic Engagement	12. Health

The key findings from Part 1 were the following:

- The greatest number of African Americans reside in a census tract that has the lowest number of housing units and contains two correctional institutions and an airport that doesn't conduct passenger flights.
- African Americans are lagging in every indicator of prosperity: median household income ($29,913), poverty (35.6 percent below poverty), food stamps (32.4 percent of households), home ownership, employment (18.1 percent unemployment rate), and, most concerningly, labor force participation rate (40.5 percent).
- Only 3.8 percent of owner-occupied housing units in Richland County were owned by African Americans.
- The difference in the percentages of the population **out of** the labor force, when sorted by gender, is staggering. Specifically, 67.8 percent of black men, 33.0 percent of black women, 26.1 percent of white men, and 29.3 percent of white women in Richland County are out of the labor force.
- Black men have the lowest rate of educational attainment at both the pre- and post-secondary levels (74.1 percent with a high school diploma or higher; 5.6 percent with a Bachelor's degree or higher).

- Black boys and men are struggling significantly. They have the lowest employment figures and rates of educational attainment compared to black women and white men and women.
- With 84.5 disciplinary incidents in a school year per 1,000 enrolled students, black children were involved in the highest number of disciplinary incidents at school (2016).
- In 2010, more than 1 in 4 black people were in correctional facilities while the figure is roughly 1 in 50 for white people.
- Black households have the lowest rate of marriage (23.18 percent) out of all races.
- Based on the last three general elections, Mansfield Wards 4, 5, and 6 have some of the lowest voter turnouts in Richland County. These wards contain most of the census tracts in which the greatest number of African Americans live. That said, this does ***not formally prove*** that African Americans have low voter turnout, though it does warrant formal investigation of this hypothesis. Moreover, correlation is not causation.
- With a response rate of only 9 percent, African Americans were remarkably unresponsive to health surveys that were sent out for the 2016 Richland County Community Health Assessment.

Part 2 offers a few solutions to the problems discussed in Part 1 and the conclusion and limitations of the report. The solutions are the following five recommendations:

1. Increase the labor force participation rate of African Americans, with a strong focus on men.
2. Help non-white owned businesses without paid employees become profitable enough to hire paid employees.
3. Increase the pre- and post-secondary educational attainment of African Americans, with an urgent focus on men.
4. Increase the percentage of married black households.
5. Increase the response rate of African Americans to health data surveys.

Part 1

1. Introduction

Diversity is a topic that is frequently discussed in the public discourse. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 58 percent of U.S. adults say that having an increasing number of people of different races, ethnic groups, and nationalities in the U.S. makes the country a better place to live in, 9 percent say it makes the country a worse place to live in, and about 31 percent say it doesn't make a difference either way (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Diversity is also a topic of discussion in the world of business. After interviewing 9,000 recruiters and hiring managers from 39 countries, the LinkedIn Talent Solutions team found that 78 percent of interviewees said that diversity is "very/extremely important" to companies, while only 34 percent reported that artificial intelligence – another important topic in society today – is "very/extremely important" to them. With respect to the managers that said that diversity was very or extremely important, the top three reasons were to improve culture (78 percent), improve company performance (62 percent), and better represent customers (49 percent). (Spar, Pletenyuk, Reilly, & Ignatova, 2018)

It would be simplistic to reduce the issue of diversity to company profits, hiring quotas, and people's opinions. The discussion about diversity is also much bigger than merely knowing which companies rank highest in diversity and inclusion indices or which ones hire the greatest number of people of color. In reality, it is a conversation about how several groups of people have been systematically excluded from prosperity, growth, and opportunities in society.

The goal of the Richland County State of the African American Community report is to analyze and report on the plight of African Americans in the county.[1] In order to improve their lives, we first need to know how they're doing in various areas of life compared to, in this case, the white population.

We hope that this report will inform us on the good that we're doing to support African Americans in Richland County and, most importantly, how we can do better.[2]

[1] This report only studied data on single-race individuals.

[2] Many of the sources for the data in this report were found in the 2017 NECIC Community Economic Development Plan but updated to use the most recent version of the data. See (Chinni & West-Torrence, 2017)

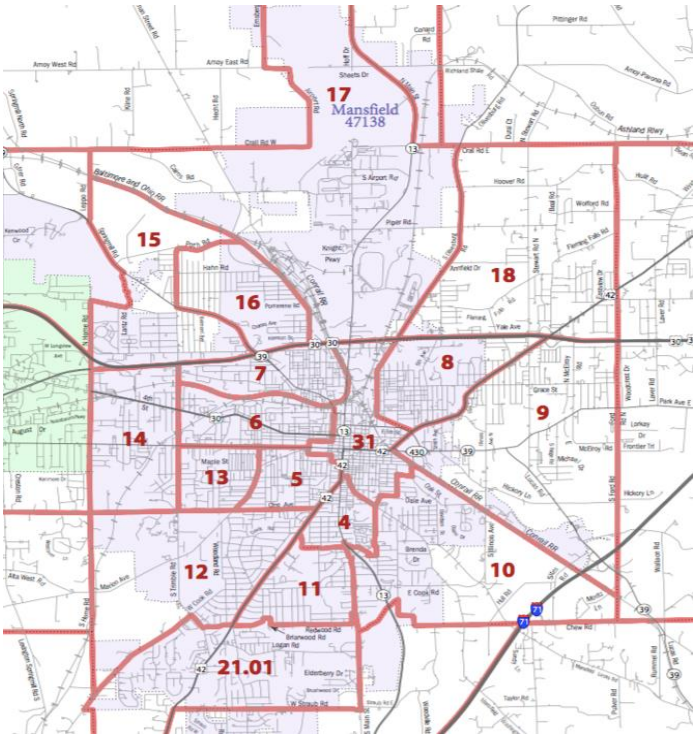
2. Demographics

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in the 5-year period of 2013-2017, African Americans constituted 7.8 percent of Richland County, while 86.8 percent of the county was white. For context, the Bureau reports that the state of Ohio was 12.3 percent African American and 81.9 percent white during the same time period (American Community Survey, 2017).

The African American population of Richland County resides almost exclusively in the city of Mansfield. Of the 9,478 black residents of Richland County, 91.9 percent (=8,714) live in Mansfield. It's no surprise then to see that Mansfield is more demographically diverse than Richland County as a whole (American Community Survey, 2017). Specifically, 72.9 percent of Mansfield residents are white and 18.7 percent are African American while, as mentioned above, 86.8 percent of Richland County is white and 7.8 percent is African American (American Community Survey, 2017).

It's also interesting to see that African Americans in Richland County are notably younger than the white population. The median age of African Americans is 33.6 years compared to 40.5 for white people (American Community Survey, 2017). This age difference is important because in 2018, 19.5 percent of Richland County was 65 years or older, meaning that the size of the county's working age population is at risk of decreasing (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

Figure 1 on the following page shows the census tracts in which African Americans in Richland County live and the median household incomes of the corresponding census tracts.



Richland County, Ohio Census Tracts 2010

Figure 1: African Americans in Richland County (2013-2017)

Census Tract	# of African Americans in Census Tract	% of Census Tract that is African American	Median Household Income per Census Tract
17	2,369	42.8%	$47,857
7	1,209	47.0%	$23,911
6	937	31.4%	$30,714
31	659	33.1%	$19,984
5	564	16.9%	$30,982
12	439	11.5%	$42,218
21.01	419	7.8%	$44,298
10	389	7.3%	$29,167
4	365	14.6%	$27,546
14	360	16.3%	$27,975
13	293	8.4%	$49,556
8	280	10.5%	$31,794
11	257	8.8%	$41,514
24	233	4.1%	$57,456
18	194	5.6%	$43,664
22	140	2.0%	$55,444
19	90	1.5%	$50,301
23	70	1.2%	$58,724
21.02	46	1.0%	$66,157
15	45	2.4%	$31,689
16	35	1.7%	$28,519
27	28	0.6%	$45,982
9	27	0.6%	$37,181
30.01	21	0.4%	$51,509
25	6	0.1%	$48,485
28	3	0.0%	$53,222
20	0	0.0%	$59,645
26	0	0.0%	$38,723
29	0	0.0%	$61,509
30.02	0	0.0%	$54,526

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

People that know Richland County intimately will note that something seems strange in Figure 1. How is it possible that 2,369 African Americans – that is, a quarter of all African Americans in the county – live in the census tract with the least number (183) of housing units? (American Community Survey, 2017) The most likely answer can be found by examining which institutions are located there. First, there's the Industrial Park and the Mansfield Lahm Airport, which take up most of the area. Second, and most important, census tract 17 is home to Mansfield Correctional Institution (MANCI) and Richland Correctional Institute (RICI). This explains why there are only 183 housing units there, with the presence of RICI and MANCI also explaining

why 92.6 percent of residents in census tract 17, or 5,132 individuals, lived in group quarters[3] in the five-year period of 2013-2017 (American Community Survey, 2017). It's still odd, however, that the median household income of the tract is so high.[4]

Figure 2 shows the median household income of each census tract. Census tracts 17, 7, 6, 31, and 5 have the most African American residents and are highlighted in yellow. These census tracts constitute 60.5% of African Americans in Richland County. Moreover, the median household income of the U.S., the county, and the city of Mansfield are highlighted in green. The figure shows us that most African Americans live in census tracts that have a median household income well below the median of the country, county, and city. The interesting case of census tract 17 was, of course, discussed earlier. It also is noteworthy that concentrations of poverty in the central portion of Mansfield (tracts 5, 6, 7, 31) correspond with concentrations of African Americans.

Figure 2: Median Household Income In The Past 12 Months By Census Tract (2013-2017)

Census Tract	Household Income	Census Tract	Household Income	Census Tract	Household Income
21.02	$66,157	13	$49,556	**Mansfield**	$34,219
29	$61,509	**25**	$48,485	**5**	$30,982
20	$59,645	**17**	$47,857	**6**	$30,714
23	$58,724	**27**	$45,982	**8**	$31,794
United States	$57,652	**21.01**	$44,298	**16**	$28,519
24	$57,456	**Richland County**	$44,138	**15**	$31,689
22	$55,444	**18**	$43,664	**4**	$27,546
30.02	$54,526	**12**	$42,218	**14**	$27,975
28	$53,222	**11**	$41,514	**10**	$29,167
30.01	$51,509	**26**	$38,723	**7**	$23,911
19	$50,301	**9**	$37,181	**31**	$19,984

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017).

[3] The Census Bureau states that "*a group quarters is a place where people live or stay, in a group living arrangement, that is owned or managed by an entity or organization providing housing and/or services for the residents… Group quarters include such places as college residence halls, residential treatment centers, skilled nursing facilities, group homes, military barracks, correctional facilities, and workers' dormitories.*" (American Community Survey, 2017)

[4] Please note the difference between the median and the average. The median is the middle value of a population distribution (sorted in ascending order). For example, in 1, 3, 4, 6, 50 the median is 4. For that same distribution though, the ***average*** is 12.8.

3. Poverty, Income, and Prosperity

Household income and poverty rates are key indicators of the wellbeing of residents in the community. However, a recent study by the Brookings Institution found that 44 percent of Americans aged 18 to 64 (=53 million people) are low-wage workers, with a median wage of $10.22 and annual pay of $17,950 (Escobari, Seyal, & Meaney, 2019). The following data shows a few key indicators of prosperity in Richland County.

Figure 3: Key Indicators of Prosperity in Richland County (2013-2017)

Households receiving food stamps	African Americans: **32.4%**
	White: **15.0%**
Households below the poverty level	African Americans: **35.6%**
	White: **13.7%**
Median Household Income	African Americans: **$29,913**
	White: **$45,623**

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

Figure 3 shows that African Americans in Richland County are behind on key indicators of prosperity. They suffer from higher rates of poverty, have significantly lower median household incomes, and receive food stamps at a higher rate relative to their population than their white counterparts. Unfortunately, research shows that people in the lowest wage occupations have a 52 percent chance of staying in that wage bracket (Escobari, Seyal, & Meaney, 2019).

Another indicator of prosperity is household debt.[5] Although only national data on this topic was found, it's still very useful to analyze. A December 2019 study by ValuePenguin found that white individuals had the most credit card debt of all races, with an average of $7,942 per person. This was followed by Asians ($7,660), other races ($7,026), people of Hispanic origin ($6,469), and African Americans ($6,172). The nationwide average was $7,697 (ValuePenguin, 2019). It is important to remember that white Americans are by far the wealthiest and have by far the highest net worth of all races in America and can thus afford more debt. In fact, a report by consulting company McKinsey found that the median white family had ten times the wealth of the median black family (Noel & Pinder, 2019).

Another study by ValuePenguin examined the percentage of first-year income that student loan debt takes up for Americans. For both men (89 percent) and women (111 percent), African Americans dedicated the greatest portion of their first-year incomes to paying off student loan debt (ValuePenguin, 2019). On the topic of housing, Figure 4 shows the racial composition of homeowners and renters in Richland County. The second column shows that of all owner-occupied housing units in Richland County, 94.3 percent of these have white householders while 3.8 percent of them have black householders. The final column shows the racial

[5] A fascinating article in *The Atlantic* studied the disparity of debt burdens and debt collection between white and black communities, finding that debt-buyer lawsuits were far more numerous in the latter than in the former. The focus was on Jennings, a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri, but the lessons could apply to other communities as well (Kiel & Waldman, 2015).

composition of the entire county that was stated earlier; 86.8 percent of Richland County is white and 7.8 percent is black.

Figure 4: Owner- and Renter-Occupied Housing Units By Race (2013-2017)

Race	Percent owner-occupied housing units	Percent renter-occupied housing units	Percent of Total Population
White	94.3%	85.1%	86.8%
Black	3.8%	10.8%	7.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Asian	0.6%	0.3%	0.8%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other race	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Two or more races	1.1%	3.5%	4.0%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**99.9%***

**Does not add up to 100% due to rounding. Source:* (American Community Survey, 2017)

We would expect the racial composition of homeowners and renters to mirror the racial composition of the entire county. That is, we would expect close to 86.8 percent of owner-occupied housing units to have white householders and close to 7.8 percent of them to have black householders. However, we see that there are disproportionately ***fewer*** black householders that own their homes and disproportionately more that rent. Similarly, we see that there are disproportionately ***more*** white householders that own their homes and fewer that rent. To understand why this is so important, consider the report by Habitat for Humanity that summarizes some of the research about the benefits of homeownership:

- Children of homeowners are significantly more likely to stay in school until age 17 than those of renters, especially in low-income households.
- An affordable home can prevent stunted growth and unnecessary hospitalizations.
- Compared to children in renting families, children in homeowning families have fewer behavioral problems, higher educational attainment, and greater future earnings, all else being equal.
- Children of homeowners are twice as likely to acquire some post-secondary education.
- The graduation rate for children of homeowners is 19 percent higher than that of children of renters.
- Homeownership status significantly reduced a household's incidence of crime. (Habitat for Humanity, 2016)

Studies also find a correlation between homeownership and crime. Generally, states with higher homeownership rates have lower crime rates, although it remains a chicken-or-the-egg question. That is, do people buy homes in areas that already have low crime rates or does the

crime rate decrease after people buy homes there? It seems like that's an issue more complex than simply homeownership resulting in lower crime (Barrington, 2014). Furthermore, Rohe and Lindblad (2013) find that high levels of homeownership lead to social benefits like residents who are more willing to intervene in community problems and more likely to join Parent-Teacher Associations and neighborhood watch groups (Rohe & Lindblad, 2013).

Despite the difficulty of determining the nature of the relationship between homeownership and crime, Ni and Decker (2009) concluded that a 1 percent increase in homeownership would reduce the annual cost of property crimes to victims by $222.9 million and the annual cost of violent crimes to victims by $959.8 million in America (Ni & Decker, 2009, p. 24).

However, the greatest benefit of homeownership is the fact that it is, unquestionably, the key to building (intergenerational) wealth. The 2018 *State of The Nation's Housing* report found that median net wealth of homeowner households was a staggering 46 times greater than that of renter households. Moreover, median net wealth of white homeowners was roughly two and a half times greater than that of black and Hispanic owners (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2018). Given their low homeownership rate in Richland County, African Americans lack a prosperous avenue to building wealth and, more importantly, passing this wealth on to their children.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines households that spend more than half their incomes on housing as severely cost-burdened, while those that spend 30-50 percent of their incomes on housing are moderately cost-burdened (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019)**.** The 2019 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps report found that, nationally, nearly 1 in 4 black households are severely cost-burdened (Givens, Gennuso, Jovaag, Willems Van Dijk, & Johnson, 2019, p. 2). In Ohio, 43.2 percent of renters are either moderately burdened (20.2 percent) or severely burdened (23 percent). (Joint Center For Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2017)

Figure 5: Cost-burdens for renter households in Ohio (2016)

Race	% of Moderately Cost-Burdened Households	% of Severely Cost-Burdened Households	Total
White	19.4%	19.9%	39.3%
Black	22.0%	29.9%	51.9%
Hispanic	22.2%	26.2%	48.4%
Asian/Other	20.9%	30.6%	51.5%

Source: (Joint Center For Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2017)

Figure 5 shows the data of cost-burdened renters in Ohio categorized by race. Data could not be found for homeowners, although given that only 3.8% of owner-occupied housing units have black households it might be better to look at the data for renters. With more than 1 in 2 black households in Ohio either moderately- or severely cost-burdened, the figure shows us that they are, unfortunately, the most cost-burdened race in the state. With so many African Americans

spending a disproportionate amount of their incomes on the basic necessity of housing, how can they ever accumulate long-term wealth?

4. Employment

There are few issues in the world of social science and politics that are more talked about than employment. That said, some argue that politicians tend to overuse and inflate the importance of the unemployment rate. For example, while in October 2019 the U.S. unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, the lowest it has been in 50 years, a group of researchers found that the quality of American jobs is getting worse. In 1990, there were 94 high-paying jobs for every 100 low-paying jobs. In 2019, when the report was published, there were 80 high-paying jobs for every 100 low-paying jobs in America (Ivanova, 2019). Nevertheless, employment data remains incredibly useful in gauging the health of a community, its residents, and the economy.

Figure 6: Employment in Richland County (2013-2017)

Labor Force Participation rate	African Americans: **40.5%**
	White: **57.6%**
Unemployment Rate (For those 16 to 64 years of age)	African Americans: **18.1%**
	White: **6.7%**
Unemployment Rate (For those 16 to 64 years of age)	African American Men: **22.0%** African American Women: **16.8%**
	White Men: **7.7%** White Women: **6.0%**
% of Population 16 to 64 years of age that is <u>not in the labor force</u>	African American Men: **67.8%** African American Women: **33.0%**
	White Men: **26.1%** White Women: **29.3%**

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

With a significantly lower labor force participation rate and an unemployment rate almost three times higher than their white counterparts, Figure 6 shows that black residents in Richland County are also behind on key employment figures. However, there are particularly remarkable insights once we categorize the data by gender. Specifically, the data shows us that the state of black men in the workforce in Richland County is very grim. They have an

unemployment rate more than three times higher than that of white women, a little higher than that of black women, and almost three times higher than that of white men.

The data point that signals a huge red flag, however, is the percentage of black men **not** in the labor force. A staggering 67.8 percent of black men are not in the labor force, a figure which is more than two times higher than that of black women, more than 2.5 times higher than that of white men, and more than two times higher than that of white women. However, people often confuse the concept of being out of the labor force (or non-working) with being unemployed. What does it mean to be one or the other? That is the topic of the next segment.

Unemployed or out of the labor force?

To understand the difference between unemployed and non-working, the concept of the unemployment rate has to be explored in detail. The unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed people by the number of unemployed ***and*** employed people[6], as shown below:

$$Unemployment\ rate = \frac{Unemployed}{Employed + Unemployed} * 100\%$$

We all understand what employed people are, so the key here is to understand what constitutes unemployed people. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) states that "*people are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work*" (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

Arguably the most important phrase from that definition – a crucial part that is often overlooked when discussing employment data – is that of "*actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks.*" While some may disagree on the specific time frame for this measurement and express concerns about how to reliably track this for hundreds of millions of people, it is important to understand that people are only counted as unemployed if they are actively looking for work and are able to perform this work.[7] The Bureau of Labor Statistics says that actively looking for work includes, but is not limited to, the following:

"*Contacting:*

- *An employer directly or having a job interview*
- *A public or private employment agency*
- *Friends or relatives*
- *A school or university employment center*

- *Submitting resumes or filling out applications*
- *Placing or answering job advertisements*

[6] Those on active duty in the Armed Forces and people living in institutions – like a correctional institution or a residential nursing or mental health care facility – are excluded from all of these calculations.

[7] With respect to being able to perform the work, this refers to people with disabilities that prevent them from working.

- *Checking union or professional registers*
- *Some other means of active job search.*"

Therefore, if a person without a job doesn't do any of the above activities, is not of working age (younger than 16 or older than 64), and/or is physically unable to work, this person is considered <u>not</u> in the labor force. Examples of people that are not in the labor force include young students (pre- high school), retired individuals, people with a severe disability that prevents them from being able to do any type of work, stay-at-home parents, those that simply do not want a job, and more (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). This is a key reason why unemployment statistics can be very deceptive. The unemployment rate is decreased if, for one reason or the other, a portion of the population drops out of the labor force altogether.[8]

Another important segment of those that are not in the labor force is what the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls discouraged workers. These workers "*report they are not currently looking for work for one of the following types of reasons*:

- *They believe no job is available to them in their line of work or area.*
- *They had previously been unable to find work.*
- *They lack the necessary schooling, training, skills, or experience.*
- *Employers think they are too young or too old, or,*
- *They face some other type of discrimination."* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015)

The absence of so many African Americans (especially men) from the labor force is also a missed opportunity for businesses in Richland County. Research by consulting firm McKinsey found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 30 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015). This financial advantage persisted when they repeated the study in 2018 (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, & Yee, 2018). The key question that remains, then, is why? Why are almost 7 in 10 black men aged 16-64 in Richland County not in the labor force and almost 1 in 4 black men in the same age range unemployed? Why is the unemployment rate for black individuals in the county almost three times higher than that of white individuals?

Admittedly, these findings closely follow national trends on African Americans in the labor force. Nationally, the black labor force participation rate has been declining since its peak in 2000, with projections showing that this decline will continue (for both genders) until at least 2026. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also reports that the labor force participation rate for black men in the U.S. has historically been the lowest among all racial and ethnic groups (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

[8] Going back to the equation for the unemployment rate, if people go from being unemployed to exiting the labor force altogether, both the numerator and the denominator decrease. However, the addition of the "employed" in the denominator will always make it larger than the numerator and, as a result, decrease the final number.

Recommendation 1: Increase the labor force participation rate of African Americans, with a strong focus on men.

An aging workforce

The Pew Research Center estimates that 10,000 baby boomers in the U.S. will retire every day from January 1, 2011 till January 1, 2030 (Cohn & Taylor, 2010). The problem is that this demographic shift is happening just as the U.S. birth rate reached a 30-year low, though declining birth rates seems to be a recurring theme in developed nations all over the world (Chappell, 2018). In 2018, 19.5 percent of Richland County was older than 65 (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

Therefore, as more people retire and fewer people are born to eventually replace those exiting the workforce, increasing the size of the labor force should be a key priority for government policy. In fact, this point is echoed in a 2014 report on former U.S. President Barack Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* program. In the *My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report to the President*, increasing the overall labor force participation rate "*by enabling our young people, including young men of color, to join the workforce with needed preparation and skills is one way to mitigate the profound demographic challenges that we face and grow the economy's potential*" (Johnson & Shelton, 2014, p. 6). Moreover, a shrinking labor force equates to a shrinking tax base, meaning that tax revenue to pay for public services will decrease.

5. Business Ownership

Entrepreneurship is often lauded as the engine of economic growth. As a result, it's important to examine the state of entrepreneurship and self-employment in Richland County. Unfortunately, up-to-date statistics on the number of non-white owned businesses is hard to find. The most recent data on this topic comes from the 2012 Survey of Business Owners, conducted by the U.S Census Bureau, and is reported in the figure below.

Figure 7: Business Ownership by Race in Richland County (2012)

Race (total population in 2012)	Number of firms with paid employees	Number of firms without paid employees
White (108,498)	1,567	6,034
Black or African American (11,078)	9	272
American Indian and Alaskan Native (352)	0	46
Asian (711*)	79	141
Asian Indian (?)	35	11
Korean (?)	1	85
Vietnamese (?)	6	28
Other Asian	21	13

* This is the total of Asian, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Other Asian.
Source: (American Community Survey, 2012).

In Richland County only Korean, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Vietnamese business owners have less firms with paid employees than African Americans. The most notable finding from this figure is that African Americans had the second highest number of firms *without* paid employees.[9] In fact, non-white) businesses in general seem to be struggling as there is less than 1 non-white firm with paid employees for every 10 white-owned firms of the same type (151/1,567). That said, it would be more informative if we knew how long these businesses have existed and how long they have not had paid employees. It would be more understandable if a majority of these businesses are younger than a year because then they were probably still working on becoming financially viable.

Recommendation 2: Help non-white owned businesses without paid employees become profitable enough to hire paid employees.

The Underground Economy

Although it goes by many different names – the black market, the shadow economy, the informal economy/sector, the grey economy – most people have a very narrow understanding of the underground economy. The average person would tell you that it (only) consists of illegal activities like prostitution, the sale and manufacture of illegal drugs or firearms, theft and sale of scrap material like copper from vacant properties, and so on. However, the underground economy is ***any*** part of a country's economic activity (both legal and illegal) that is unrecorded and untaxed.

Hence, it's not the nature of the activity that is the issue, it's the fact that it's not on the books that is the real problem. Some of the most common examples of underground economy activities are uncredentialed, uninsured, and/or unlicensed residents who are skilled in a trade and provide their services off the books. Think of carpenters, handymen, barbers, hairstylists, skilled cooks that prepare meals in their homes for sale to individuals or private parties and events, and others who are excellent in their craft but have not officially registered as a business. The following excerpt from the 2017 North End Community Economic Development Plan sums it up well:

> "In some cases, a person learned a skill or trade informally through a family member or friend, in other cases an individual learned a skill or trade in prison and faces barriers to employment upon release, in still other cases, a person has the formal training required but, for whatever reason, they have never taken the next step to legitimize themselves as a contractor or a properly structured business. Whatever the case may be, these individuals represent an untapped cache of economic opportunity." *(Chinni & West-Torrence, 2017, p. 66)*

Nevertheless, this leaves us with more questions than answers. To what degree can the low rate of business ownership for people of color (see Figure 7) be explained by people choosing

[9] It must be noted that survey data is subject to the willingness of business owners to respond to them and the results in Figure 7 may, therefore, be underreported. It can be difficult to get high response rates for (both paper and emailed) surveys.

to work off the books? Who are the people that do this unlicensed work? Are they black, white, young, old, male, female? And, most importantly, how large is the underground economy in Richland County? Regarding the last question, it's almost impossible to calculate this accurately, although one study estimated the U.S. underground economy to be as large as $2 trillion (Koba, 2013). In a 2012 interview for the *Freakonomics Radio* podcast, Columbia University sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh, author of the books *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets* and *Off The Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*, explained why it's almost impossible to measure the size of this sector of the economy:

> "YOU HAVE TO BE PRETTY CREATIVE IF YOU'RE GOING TO TRY TO MEASURE THE SHADOW ECONOMY. MANY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT WANT TO SEE WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE SHADOW ECONOMY IS IN THE COUNTRY OVERALL, THEY WANT BIG ESTIMATES, THEY'LL OFTEN DO SURVEYS. SO THEY MIGHT ASK PEOPLE VERY DIRECTLY, "HEY, HOW MUCH DID YOU WORK ILLEGALLY IN THE U.S.?" WELL THERE'S A PROBLEM — PEOPLE MIGHT NOT BE TELLING THE TRUTH.
>
> OTHER ECONOMISTS MIGHT SAY, YOU KNOW, TO AVOID THE TRUTH-TELLING ISSUE WE'RE JUST GOING TO TAKE CAREFUL ESTIMATES. AND SO THEY CONSTRUCT VERY ELABORATE MODELS. SOCIOLOGISTS LIKE ME WHO DON'T TRUST PEOPLE AT ALL AND BELIEVE THAT WE GENERALLY DON'T TELL THE TRUTH AT ALL HAVE TO GO AND SEE SOMEONE PERFORM SOMETHING ILLEGALLY. SO THAT MEANS WE'LL GO AND WATCH THEM. AND IN MY CASE I'LL SPEND YEARS WATCHING THEM. THE PROBLEM IS I MIGHT ONLY END UP WATCHING TWO DOZEN PEOPLE. IT'S HARD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE COUNTRY IS DOING AS A WHOLE BY WATCHING TWO DOZEN PEOPLE, LET ALONE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. SO IT'S A PROBLEM. AND AS CREATIVE AS WE WANT TO BE IN TRYING TO MEASURE IT, WE OFTEN FALL SHORT." *(Dubner, 2012)*

What are the barriers that prevent or discourage people from legitimizing their businesses? Are these financial, regulatory, educational, emotional, or cultural in nature? Or are too many people simply trying to evade taxes?[10] Whatever the case, the underground economy is a huge missed economic opportunity, one that we can no longer afford to ignore.

6. Occupations

After looking at employment from a macroeconomic perspective, it is also useful to look at it from a microeconomic one. Specifically, we need to know which industries African Americans work in. While the available data from the Census Bureau isn't on an extremely granular level, it still allows us to address this to some degree. Figure 8 shows that black men predominantly work in service occupations (37.7 percent) and production, transportation, and material moving occupations (26.7 percent), while black women predominantly work in sales and office occupations (40.7 percent) and service occupations (29.8 percent).[11] In comparison, white men work mostly in production, transportation, and material moving (30.7 percent) and

[10] For example, for people that have to pay child support, undocumented income is a way to circumvent the system.

[11] The data in Figure 8 for African Americans seem so low due to the low labor force participation rate and high unemployment rate of this population (see Figure 6).

management, business science, and arts (24.4 percent). Interestingly, white women predominantly work in management, business, science, and arts (32.7 percent) and sales and office (31.2 percent).

Figure 8: Employment per occupation, 16 years and over, in Richland County (2013-2017)

Occupation	Black Male (%)	Black Female (%)	White Male (%)	White Female (%)
Management, business, science, and arts	235 (18.8%)	246 (18.3%)	5,819 (24.4%)	7,263 (32.7%)
Service	471 (37.7%)	399 (29.8%)	3,251 (13.6%)	5,303 (23.9%)
Sales and office	164 (13.1%)	546 (40.7%)	3,723 (15.6%)	6,931 (31.2%)
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	45 (3.6%)	0 (0%)	3,764 (15.8%)	155 (0.7%)
Production, transportation, and material moving	333 (26.7%)	150 (11.2%)	7,337 (30.7%)	2,543 (11.5%)
Total	**1,248**	**1,341**	**23,894**	**22,195**

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017).

It's also useful to look at the median earnings per industry. Unfortunately, the Census Bureau is somewhat inconsistent in its categorization of industries and occupations. For example, when reporting employment figures it puts "service" in one category, but when reporting median earnings the categories are "professional, scientific, and technical services", "educational services", "accommodation and food services", and "administrative and support and waste management services." As a result, comparing Figures 8 and 9 is not an entirely perfect exercise but is still useful in giving us a general idea of the median earnings of the occupations stated in Figure 8.

Figure 9: Median Earnings Per Industry, Richland County (2013-2017)

Industry	Median Earnings
Management of companies and enterprises	$14,400
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	$13,184
Finance & Insurance	$34,609
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	$27,550
Accommodation & Food Services	$11,288
Educational services	$35,331
Professional, scientific, and technical services	$36,602
Administrative and support and waste management services	$22,632
Health care and social assistance	$30,638
Other services, except public administration	$20,243
Public administration	$44,452

Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	$27,361
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	$73,750
Construction	$40,051
Transportation & Warehousing	$44,431

7. Education

We live in a time of remarkable social change. In its 2017 report, the multinational accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated that by the year 2030, 38 percent of jobs will be automated (Berriman, 2017, p. 30). This is likely a result of a phenomenon that Klaus Schwab, Chairman of the World Economic Forum, calls *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*. A report by Georgetown University's Center on Education and Workforce estimates that by 2020, 65 percent of jobs in the nation (and 64 percent of jobs in Ohio) will require postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013, p. 3). Given this data, what is the status of educational achievement of African Americans in Richland County? Figures 10 and 11 answer this question.

Figure 10: Educational Attainment in Richland County (2013-2017)

% of population with a high school diploma or higher	African Americans: **78.5%** African American Men: **74.1%** African American Women: **86.0%**
	White: **88.0%** White Men: **86.9%** White Women: **89.1%**
% of population with a Bachelor's degree or higher	African Americans: **7.2%** African American Men: **5.6%** African American Women: **9.8%**
	White: **17.8%** White Men: **16.3%** White Women: **19.2%**

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

Figure 11: School Enrollment (age 3 and older) in Richland County (2013-2017)

Status	African Americans	White
Enrolled in school	2,365 (26%)	22,138 (22%)
Not enrolled in school	6,728 (74%)	80,058 (78%)
Total	**9,093**[12]	**102,196**
Enrolled in nursery school, preschool	132 (1.5%)	1,376 (1.3%)
Enrolled in kindergarten	80 (0.9%)	1,128 (1.1%)
Enrolled in grade 1	128 (1.4%)	1,039 (1.0%)
Enrolled in grade 2	91 (1.0%)	1,135 (1.1%)
Enrolled in grade 3	104 (1.1%)	1,160 (1.1%)
Enrolled in grade 4	60 (0.7%)	1,222 (1.2%)
Enrolled in grade 5	182 (2.0%)	1,384 (1.4%)
Enrolled in grade 6	61 (0.7%)	1,742 (1.7%)
Enrolled in grade 7	106 (1.2%)	1,045 (1.0%)
Enrolled in grade 8	143 (1.6%)	1,484 (1.5%)
Enrolled in grade 9	142 (1.6%)	1,418 (1.4%)
Enrolled in grade 10	83 (0.9%)	1,237 (1.2%)
Enrolled in grade 11	115 (1.3%)	1,186 (1.2%)
Enrolled in grade 12	354 (3.9%)	1,241 (1.2%)
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	547 (6.0%)	3,718 (3.6%)
Graduate or professional school	37 (0.4%)	623 (0.6%)

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

In Figure 10 we see that not only are African Americans not obtaining educational credentials at the same rate as their white counterparts, but that black men are also struggling the most. They have the lowest rates of educational attainment at both the pre- and post-secondary education levels, which means that they are most vulnerable to and unprepared for the dramatic changes in the labor market that will happen in the near future.[13] A lack of education also impacts people's future earning capacity. Below are the median earnings in Richland County, sorted by educational attainment (American Community Survey, 2017). As we'll see in the following section though, the implications of these findings go beyond just income, education, and the labor market.

[12] The reader will note that it was earlier stated that there are 9,478 African Americans in Richland County, while in this table the number is 9,093. This is because the numbers in this table exclude African Americans under the age of 3.

[13] For those that have a subscription to the publication, there is an extremely insightful article in *The Economist* called *Manhood: Men Adrift* that discusses how poorly educated men in rich countries "have not adapted well to trade, technology, or feminism."

- **Less than high school graduate:** $21,202
- **High school graduate (includes equivalency):** $27,151
- **Some college or associate's degree:** $32,142
- **Bachelor's degree:** $41,638
- **Graduate or professional degree:** $58,980

Recommendation 3: Increase the pre- and post-secondary educational attainment of African Americans, with an urgent focus on men.

8. The Family Unit

The family unit is a key factor in determining the economic health of a community. Marriage researchers Drs. Maggie Gallagher and Linda J. Waite (2000) state that "*when it comes to building wealth or avoiding poverty, a stable marriage may be your most important asset.*" (Gallagher & Waite, 2000, p. 123) Marriage is often seen as an antidote to poverty because two wage earners combining their pay are far less likely to fall below the poverty line (Chinni & West-Torrence, 2017, p. 14). In fact, Dixon (2009) states that the primary way in which African Americans achieve middle-class status is through marriage rather than education. Unfortunately, however, research shows that they are the least likely to marry and stay married and when they do marry, they do so later and spend less time married than white Americans (Dixon, 2009).

In their 2015 policy brief, Sawhill and Venator (2015) of The Brookings Institution Center on Children and Families explored the causes of the decline in marriage rates of the last half century. They argued that the decline in the number of "marriageable men" – using renowned sociologist William Julius Wilson's definition to describe the ratio of employed men to all women of the same age[14] – was a possible explanation for the fall in marriage rates in America.

When they looked at marriageable men through the lens of education, they found that "women are now more educated than men, meaning that they will necessarily face a shortage of marriage partners with the same level of education. What we are likely to see in the future, then, is either women marrying "down" educationally, or not marrying at all" (Sawhill & Venator, 2015, pp. 4-5). Sawhill and Venator also looked at the marriage market amongst African Americans and found that there was a shortage of men on almost all measures of marriageability. They claimed that this shortage was likely due to "high rates of incarceration and early death among black men, and a growing education gap in favor of women among both races" while they found "no shortage of marriageable men among less-educated whites based on various definitions of "marriageability"" (Sawhill & Venator, 2015, p. 6).

[14] The authors did note that Wilson's original definition of marriageable, his claim that all women are equally marriageable, and his assumption that the term only applies to men were outdated and didn't accurately reflect today's cultural realities. Women's earnings are increasingly important in family finances (Lahart & Laughlin, 2019) and the rising rate of single-motherhood significantly affects the marriageability of women.

They also noted that this is particularly problematic for black women because although rates of interracial marriage have increased, people still generally marry within their own race (Sawhill & Venator, 2015, p. 4). Given the struggles that black men are experiencing, black women face an increasingly challenging world of courtship. Moreover, Greenwood and colleagues (2014) found that better-educated people are more likely to marry other better-educated people and less-educated people more likely to marry other less-educated people.[15] This increases income inequality because, generally speaking, the more education you have the more money you earn (Greenwood, Guner, Kocharkov, & Santos, 2013).

These findings paint a bleak picture for the African American population in Richland County. The jobs of the future will increasingly demand post-secondary educational credentials, but black men have low rates of high-school diploma and Bachelor's degree attainment, while their labor force participation rate also remains extremely low. This makes them less "marriageable" and, combined with the fact that people generally marry within their race and economic class, could have negative effects on the marriage rates, social mobility, and long-term wealth prospects of African Americans in Richland County. Figure 12 shows that African Americans have the lowest rate of married households in Richland County and the second highest rate of single female households. Most concerningly, African Americans also have rates of one person and single male and female households well above the county average.

Figure 12: Percentage of households of each race per category in Richland County

Race	Single Male	Single Female	One Person	Married
White	3.69%	10.86%	30.93%	49.81%
Asian	[Unknown]	6.30%	18.90%	72.44%
Black	6.37%	29.55%	32.11%	23.18%
Mixed Race	7.57%	34.80%	27.23%	25.79%
Hispanic	6.82%	26.13%	37.50%	29.55%
All households in Richland County	3.90%	12.60%	31.00%	47.60%

Source: (Statistical Atlas, 2019)

- **Single Male:** male householder, no wife present, with other family members in the household
- **Single Female:** female householder, no husband present, with other family members in the household
- **One Person:** householder living alone
- **Family:** a group of two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together

[15] This is formally known as "assortative mating" (Morin, 2014).

- **Married:** a husband and wife that are part of the same household

What is the effect of these socioeconomic changes on children? Writing for *The New York Times*, Annie Lowrey states that "*one in eight children with two married parents lives below the poverty line; five in ten living with a single mother do*" (Lowrey, 2014). Children growing up in single parent households are also more likely to develop behavioral issues and health problems. Faced with this data it would seem that a marriage is the magic bullet that can end poverty, but there are other factors that make this an impractical solution. Some women living in poverty choose not to get married to avoid further upsetting their financial situation by introducing another poverty level income, while others want to avoid the penalizing taxes married women can face if they return to work after having children (Chinni & West-Torrence, 2017, p. 14). Whatever the case, there is a multitude of reasons affecting people's decision to marry or forego marriage.

Recommendation 4: Increase the percentage of married black households.

Factors affecting the marriage rate

Research shows that many of the factors that affect people's likelihood of getting married are not particularly surprising. The first one, and arguably the most important, is income. In a 2012 report for the Brookings Institution, Greenstone and Looney (2012) argue that "rather than focusing on changing values, a more effective approach to addressing both poverty and marriage may be to improve economic opportunities for all Americans, particularly for low-skilled, less-educated workers." (Greenstone & Looney, 2012)

In his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*, American sociologist William Julius Wilson argued that the decline in marriage and rise in single parenthood among urban blacks was a direct result of the worsening economic statuses of young black men. In his other book, *When Work Disappears*, Johnson notes that the key factors that contributed to the declining employment status of young black men were globalization, the restructuring of the global economy (due to technology), and the disappearance of (mostly manual labor) jobs that didn't require post-secondary education. Further research emphasizes how much the unstable, under-, and unemployment of black men affects the likelihood of getting married and the stability of existing marriages. For example, participants in Chadiha's study (1992) spoke about "not wanting to marry broke" and postponing marriage until they were "financially settled" (Chadiha, 1992).

Greenstone and Looney also found that in the last forty years, low- and middle-income men experienced the sharpest decline in their chance of being married. Coincidentally, these men also experienced the biggest falls in real earnings over time. If black men are unable to provide for their families or financially contribute to their families' fortunes, they will likely feel inadequate, reluctant to marry, and unappealing as marriage prospects. The two researchers describe the situation perfectly in the following excerpt:

"INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING WOULD HELP PUT AMERICANS BACK TO WORK IN WELL-PAYING JOBS, PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY THAT CAN LEAD TO MORE AND BETTER MARRIAGES—AND BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CHILDREN OF THOSE MARRIAGES… A STRONG ECONOMY IS A SOUND FOUNDATION FOR A STRONG SOCIAL FABRIC." (Greenstone & Looney, 2012)

The second factor is imbalanced sex ratios. According to Census data, there are 103.1 men per 100 women in Richland County. However, there is a surprising sex imbalance for African Americans: 162.4 men per 100 women (5,867 men and 3,611 women). This is interesting because, given the tendency for people to marry within their race, this would seem to suggest that black women have **more** choice in marriage partners than black men do, though we would need to see the age distributions of both black men and women to speak more conclusively.

Women are also now more empowered when making the decision to get married or not. They can be financially independent without the support of men, are able to pursue careers outside the home rather than being restricted to being a housewife, have increased access to contraception to control when/if to have children, and can simply be more selective when choosing marriage partners.

Cultural and social norms influence marriage rates for African Americans as well, especially through the role that extended family plays in their lives. Dixon (2009) cites research that found that marriage might not be as important to African Americans because their extended family networks, which play an incredibly significant role in their lives, already protect them from economic and demographic challenges and provide the type of support that a spouse would (Dixon, 2009). Gender norms also play a role in marriage. Haynes (2000) found that black men and women still expect the opposite sex to perform traditional gender-specific roles and that while they ***claim*** to want egalitarian marriages, their ideas seem to actually describe traditional marriages in which the man is the provider and the woman the caretaker. In Haynes' study, middle-class black women expressed that they strongly valued both careers and family and stated that it would harm their self-esteem if men were not able to be providers (Haynes, 2000). Given the dire employment prospects of black men, this is another important factor in explaining the marriage rates of African Americans.

Another important factor affecting marriage rates of African Americans is the perceptions of black women. Studies show that they marry later than white women and are less likely to ever marry (Dixon, 2009). Sassler and Schoen (1999) also found that single black women are substantially more likely than single white women to believe that their lives would be better if they were married (Sassler & Schoen, 1999). Contrary to the findings from Haynes's study, King (1999) found that well-educated, young black women believed that a successful career was ***more*** important than a successful marriage. He also found that the variables that best predicted the probability of marriage were years of education, current marital status, age, religion, and whether the person was raised by both a man and a woman (King, 1999).

Interestingly, beliefs about the significance of marriage and expectations of the prerequisites of it also play a part in people's willingness to get married. For example, behavior that might have

been acceptable in a relationship becomes completely unacceptable when married. Edin and Reed (2005), citing findings from the *Time, Love, and Cash in Couples with Children* study (TLC3), state that both poor and affluent Americans believe that marriage "would profoundly transform the meaning of their relationship, in no small part because they believe that marriage carries with it much higher expectations about relationship quality and financial stability than does co-habitation." (Edin & Reed, 2005, p. 121)

Citing research from a study of single mothers in Philadelphia, these mothers believed that marriage was only for couples that could afford a "white picket fence" lifestyle that includes a decent home that they owned, a car, some savings, and enough to pay for a wedding. Similarly, in a study of low-income single mothers in Chicago, Illinois; Camden, New Jersey; and Charleston, South Carolina, most said that a poor but happy marriage "has virtually no chance of survival" and that the stress of living paycheck-to-paycheck would put tremendous strain on a marriage. Given the poor economic conditions of African Americans in Richland County, perhaps Edin and Reed are correct when they say that "the poor may marry at a lower rate simply because they are not able to meet this higher marital standard." (Edin & Reed, 2005, pp. 121-122)

Unsurprisingly, various quantitative studies have found that low relationship quality is a significant barrier to marriage. Factors contributing to this low quality include crime, repeated instances of domestic violence, drugs, alcohol, abuse, and infidelity. In fact, Carlson and co. (2004) showed that higher relationship quality would boost marriage rates more than a significant increase in the man's earnings would (Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2004).

Lastly, a fear of divorce also keeps some people from getting married. From the aforementioned study of low-income single mothers in Chicago, Camden, and Charleston, the participants stated that they believed that marriage is sacred and that divorce is an insult to the institution of marriage (Edin, 2000). In 53 percent of the unmarried couples from the TLC3 study, one or both partners said that the fear of divorce kept them from getting married (Edin & Reed, 2005, p. 125).

Personal Insights

To understand the determinants of marriage from a more qualitative perspective, we asked a group of unmarried black women in Richland County about their views on marriage, the factors that were preventing them from getting married or those causing them to not want to get married, and what they considered to be important criteria for a man to be a good marriage prospect. While these insights are in no way intended to be scientific, they are useful qualitative supplements to the data. To respect their privacy, the participants' identities will remain anonymous.

Overall, each respondent indicated that they deeply respected the institution of marriage. For instance, one respondent, an unmarried black woman in her late twenties, viewed marriage in a very positive light and said that she does want to get married someday. "I view marriage as a partnership and I want to have a partner to share the household with, to share expenses with,

and to share my life with. I want the stability of a marriage." However, she understood and deeply respected the legal implications of marriage and considered that to be an important consideration when looking for a potential partner: "Do I want to tie myself legally with you?"

She also mentioned that while she does want to have more children – she currently has one son – she would only consider having them if she were married. She stated that it would be safer and better for the child(ren) to be born into a married household, which aligns with research that shows that children born to and raised by two biological parents are better off than those who are not (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Another respondent, a divorced black woman, said that she wanted to get married when she was younger because she considered it important to have a strong male black presence in the home for her sons. However, after being in an abusive marriage, she realized the "double damage" she was doing to her children by staying in it. "I was harming my sons because they were witnessing their father abusing me and I was harming my daughter because she got this negative view of how women should be treated by men." Unsurprisingly, then, she said that she would rather be "rightly single than wrongly coupled" and that "you can be a phenomenal mom without being a wife."

Most interestingly though, the financial struggles of becoming a single mother with multiple children did not faze her. "I would rather take the chance on poverty and do it myself than stay in a damaging marriage." Respondent 3, an unmarried black woman in her mid-twenties, added to this by saying that she did not expect to "marry into struggle." She said that she would rather struggle by herself than marry someone who is struggling financially and amplify that struggle.

One of the most fascinating insights that the respondents, who were all single mothers with at least one son at the time of the interview, shared was about the desire to specifically marry a black man[16] because of their sons. To be clear, none of them were explicitly against interracial marriage or expressed any moral objections to marrying outside of their race. Instead, their reasons for this preference were entirely because of the love for their children, specifically their sons. "I want my son to learn to be a strong black man from a strong black man," said one respondent. She continued: "There are certain life lessons that only black men can teach black boys", a statement that drew unanimous agreement from the other respondents.

Such views are likely the result of today's tense racial and sociopolitical landscape in which mothers of black boys have to be agonizingly worried about the safety of their sons – "you don't know the nights that I stay awake crying because I'm worried sick about my son's safety" – and, given how much it happens nationally, worry about police officers unfairly targeting their sons. That said, the respondents agreed that maybe once their sons were older and grown up, they would be more open to interracial marriage.

[16] This also reminds us of the data that shows that people generally marry within their own race (Sawhill & Venator, 2015, p. 4).

Nevertheless, these insights emphasized the tremendous (and different) sense of responsibility that single black mothers, especially those of black sons, have towards their children and how this affects their choice of potential marriage partners. The need for them to have a strong and positive black male presence in their household who understands the experience, struggle, and pain of being a black man and person in America comes from the deep love of their children and their wellbeing. Such concern is one that parents of any race can certainly relate to but, given the current racial and political climate in America, is probably unique to black mothers and mothers of black children.

Given this context, the respondents did not seem particularly optimistic about potential marriage prospects in Richland County. They expressed the belief that they do not have access to a qualified dating pool of black men in the community. For example, when discussing the criteria for good marriage prospects, most of them said that it was incredibly important that the man had a job. "A man who does not work does not eat", one respondent said bluntly. "He has to work and he has to match my ambition. I cannot respect a man that does not work", she continued. Another one said that her potential partner "better match my drive or get out." Interestingly, a different respondent said that she would have no problem with a stay-at-home husband who would raise and nurture the children while she was the sole source of income for the family.[17]

These views are not particularly surprising given the huge influx of women into the workforce in the decades after World War II and the resulting increase in the number of career-driven women in society. While it used to be frowned upon, being a working mother is completely normal in developed countries. It's also unsurprising to note the respondents' lack of optimism about marriage prospects in Richland County given the data presented in Figure 6 and Figure 10 that show that black men have the worst rates of employment, labor force participation rate, and educational attainment in the community.

Lastly, the respondents discussed a few cultural factors in the African American community that affect their desire to get married. One of these was the unfortunately very common issue of absent black fathers. The respondents discussed that due to the number (and generations) of black men that have grown up without fathers, too many of them have grown up with neither the example nor the expectation of marriage. These men are rarely surrounded by examples of married men that can teach and mentor them about healthy and positive marriages. They believed that this is not as prevalent in the white community because white men have far more positive role models of married men in their lives. Given the lower rate of single white households (see figure 12) there might be some validity to this theory.

[17] Note: all respondents were employed – "I'm doing a disservice to my child if I don't work," one said – and all, except for one, had at least a Bachelor's degree.

9. Poverty and Children

A discussion about family and marriage is incomplete without talking about children. In a report for the Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Kelly Capatosto found that implicit bias and teachers' race contribute to racial disparities in school discipline data (Capatosto, 2015). Research also shows that even though they make up only 18 percent of preschool enrollment, black children represent 48 percent of students receiving one or more suspensions in preschool. Black boys are also roughly four times more likely to be suspended than white boys, while black girls are four times more likely to be suspended than white girls (O'Neal Cokley, 2016).

A study of nearly a million Texas schoolchildren found that of students disciplined in middle or high school, 23 percent of them ended up in contact with a juvenile probation officer. This figure was only 2 percent for those who were not disciplined. Suspended or expelled students were three times more likely to come into contact with the juvenile probation system the following year than those who weren't suspended or expelled (Fabelo, et al., 2011, p. 66).

A 2014 study by The Black Star Project found that only 10 percent of eight-grade black boys in the U.S. are considered proficient in reading, a number that was even lower in large urban areas. In contrast, A 2013 study by the National Assessment of Education Progress found that 46 percent of white students are reading-proficient by eighth grade (Lynch M. , 2014). The following table shows the data on disciplinary incidents in Richland County in 2016. Black and multiracial students are by far involved in the greatest number of disciplinary incidents in a school year.

Figure 13: Disciplinary incidents for children in Richland County (2016)

Race or Ethnicity	Disciplinary incidents in a school year per 1,000 enrolled students
Asian	5.4
White	19.5
Hispanic	25.3
Multiracial	53.7
Black	84.5

Source: (Kids Count Data Center, 2019)

"The black experience in education is very different from the white experience," said Buffi Williams, licensed social worker for over 20 years, MSSA, LSW, LCDC-III. "School is a place of disconnect for them and no longer a friendly environment because there's an emotional disconnect between who they are and where they want to be. It no longer satisfies their emotional needs."

She agreed that a lack of racial diversity of teachers is a real problem and discussed the potential consequences of this for black children. "If they have the choice between skipping

school with their friends down the street and learning from a middle-class white teacher who cannot relate to their experience, who do you think they're going to choose?"

Williams also touched on how identity affects the educational experience of black children. "They don't have an identity as learners and intelligent individuals because they haven't been taught the value of education", which likely exacerbates the fact that school and education are places of disconnect for them.[18] As a result, Williams says, there is "an emotional disconnect between the educators and those being educated [the black children]."

She also raised the interesting point of teachers' unions. Specifically, if teachers say that they don't want to and/or cannot deal with a certain classroom or (group of) "trouble" students, they can go to the union and request mental health leave. The school then has the burden of having to pay for this leave ***and*** a substitute teacher. Therefore, there's an incentive to discipline and/or remove the students from the class rather than understand the underlying cause of their behavior.

Causes of disciplinary problems at school

What does the research say about factors that cause or contribute to disciplinary problems of children at school? Nationally, nearly half of black students attend schools with high rates of poverty and these students are roughly six times more likely to attend a low-income school than white students, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Lynch M. , 2017). Moreover, Parker, Greer, and Zuckerman (1988) found that children living in poverty and highly stressed home environments "are at increased risk for a variety of developmental and behavioral problems, including poorer performance on developmental tests at 8 months, lower IQ scores and impaired language development at 4 years, and poorer emotional adjustment and **increased school problems at school age** [emphasis added]."

The researchers state that the issue of poorer emotional adjustment and more school problems is worst for children in low-income, high-stress families and much less apparent in high-income, low-stress families (Parker, Greer, & Zuckerman, 1988, p. 1232). In fact, they find that the strongest predictor of long-term developmental outcomes for infants is the socioeconomic status of the parents (Parker, Greer, & Zuckerman, 1988, p. 1228).

They also find that incidents of low birthweight are two to three times higher in low socioeconomic status groups (i.e. families living in poverty) and that children living in poverty are exposed to far more stressful events than those that do not. Moreover, disadvantaged children experience a significant lack of social and emotional support, which is associated with decreased cognitive abilities at 8 months, more behavior problems among 5 to 8 year olds,

[18] This relates to comments made by former U.S. President Barack Obama in 2009 regarding the aspirations of young black children: "They might think they've got a pretty jump shot or a pretty good flow but our kids can't all aspire to be LeBron or Lil Wayne. I want them aspiring to be scientists and engineers, doctors and teachers, not just ballers and rappers." Source: (McGreal, 2009).

lower IQ and receptive language skills at 4 years, and a higher incidence of child abuse (Parker, Greer, & Zuckerman, 1988, pp. 1231-1232).

Given that a stunning 30.6 percent of children under the age of 5 and 22.5 percent of children under the age of 18 in Richland County live below the poverty line, we cannot rule out that the adverse effects of growing up in poverty are affecting children's behavior at school (American Community Survey, 2017).

According to Dr. Melinda Paige, a behavioral expert and professor in clinical mental health counseling at Argosy University in Atlanta, Georgia, the brain of a person living in poverty is being flooded with high levels of cortisol, our body's primary stress hormone. When that happens, the part of our brain that allows us to plan, concentrate, learn, pay attention to detail, and think logically becomes less functional. Paige claims that this poverty-induced, stress-related change to children's brains is being misdiagnosed as ADHD, a diagnosis which, for children, increased by 43 percent between 2003 and 2016. In fact, psychologists believe that growing up and living in poverty is a form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (Fallon, 2016)

Students with behavioral issues often come from (low-income) households where they experience poor emotional support and witness substance abuse, violence, alcoholism, and financial stress. "They're so traumatized that they're not able to focus in school, so they're diagnosed with ADHD and put on Ridalin and Adderal to make them convenient...They need treatment for [post-traumatic stress disorder], not ADHD." (Fallon, 2016)

Growing up in a single parent household also adversely affects children's academic performances and behavior. Barajas (2011) summarized the most prominent studies on the topic, stating that:

> "A large majority of studies reviewed show that children from single-parent (SP) homes score lower on tests of cognitive functioning and standardized tests, receive lower GPAs, and complete fewer years of school when compared to children from two-parent (TP) homes. Even when controlling for economic and racial differences of the family, children from two-parent households outperform children from one-parent households across a variety of measures." (Barajas, 2011, p. 14)

While McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) summarize the research on the topic as follows:

> "Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents, regardless of the parents' race or educational background, regardless of whether the parents are married when the child is born, and regardless of whether the resident parent remarries." (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994, p. 1)

Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is an extremely important public health issue and even more serious when children suffer from it. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes the adverse health effects of lead poisoning for children in the following excerpt:

> "At high levels of exposure, lead attacks the brain and central nervous system to cause coma, convulsions and even death. Children who survive severe lead poisoning may be left with mental retardation and behavioural disorders. At lower levels of exposure that cause no obvious symptoms lead is now known to produce a spectrum of injury across multiple body systems. In particular lead can affect children's brain development resulting in reduced intelligence quotient (IQ), behavioural changes such as reduced attention span and increased antisocial behavior, and reduced educational attainment.
>
> Lead exposure also causes anaemia, hypertension, renal impairment, immunotoxicity and toxicity to the reproductive organs. The neurological and behavioural effects of lead are believed to be irreversible. There is no known 'safe' blood lead concentration; even blood lead concentrations as low as 5 μg/dL, may be associated with decreased intelligence in children, behavioral difficulties and learning problems." (World Health Organization, 2019)

Lead was banned in US residential paints by 1978, meaning that properties built after this date should be free from lead-based paints. Richland Public Health states that homes built between 1950 and 1978 may contain lead-based paint while those built before 1950 have the greatest chance of containing some lead-based paint (Richland Public Health, 2019). The Census Bureau reports that there are 14,565 housing units (30 percent) that were built between 1960 and 1979, 12,264 (26 percent) that were built between 1940 and 1959, and 9,473 (20 percent) that were built in 1939 or earlier. This means that 76 percent of housing units in Richland County were built before 1980 (American Community Survey, 2017). While this absolutely does not ***prove*** that all residents in these housing units suffer from lead poisoning, it does mean that a significant portion of the population, especially children, is at risk.

The Ohio Department of Health published a list of zip codes where there is a high-risk for lead poisoning due to the condition of the average home in the area. This list was last updated in January 2018 and, shockingly, eleven of the nineteen zip codes in Richland County are on it: 44827, 44833, 44865, 44875, 44901, 44902, 44903, 44904, 44905, 44906, and 44907 (Ohio Department of Health, 2018).

10. Mass Incarceration

As discussed earlier, one of the possible reasons for the decrease in the number of marriageable men is the high rate of incarceration of black men. As a result, it is necessary to track how many African Americans are in correctional facilities compared to the rest of the population.[19] Figure 14 shows that in 2010, more than 1 in 4 black people were in correctional facilities in Richland County, while the figure is roughly 1 in 50 for white people. Unfortunately, data categorized by gender could not be found.

Figure 14: Adult + Juvenile Population in Correctional Facilities in Richland County (2010)

Race	Individuals in Correctional Facilities
Black	1 in 4 (3,080/11,720)
White	1 in 50 (2,252/110,302)

Sources: (United States Census Bureau, 2010) and (United States Census Bureau, 2010)

It is a well-known and unfortunate fact that the United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other country in the world. Approximately 2.3 million people – or 698 per 100,000 residents – are incarcerated, though mass incarceration does not affect all populations equally (Sawyer & Wagner, 2019). People of color constitute 37 percent of the population but a stunning 67 percent of the prison population (The Sentencing Project, 2019) while African Americans constitute 40 percent of the incarcerated population despite representing only 13 percent of U.S residents (Sawyer & Wagner, 2019).

The myth that incarceration reduces crime has long been disproven. In a report named *The Prison Paradox*, The Vera Institute of Justice found that incarceration has become almost completely ineffective as a crime deterrent. Between 1980 and 2000, each 10 percent increase in incarceration rates was associated with a 2 to 4 percent lower crime rate. Through the 1990s, incarceration accounted for 6 to 25 percent of the total reduction in crime rates. Since the year 2000, however, "the increased use of incarceration accounted for nearly zero percent of the overall reduction in crime… Research shows that each additional increase in incarceration rates will be associated with a smaller and smaller reduction in crime rates" (Stemen, 2017, pp. 1-2).

Quite remarkably, research suggests that there's a tipping point at which incarceration actually **increases** crime. "High rates of imprisonment break down the social and family bonds that guide individuals away from crime, remove adults who would otherwise nurture children, deprive communities of income, reduce future income potential, and engender deep

[19] The Census Bureau defines those living in correctional facilities as the sum of those in federal detention centers, federal prisons, state prisons, local jails and other municipal confinement facilities, correctional residential facilities, military disciplinary barracks and jails, and correctional facilities intended for juveniles.

resentment toward the legal system." Therefore, any potential benefits that incarceration might have on public safety are outweighed by the damage it does to the social capital and fabric of communities and families. To add insult to injury, data shows that the United States "was spending roughly $33 billion on incarceration in 2000 for essentially the same level of public safety it achieved in 1975 for $7.4 billion – nearly a quarter of the cost." (Stemen, 2017, p. 2)

The Prison Paradox debunks the myth that a so-called "tough-on-crime" stance reduces crime and estimates that between 75 and 100 percent of the reduction in crime since the 1990s came as a result of factors other than incarceration. These include an aging population, increased wages, increased employment, increased graduation rates, increased consumer confidence, increased law enforcement personnel, and changes in policing strategies (Stemen, 2017, p. 2).

Poverty, meanwhile, is generally both a predictor and an outcome of incarceration. *The Brookings Institution* collected data of the entire prison population over a sixteen-year period and found that only 55 percent of former prisoners have any earnings at all "and those that do tend to earn less than the earnings of a full-time job at the minimum wage." However, the struggles begin well before incarceration. "Boys who were born into families in the bottom 10 percent of the income distribution (families earning about $14,000 per year) are about 20 times more likely to be in prison in their 30s, compared to boys born into families in the top 10 percent (families earning more than $143,000 per year)." (Looney & Turner, 2018, pp. 1-2)

Moreover, only 49 percent of prime-age men (25-54 years old) were employed three years before being incarcerated. Their median earnings were roughly $6,250 and a paltry 13 percent of them earned more than $15,000. They further estimate that a third of non-working 30-year-old men are either in prison, jail, or are unemployed former prisoners and conclude that "the challenges ex-prisoners face in the labor market start well before the period of incarceration we observe" (Looney & Turner, 2018, pp. 1-2). A study by the *Prison Policy Initiative* confirmed this link between poverty and incarceration. Using data from the Bureau of Justice, they found that "incarcerated people had a median annual income of $19,185 prior to their incarceration, which is 41% less than non-incarcerated people of similar ages." (Rabuy & Kopf, 2015)

Felony disenfranchisement

Another indirect way that mass incarceration affects the local economy and community is through felony disenfranchisement. "As of 2016, 6.1 million Americans were prohibited from voting due to laws that disenfranchise citizens convicted of felony offenses" (Chung, 2019). Excluding so many people from the act of voting – an act that is fundamental to the healthy functioning of a democracy – is particularly serious when considering that, as noted earlier, people of color constitute 67 percent of the U.S. prison population. The degree to which felony disenfranchisement occurs varies from state to state, as the following figure from a report by *The Sentencing Project* shows. For example, Figure 15 shows that individuals in prison, on parole, or on probation are not allowed to vote in eighteen states across the country. Ohio is one of seventeen states in which incarcerated individuals are not allowed to vote.

Figure 15: Felony disenfranchisement restrictions (2019)

No restriction (2)	Prison (17)	Prison & Parole (3)	Prison, parole, and probation (18)	Prison, parole, probation, and post-sentence – some or all of the above (11)
Maine Vermont	Colorado District of Columbia Hawaii Illinois Indiana Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Montana Nevada New Hampshire North Dakota Ohio Oregon Pennsylvania Rhode Island Utah	California Connecticut New York	Alaska Arkansas Georgia Idaho Kansas Louisiana Minnesota Missouri New Jersey New Mexico North Carolina Oklahoma South Carolina South Dakota Texas Washington West Virginia Wisconsin	Alabama Arizona Delaware Florida Iowa Kentucky Mississippi Nebraska Tennessee Virginia Wyoming

Source: (Chung, 2019, p. 1)

11. Civic Engagement

We cannot precisely determine voter turnout by race given that this is not tracked on the county level. Nevertheless, there is a way to get a reasonable estimate of this if we know the voter turnout by ward in the county – this data is publicly available on the Richland County Board of Elections website – and the demographics of each ward. While precise Census data is available on all the townships in Richland County, this is not the case for the Mansfield City, Ontario, and Lexington wards. That is, census tracts are not exactly the same geographic regions as wards; sometimes they overlap, sometimes not entirely. Figures 16-18 show the turnout per ward and township for the last three general elections.

Figure 16: Voter turnout General Election November 2018

Ward or Township	Turnout	Ward or Township	Turnout
Mansfield Ward 1	60%	Monroe Township	62%
Mansfield Ward 2	54%	Perry Township	60%
Mansfield Ward 3	51%	Plymouth Township	49%
Mansfield Ward 4	35%	Sandusky Township	58%
Mansfield Ward 5	29%	Sharon Township	69%
Mansfield Ward 6	35%	Ontario 1A	51%
Shelby Ward 1	55%	Ontario 2A	55%
Shelby Ward 2	57%	Ontario 3A	60%
Shelby Ward 3	46%	Ontario 4A	65%
Shelby Ward 4	64%	Springfield Township	64%
Bloominggrove Township	52%	Lexington B	53%
Butler Township	48%	Lexington C	72%
Cass Township	49%	Lexington E	66%
Franklin Township	58%	Troy Township	70%
Jackson Township	67%	Washington Township	68%
Jefferson Township	61%	Weller Township	60%
Madison Township	49%	Worthington Township	58%
Mifflin Township	57%		

Figure 17: Voter turnout General Election November 2017

Ward or Township	Turnout	Ward or Township	Turnout
Mansfield Ward 1	32%	Monroe Township	36%
Mansfield Ward 2	28%	Perry Township	37%
Mansfield Ward 3	24%	Plymouth Township	35%
Mansfield Ward 4	12%	Sandusky Township	31%
Mansfield Ward 5	13%	Sharon Township	56%
Mansfield Ward 6	15%	Ontario 1A	29%
Shelby Ward 1	42%	Ontario 2A	28%
Shelby Ward 2	42%	Ontario 3A	35%
Shelby Ward 3	30%	Ontario 4A	39%
Shelby Ward 4	51%	Springfield Township	36%
Bloominggrove Township	29%	Lexington B	26%
Butler Township	26%	Lexington C	43%
Cass Township	30%	Lexington E	37%
Franklin Township	29%	Troy Township	37%
Jackson Township	51%	Washington Township	35%
Jefferson Township	36%	Weller Township	36%
Madison Township	26%	Worthington Township	31%
Mifflin Township	34%		

Figure 18: Voter turnout General Election (Presidential) November 2016

Ward or Township	Turnout	Ward or Township	Turnout
Mansfield Ward 1	71%	Monroe Township	76%
Mansfield Ward 2	65%	Perry Township	73%
Mansfield Ward 3	63%	Plymouth Township	64%
Mansfield Ward 4	46%	Sandusky Township	74%
Mansfield Ward 5	44%	Sharon Township	80%
Mansfield Ward 6	50%	Ontario 1A	69%
Shelby Ward 1	71%	Ontario 2A	71%
Shelby Ward 2	69%	Ontario 3A	73%
Shelby Ward 3	60%	Ontario 4A	78%
Shelby Ward 4	77%	Springfield Township	79%
Bloominggrove Township	69%	Lexington B	64%
Butler Township	63%	Lexington C	82%
Cass Township	65%	Lexington E	77%
Franklin Township	74%	Troy Township	79%
Jackson Township	79%	Washington Township	80%
Jefferson Township	77%	Weller Township	76%
Madison Township	67%	Worthington Township	76%
Mifflin Township	74%		

Source for Figures 16-18: (Richland County Ohio, 2019)

While it will not offer formal proof of any argument or hypothesis, it is still useful to compare the voter turnout rates of each ward/township with their respective demographics. The figure below shows the areas with the fewest and greatest number of black residents.

Figure 19: Demographics of voting wards/townships

Areas without black residents	Areas with less than 100 black residents	Areas with 100-300 black residents	Areas with more than 300 black residents
Bloominggrove Township Butler Township Cass Township Franklin Township Monroe Township Sandusky Township Washington Township Weller Township Worthington Township	Jackson Township (28) Jefferson Township (18) Mifflin Township (90) Perry Township (3) Plymouth Township (3) Shelby (6)	Lexington (140) Madison Township (205) Ontario (252) Springfield Township (271) Troy Township (140)	Mansfield (8,714)

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

Looking back at Figure 1 at the beginning of the report, the census tracts with the greatest number of African Americans are (in descending order) CT 17, 7, 6, 31, and 5. Given that we could not find exact demographic data of wards in Mansfield, Shelby, Ontario, and Lexington, we had to estimate this by looking at which census tracts each ward/area falls into. Though it's certainly not a perfect or scientifically accurate method, it's a reasonable proxy. (Note: Since Shelby only has six black residents, we're excluding it from the following analysis.)

- **Mansfield Ward 1**: Most of CT 21.01 and 21.02.
- **Mansfield Ward 2:** Most of CT 11 and 12, a little part of CT **5**.
- **Mansfield Ward 3:** CT 13, half of CT 14, little parts of CT 12 and **5**.
- **Mansfield Ward 4:** CT **6**, **7**, 16, half of 14, little parts of CT 15 and CT 23.
- **Mansfield Ward 5:** CT **17**, most of CT **31**, most of CT 8, very little part of CT **6** and CT **7**.
- **Mansfield Ward 6:** Little parts of CT 8, CT 9, CT 10, and CT **31**.
- **Ontario:** CT 24 and part of CT 23.
- **Lexington:** Most of CT 22 and part of CT 21.02.

Based on this rudimentary analysis, we can state a few observations. First, as already mentioned at the beginning of the report, 92 percent of African Americans live in Mansfield. Second, a quick look at figures 16-18 shows us that based on the last three general elections, Mansfield Wards 4, 5, and 6 have consistently the lowest voter turnouts in Richland County. Third, we see that these wards contain most of the census tracts in which the greatest number of African Americans live. Again, we have to repeat that this does ***not formally prove*** that African Americans have low voter turnout, but it does indicate that there is enough to justify formal investigation of this hypothesis.

12. Health

The 2016 Richland County Community Health Assessment report noted significant difficulty in obtaining health data for African Americans. In fact, the response rate to the survey was a mere 9 percent as only 97 African Americans responded to it, "*even with a specialized mailing list being purchased specifically to recruit African Americans*" (Richland Public Health, 2017, p. 10). It was noted that the data on African Americans in the report "*is not generalizable to the entire population*" (Richland Public Health, 2017, p. 103). As a result, we decided to exclude their findings from this report. Nevertheless, we would like to recognize Richland County Public Health for their efforts to gather data on the health of African Americans in Richland County. That said, the Richland County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for 2017-2020 reports that African Americans were most at risk for the following issues/concerns (self-reported):

- Obesity
- Overweight
- Diagnosed with diabetes
- Diagnosed with high blood pressure
- Diagnosed with high blood cholesterol

- Diagnosed with arthritis
- Using medication not prescribed for them
- Binge alcohol drinker (among current drinkers)
- Current alcohol drinker
- Attempted/Made a plan to attempt suicide
- Current/former smoker
- Diagnosed with asthma
- Uninsured
- Rated health as fair or poor
- Rated physical health as not good on 4+ days
- Rated mental health as not good on 4+ days (The Richland County Community Health Partners, 2017, pp. 12-13)

Data from the Ohio Department of Health shows the differences in the percentage of the population living with diagnosed HIV infection. In this case, health outcomes of African Americans are more favorable than those of white people. Figure 20 shows these results and should be read as follows. In the column for the year 2013, 39 percent of the total population of persons living with diagnosed HIV infection in the state of Ohio was African American.

Figure 20: Persons living with diagnosed HIV Infection (2013-2017)[20]

Race/Ethnicity	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
American Indian/Alaska Native	*1%*	*1%*	*1%*	*1%*	*1%*
Multi-race	*2%*	*2%*	*1%*	*2%*	*3%*
Hispanic/Latino	*5%*	*9%*	*9%*	*7%*	*5%*
Black/African American*	*39%*	*33%*	*36%*	*37%*	*39%*
White*	*53%*	*55%*	*52%*	*53%*	*53%*

* Not Hispanic. Source: (Ohio Department of Health, 2018, p. 5)

The Ohio Department of Health also reports figures for invasive cancer cases in Richland County, Ohio, and the entire country. Figure 21 shows that while the rate for the white population in the county is below the state and national rates, the rate for black people is well above the state and national rates.

[20] Due to rounding error, the total percentages may sometimes be slightly above or below 100%.

Figure 21: Average Annual Number of Invasive Cancer Cases in Richland County, Ohio and the United States (2010-2014)

Demographics	Richland County		Ohio	U.S.
	Cases	Rate per 100,000	Rate per 100,000	Rate per 100,000
White	666	450.4	454.0	451.8
Black	51	480.8	458.8	459.3

Source: (Ohio Department of Health, 2017, p. 1)

The story is almost the opposite when looking at invasive cancer deaths. Figure 22 shows that the rate for white people in Richland County is higher than both the state and national rates. The rate for black people is marginally lower than that of the state but higher than the national rate.

Figure 22: Average Annual Invasive Cancer Deaths in Richland County, Ohio, and the U.S. (2010-2014)

Demographics	Richland County		Ohio	U.S.
	Deaths	Rate per 100,000	Rate per 100,000	Rate per 100,000
White	280	181.2	179.5	166.2
Black	19	205.3	206.6	194.2

Source: (Ohio Department of Health, 2017, p. 1)

Infant mortality is a very serious issue in Ohio. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that in 2017 Ohio was ranked eighth in the list of U.S. states with highest infant mortality rates (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Figure 23 shows Richland County's infant mortality rates in the period 2007-2012, broken down by race. Except for the years 2008 and 2011, infant mortality rates were higher for black infants than for white ones, with a particularly worrying spike in 2007.

Figure 23: Richland County Infant Mortality Rates by Race (2007-2012)

Year	Total	White	Black
2007	9.24	7.66	25.53
2008	3.90	4.40	0.0
2009	9.08	8.87	12.20
2010	10.96	10.84	14.29
2011	10.16	10.66	7.52
2012	4.18	3.97	6.67

Source: (Ohio Department of Health, 2012). Rates are per 1,000 births

Figure 24: National and Ohio Infant Mortality Rates by Race (2013)

Area	Total	White	Black
U.S.	6.0	5.1	11.2
Ohio	7.4	6.0	13.8

Source: (Ohio Department of Health, 2014). Rates are per 1,000 births.

Figure 25 shows that the racial disparities in health insurance coverage between the black population and the white population are not very large. In Richland County, 89.8 percent of the black population has health insurance compared to 90.7 percent of the white population.

Figure 25: Health Insurance Coverage in Richland County (2013-2017)

Race	% of population *with* health insurance	% of population *without* health insurance
Black	89.8%	10.2%
White	90.7%	9.3%
Asian	78.7%	21.3%
American Indian & Alaska Native	77.7%	22.3%

Source: (American Community Survey, 2017)

Recommendation 5: Increase the response rate of African Americans to health data surveys.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that African Americans aged 18-49 are twice as likely to die from heart disease than whites while those aged 35-64 are 50 percent more likely to have high blood pressure than whites. African Americans in general are more likely to die at early ages from all causes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Given this data, and in order to ensure health equity and reduce health disparities, it is important to collect comprehensive health data on African Americans in Richland County. This is the only way to ensure that they receive adequate and relevant medical treatment.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health inequities as systematic differences in the health status of different population groups (World Health Organization, 2017). A 2013 study by the Commonwealth Fund shows that the United States ranks last in a list of eleven industrialized countries on measures of health equity. The other countries studied were Sweden, Switzerland, the U.K., Germany, Australia, Norway, France, the Netherlands, Canada, and New Zealand (Davis, Stremikis, Squires, & Schoen, 2014).

Part 2

13. Solutions

The North End Community Improvement Collaborative (NECIC) is an asset-based community development corporation. As a result, NECIC takes an asset-based, solution-focused approach to its work and believes that the solutions to the problems posed in this report are in the community. This section will focus on potential solutions to the challenges presented thus far by discussing the five recommendations offered earlier. Before doing this, however, the theoretical framework that will inform the recommendations and solutions proposed in this section has to be established.

The theoretical framework is based on First Principles thinking. A first principle is a basic assumption that cannot be deduced any further and answers the question: "What am I absolutely sure is true?" According to Aristotle, a first principle is "the first basis from which a thing is known." The goal of this framework is to deconstruct a problem (like the low labor force participation rate of African American men) to its most fundamental parts that we are absolutely certain are true and then reason up from there (Clear, 2019).

Simply put, it is a scientist's way of thinking in which we start with and only deal with **verifiable facts** when trying to solve difficult problems. It prevents us from solving problems by reasoning by analogy, which is a process in which we start with bizarre stereotypes that have no foundation in facts – "African Americans are lazy and just don't want to work" – and implement solutions based on these poor foundations – "cut their benefits so that they are forced to work."

Recommendation 1: Increase the labor force participation rate of African Americans, with a strong focus on men.

Following First Principles thinking, it seems that the best way to know how to increase the labor force participation rate of African Americans is to understand the reason ***why*** they aren't in the labor force in the first place. Moreover, how do we make it such that it is more attractive and profitable to be ***in*** the labor force rather than out of it? To do this, we would need to survey every African American individual currently out of the labor force and have them list the main barriers keeping them out of the labor force. This would allow us to know the fundamental truths (i.e. first principles) of their extremely low labor force participation rate and the barriers that exist for them.

We've already found that a lack of education is one of the greatest barriers stopping them from entering the labor force – this will be discussed in recommendation #3 – but what else is there? A lack of diversity and inclusion initiatives from employers? Physical or mental disabilities? A prior criminal record? What do black men (and women) who are out of the labor force do instead of working or looking for work?

The main problem with such a survey, however, is the following: given how socially frowned-upon it is to have no desire to work, how likely are people to participate in a study that asks them why they are both unemployed and not looking for employment?[21] Nevertheless, it is an extremely important problem to solve because the lack of labor force participation results in lost tax revenue for the city and county. Lost tax revenue results in less money for infrastructure projects (e.g. roads), the public-school system, healthcare, and, as remains a particularly sore topic, snowplows and salt for the icy Ohio winters.

Besides individual factors, it is also important to focus on systemic ones. What efforts, if any, are being made by employers to recruit African Americans and African American men to their companies? Are enough companies offering living wages to ***all*** their employees? Why are companies not hiring (or unable to hire) African Americans at higher rates? And lastly, besides education, what are the cultural, individual, physical, and emotional barriers preventing them from entering the labor force? All things considered, at this point the most effective solution to this problem is to increase the educational attainments of African Americans, particularly the men.

Another important point to consider is that increasing the labor force participation rate, employment rate, and income of African Americans would, hopefully, lead to an increase in homeownership for them as well.

Recommendation 2: Help non-white owned businesses without paid employees become profitable enough to hire paid employees.

Supporting non-white owned business in Richland County is so important because Ohio is the only state in the country to have mandated by law a 15 percent procurement of goods and services of state agencies from certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) businesses. This means that state agencies, boards, and commissions **must** purchase at least 15 percent of their goods and services from non-white owned or operated businesses (Ohio.gov, 2019).

Once again though, we have to understand the barriers to financial prosperity that Richland County's non-white owned businesses face. Are these barriers merely financial? Or regulatory barriers, like codes and permits? Is it a lack of knowledge and expertise, that could be solved through in-kind support like mentorship, teaching, co-working space, legal consultation, business management advice, accounting and bookkeeping assistance, leadership coaching, and so on?

In addition to that, a key solution to this issue is the services of the Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC) through the Akron Urban League (AUL). In July 2019, NECIC became a satellite office for MBAC with the goal of helping businesses in Richland County thrive, with a specific (though not exclusive) focus on non-white businesses. This includes veterans (of all races),

[21] This is something that researchers call the "social desirability bias", which is the tendency for respondents to give answers to survey questions that seem more socially acceptable than their true answer might be.

women (of all races), African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics or Latinos, and Asians. Services offered include help with writing a business plan, access to funding, assistance with getting certified[22] and bidding for state contracts, free website building services through GoDaddy, and group classes on entrepreneurship, bookkeeping, customer validation, and business financial literacy.

Another important resource in this respect is the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The closest office is the one located at Ashland University. SBDCs offer free face-to-face business consulting services to small businesses in America. Their mission is to promote entrepreneurship, small business growth and the U.S. economy by providing the critical funding, oversight, and support needed by the nationwide network of Small Business Development Centers (SBA.gov, 2019). Besides these resources, Richland County has a wide variety of other services available to small businesses. These include Braintree Business Development Center, the Service Corps Of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce.

That said, it's one thing to list these resources, but it's another thing to actually connect non-white business owners with these resources. Similar to recommendation #5, there must be a concerted outreach effort to non-white business owners to connect them with the aforementioned resources. This would also help us understand if there are business owners who know about these services but decline to use them (and why they choose to do so).

Recommendation 3: Increase the pre- and post-secondary educational attainment of African Americans, with an urgent focus on men.

What are the barriers that prevent African Americans, particularly men, from a) enrolling into and b) completing pre- and post-secondary education? Looking at Figure 11 earlier in the report, enrollment doesn't seem to be an issue. As a percentage of the population, African Americans have similar rates of enrollment as white people in every grade. The only significant differences are in twelfth grade and undergraduate years of college where, curiously, there are more African Americans enrolled as a percentage of their total population than white people.[23]

If enrollment is not an issue – though further research is necessary to confirm this – what is keeping African Americans from ***completing*** their education? Besides surveying them and asking them this question personally, it's also useful to consider some common reasons that might apply to students of all races. This includes a lack of finances, time, guidance, and emotional support; family responsibilities and emergencies; inadequate academic preparation; homelessness and hunger; and more.

[22] Certifications include Encouraging Diversity, Growth, and Equity (EDGE), Women Business Enterprise (WBE), Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE), and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE).

[23] It might be better to look at enrollment (and how it has changed) over a longer period of time rather than just five years.

One suggestion is to use (and increase the use of) Certified Community Health Workers (CHW) to provide supportive services to African Americans that struggle with the abovementioned issues. CHWs are "frontline public health workers who have a close understanding of the community they serve." They operate as an intermediary between health/social services and the community "to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery." (ExploreHealthCareers.org, 2019) CHWs can remove the barriers that black (and other) students face by connecting them to the resources in the community that can help with this. This is a particularly important solution given the discussion in Chapter 9 about the impact of poverty and trauma on performance at school. Poverty and trauma are (mental) health problems that require the services of qualified healthcare professionals and social workers.

This means we are left with the specific issue of the low educational attainment of African American men. Regarding this challenge, we are unfortunately left with more questions than answers. Why is it that, in 2016, black boys accounted for 20 percent of U.S. students labeled as mentally retarded even though they represented just 9 percent of the population? Why were 80 percent of all special education students black or Hispanic males? (Lynch M. , 2016) Why, as a study by the UCLA Civil Rights Project shows, do black boys and black boys with disabilities in America have the highest suspension rates of all racial groups? (Losen & Gillespie, 2012, p. 6) Hence, it seems like another crucial part of the solution lies in doing something about the rates of disciplinary incidents of black students in Richland County.

A potential solution to these challenges is former U.S. President Barack Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* (MBK) initiative, which NECIC is a part of. Launched on February 27, 2014, MBK aims to "address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential." It is focused on the following six milestones:

1. **Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn.**
    a. All children should have a healthy start and enter school ready – cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally.
2. **Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade.**
    a. All children should be reading at grade level by age 8 – the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.
3. **Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career.**
    a. All youth should receive a quality high school education and graduate with the skills and tools needed to advance to postsecondary education or training.
4. **Completing Postsecondary Education or Training.**
    a. Every American should have the option to attend postsecondary education and receive the education and training needed for the quality jobs of today and tomorrow.
5. **Successfully Entering the Workforce.**
    a. Anyone who wants a job should be able to get a job that allows them to support themselves and their families.
6. **Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances.**

a. All youth and young adults should be safe from violent crime; and individuals who are confined should receive the education, training, and treatment they need for a second chance (Obama White House, 2019).

Given that the MBK program targets young boys and men of color, whose struggles have been highlighted repeatedly throughout this report, we recommend increased collaboration and community support for this initiative.

Recommendation 4: Increase the percentage of married black households.

This recommendation requires that we correctly understand the factors affecting people's likelihood of getting married, factors which were discussed in Chapter 8 of this report, 'The Family Unit.' While multiple issues were discussed – imbalanced sex ratios; social, cultural, and gender norms; perceptions of black women – it seems that the factor that had the most significant impact on marriage was employment.

As a result, this brings us back to recommendations #1, #2, and #3: improving the employment prospects of African Americans and African American men and getting them jobs with living wages. Furthermore, we suggest interventions like family counseling classes, sex education, and relationship education to teach individuals how to be in emotionally, physically, financially, and sexually healthy relationships.

Recommendation 5: Increase the response rate of African Americans to health data surveys.

Between 1932 and 1972, the U.S. government commissioned The Tuskegee Study to understand the long-term effects of syphilis. The test subjects were four-hundred African American men with latent syphilis. However, the study quickly became (even more) controversial because even when penicillin became available, which would have cured the ailment, the test subjects were left untreated (Nix, 2019). Research by economists Alsan and Wanamaker (2018) found that The Tuskegee study resulted in increases in medical mistrust and mortality and decreases in outpatient and inpatient physician interactions for older black men and African Americans in general. The study also led to a fall in life expectancy for black men at age 45 by up to 1.5 years (Alsan & Wanamaker, 2018).

The Tuskegee Study is a good example of why African Americans distrust the medical industry and why, consequently, there might be such a low response rate to health data surveys even if this makes the situation worse for them in the long run. The less data we have on the health of African Americans, the less we're able to create health interventions that are specific to their needs.

While this is much easier said than done, the solution to this recommendation can be summarized in one word: trust. Specifically, the medical industry has to rebuild trust with the African American community. Speaking at the 2018 conference *Re[Building] Trust*, Dr. Dhruv Khullar points out three reasons why trust in healthcare is so important. First, trust makes

people more likely to engage in healthy behaviors. “Patients who trust their doctors are more likely to take their medications as prescribed, exercise, eat a healthy diet, and use condoms”, states Dr. Khullar.

Second, trust enables innovation due to patients’ increased willingness to engage with new technologies and treatments. Third, trust helps communities respond to public health crises and other epidemics. Dr. Khullar cited research that found that people who did not trust the government were less likely to engage in precautionary measures to protect themselves from the Ebola virus (Lynch T. , 2018).

The only way that the response rate for health surveys can be increased is if African Americans regain trust in the medical industry. How can we restore this trust though? And how can we get those African Americans who would forego a visit to the doctor due to a lack of trust to reengage with the healthcare industry? Dr. Khullar states that there are three dimensions to rebuilding trust in healthcare professionals: Do you know what you’re doing (competence)? Will you tell me what you’re doing (transparency)? Are you doing this to help me or yourself (motive)? (Lynch T. , 2018)

Speaking at the same conference, Dr. Lisa Cooper of John Hopkins University cited two studies that provide other reasons for the lack of trust of African Americans and other non-white individuals in the healthcare system. One study that found that physicians were more “verbally dominant” and sounded less friendly when talking to non-white patients and another study found that when patients and physicians were from the same racial background, medical visits lasted 2.5 minutes longer.

Rather than being the result of intentional harm, Dr. Cooper believes that these problems are caused by implicit biases of physicians. As part of her research, she administered the Implicit Association Test to physicians in the study and found that those who scored high for implicit bias had poorer communication, particularly with African American patients. In turn, these patients considered them to be less respectful and trusted them less. (Lynch T. , 2018)

Dr. Cooper discussed four ways in which health care organizations can (re)build trust with non-white patients. These include “having leaders speak about their commitment to health equity, using data to better understand the health and care patterns of the populations they serve, building relationships with community partners to better address patients’ needs, and communicating with patients and community members in ways that are clear and responsive to their needs.” (Lynch T. , 2018) Lastly, the importance of hiring more African American healthcare professionals cannot be understated. It is crucial to have a workforce that reflects the people you serve.

14. Conclusion

Even though they constitute only 18.7 percent of Mansfield and 7.8 percent of Richland County, African Americans in our community are struggling significantly. The greatest number of them reside in a census tract that has the lowest number of housing units and contains two correctional institutions and an industrial park airport that doesn't conduct passenger flights. It's no surprise then, that they are lagging in every indicator of prosperity: median household income, poverty, food stamps, home ownership, employment, and, most concerningly, labor force participation rate. Regarding this last point, we found that not only are African Americans employed at a lower rate than white individuals, but a far greater percentage of them are also out of the labor force. This finding led to one of the most important implications of this report, namely the serious struggles of black men in Richland County.

The percentage of black men **not** in the labor force is twice that of black women, more than 2.5 times that of white men, and more than twice that of white women. We cannot stress enough what an extremely worrying finding this is. This pattern continues when looking at education as black men have the lowest rates of educational attainment at both the pre- and post-secondary level. Black children are also by far involved in the highest number of disciplinary incidents at school. Given that we are on the cusp of the Fourth Industrial Revolution – an era characterized by exponential breakthroughs in areas such as artificial intelligence, automation, and physical and biological technologies – having post-secondary credentials will be a crucial path to prosperity.

The demise of the black male could, and likely will, have negative consequences for marriage rates and the family unit (if it hasn't already). People still generally marry within their own race and, thanks to the tremendous advances in women's financial and career prospects after World War II, women are less willing to marry a man who isn't at least as financially independent as they are. Marriage is one of the key pathways to wealth, so if African Americans in Richland County are marrying at a lower rate – they do have the lowest rate of married households in the county – then they are missing out on yet another pathway to (financial) prosperity. Moreover, we also have to consider one of the most fiercely debated topics in America today: mass incarceration. More than 1 in 4 black people were in correctional facilities in Richland County, while the figure is roughly 1 in 50 for white people.

One of the most powerful and effective methods to create change is to use one's constitutional right to vote. Hence, while many might be quick to blame "the system" after reading this report, one must ask whether African Americans are actually using this right and getting out to vote for politicians that can change their lives for the better. Although we were unable to scientifically test this, our informal analysis suggests that voter turnout for African Americans in Richland County is significantly lower than that of white voters. If true, this is an extremely disturbing finding. One cannot complain about the system if (s)he is doing nothing to change it.

One aspect of the state of African Americans in Richland County that we have almost no information on is health. With a response rate of only 9 percent, African Americans barely

responded to health surveys that were sent out for the 2016 Richland County Community Health Assessment. We speculate that this is related to the lack of trust that they have in the healthcare system, which is a result of the systematic discrimination and marginalization they have experienced in this industry. Given that African Americans are twice as likely to die from heart disease than whites and are generally more likely to die at early ages from all causes, obtaining health data for this part of the population is, quite frankly, a matter of life and death.

Every good conclusion has to answer one crucial question: why was this report important? If we did not shine a light on how African Americans, the most sizeable non-white population in Richland County, are doing then it's likely that nobody would have. And by shining this light, we made some extremely important discoveries, including those about the labor force participation rate, educational shortcomings, the family unit, and the struggles of the African American male. Given that social justice and racial equity are two of the most hotly debated topics in the nation, and with today's tense political climate making it difficult to discuss this objectively, putting these issues in a local context is fundamentally important. And with the persistent racial wealth (and income) gap burdening the U.S. economy and showing no signs of decreasing, the need to bring this conversation to the forefront is even more important (Noel & Pinder, 2019).

When asked if his research had ever led to policy change, Steve Levitt, University of Chicago Professor of Economics and co-author of the books *Freakonomics* and *Superfreakonomics*, laughingly answered that in almost thirty years of doing research "the only law change I know that occurred because of my work, [there] was a small town in Alaska which passed a law which made walking drunk a crime because we had written in one of our books about the dire risks of walking drunk." (Dubner, 2019) Unfortunately, this is a common story in the field of research. We recognize that despite the importance of this report's findings, the simple and painful reality is that research rarely leads to policy change. Even if it doesn't result in legislation though, we hope that this report will, at the very least, result in a change in mindset.

Because at the end of the day, words mean nothing if they are not followed by action.

15. Limitations

As is the case with every piece of research, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this report. First, there was much data that was either limited or that we were unable to obtain. As mentioned in the *Health* section, there was very limited data available on the health of African Americans in Richland County due to the low survey response rate. Furthermore, this report would have been more comprehensive if we had been able to include a variety of additional data on the state of African Americans in Richland County, such as:

- More detail on the industries in which most African Americans work (e.g. how many are in executive-level positions, how many have STEM careers, and so on);
- Mental health and life expectancy data;
- The levels and types of debt that African Americans have as a ratio of their income compared to other populations;
- Access to banking services (i.e. how many African Americans have bank accounts?), and;
- The racial ***wealth*** gap. Research shows that closing the U.S. racial wealth gap would result in a 4 to 6 percent increase in U.S. GDP (Noel & Pinder, 2019).

This type of data is often reported on the national level, such as in reports by the *Institute for Policy Studies* and *Prosperity Now* (Asante-Muhammad, Collins, Hoxie, & Nieves, 2017), *The United States Census Bureau* (United States Census Bureau, 2016), *Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co.* (Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co., 2018), McKinsey & Company (Noel & Pinder, 2019), and more.

Another limitation of the report was the lack of rigorous statistical methods used to analyze the data. This includes methods like regression analysis, hypothesis testing, ANOVA testing, and other such methods that are traditionally used to determine correlation and/or causality. Such tests would provide more formal verification/rejection of the conclusions made in this report. For example, the civic engagement section of the report would certainly benefit from this type of testing. This could help us understand if voter turnout in Richland County was, perhaps, a function of other variables such as income, education, or others.

Finally, another important limitation of this report was the potential personal bias of the author. Specifically, the author of this report is black, a factor which may have introduced unconscious and unintentional bias to the report. Given the existing literature on implicit bias – e.g. from (Bagenstos, 2007), (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006), (Devine & Plant, 2002), and more – this is a very legitimate concern.

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