



Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-Being

Closing the Black-White Earnings Gap

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A recent report from the Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-Being (CRFCFW) at Columbia University recommended several programs and job training ideas for helping Black Bermudian males close earnings, unemployment and enrollment gaps between themselves and their same age White male and Black female peers.

The report also detailed a collaborative structure to implement the proposed programs. This structure would involve Bermuda's schools, its other units of government, key youth serving organizations, and members of the business community for implementing the programs and training.

The recommendations are meant to prevent earnings and employment gaps from forming in the first place and include "second chance" programs providing vocational, soft and work-related skills for out-of-school youth that help them come off the wall

Framing the Problem: Occupational Segregation

Our analysis of Census data concluded that Black men tended to work in trades or technical jobs, whereas Black females and White men were more likely to work in the finance or business-sector or in administrative jobs. There were several possible explanations for the resulting earnings and employment disparities between Black males and their same-age peers. Occupational segregation was one such explanation. Occupational segregation by race and gender could be driven by choices

young people make for themselves, but they could also be the result of choices made by employers including a preference for women over men for administrative jobs. Below we focus on the first of these points and how young Black males often perceive their career options.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with Black male high school seniors revealed that Black male youth have a strong interest in trades or technical jobs because they enjoy 'working with their hands'. Boys anticipate greater job satisfaction in positions where they might take things apart, build and/or fix things.

"I find carpentry interesting because I'm still hands on and I'm making stuff. So just like with the IT, you're hands on, putting stuff together, taking it apart and building different things."

Though many do not live with their fathers, sons model the career choices of their fathers and fathers are less likely than mothers to have post-secondary education or to work in administrative positions. Thus, the preference for 'working with their hands' passes from one generation to another even though the economy is generating high paying administrative, managerial, and professional jobs requiring post secondary-education

"Well, I just started the motor mechanics class, and that's pretty interesting, because my grandpa owns a garage, but this class has actually given me more insight of how things work and stuff. Before it was just like me doing it because my grandpa asked me to. But now I'm getting more of an understanding."

One boy had considered the corporate sector but his mom convinced him to pursue engineering.

“Well she always wants me to do something that I’m gonna like. When I used to tell her I wanted to go into the business field, she really didn’t think that was for me and I think she was right there. She always like encouraged me to go into ...the mechanical area, but I always you know thinking of money first. Yeah it’s Bermuda, I wanted to get a job in one of the big insurance firms there so, but like she kinda help me out in making up that decision that uh, that something more hands-on was right for me.”

Bermuda’s parents generally, and her youth-serving organizations especially, can send a more useful message to males that ‘working with one’s hands’ and post-secondary schooling are not mutually exclusive. Even surgeons work with their hands.

Programs that expose Black male youth to high-wage jobs in finance and business sectors through mentoring and job-shadowing opportunities may change their perceptions about gender and work. If done effectively, the exposure will counteract their self-imposed barriers to high-wage jobs while also combating lingering employer discrimination – a factor also noted by the study.

Policies and Programs to Improve the Employment and Educational Outcomes of Black Bermudian Youth₁

From our original report and in follow-up policy discussions we concluded that an extensive world of work and job-exposure program was needed. Such an effort would involve multiple sectors, including: schools, businesses, government, and the non-profit community. The effort would also include the following components and target in-school and out-of-school youth.

In-School Policies and Programs

1. Extensive guidance counseling in high school
2. Guidelines that document job requirements distributed to school guidance departments by members of the business community.
3. Career Academies for Career Exposure
4. Enhanced and expanded business mentoring and job exposure/ experience for public school students.
5. Educational scholarships
6. Better Workforce outcomes for Bermuda College Graduates

Out-of-School Policies and Programs

1. Tutoring for the GED
2. Job Corps

To implement these policies we offer two guidelines: (1) Collaboration matters and (2) Evaluation matters. We also highlight two US-based programs that Bermuda might consider replicating and offer suggestions for upgrades at Bermuda College.

Collaboration Matters

We recommend a strong collaborative effort involving schools, businesses, other government agencies and non-profit organizations to implement the policies and programs that can reduce occupational segregation and increase earnings among Black Bermudian males. Schools already serve in-school youth with teachers, curricula, and guidance personnel. However, in the proposed collaboration teachers would send different messages, curricula would be revised, and more guidance personnel would be available to identify students’ career interests earlier, so they are better prepared to make choices about post-secondary schooling. The government would provide oversight, leadership and funding for program operations, evalua-

tion and capacity building. Non-profit organizations would provide after school supports to in-school youth and undertake proposed program activities for out-of-school youth. Finally, businesses would contribute jobs and internships, and guidance to schools and non-profit organizations about the hard and soft skills young people need to be successful in the workplace. Businesses should also play a leading role in guiding curricula changes and in monitoring program content and standards.

Evaluation Matters

Evaluation matters because programs with impacts that have been demonstrated by a rigorous, multi-site evaluation are more likely to be replicated successfully at a national scale. This may occur because the capacity to replicate the program had to be developed in order to undertake the multi-site evaluation, and therefore, the technical assistance required to undertake subsequent replication already exists. For example, the island's mentoring programs, Youthnet and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, are both based on a program model whose impacts were confirmed by a rigorous, multisite evaluation in the U.S. The model was brought to Bermuda in 1999 and Youthnet has grown to become the island's largest mentoring program. Youthnet is school-based and matches senior- age adults with primary school students. By 2007, 50 volunteers in 18 schools had formed over 500 student-mentor relationships.

Bermuda's businesses have involved themselves with Youthnet, creating an infrastructure that can be used to expand the Island's job-shadowing options. Recently the Berkeley Institute teamed up with Youthnet and Appleby, an offshore law firm, to produce a corporate mentoring program for 33 of the Berkeley schools "S1" middle school students. Twenty-five mentors from Appleby will become "buddies" for 18 months so that the students will gain "the skills and confidence to be responsible for their own futures." In a similar vein, Caitlin Insurance offers a mentoring program for "S3-S4"

students. Those that maintain a grade of B or better receive a \$10,000 college scholarship.

Although some adaptation may be required to adjust for local conditions, once replicated successfully, programs that have demonstrated positive impacts in a rigorous evaluation are likely to be successful elsewhere. Below we identify two additional programs with positive impacts on secondary-school graduation or the employment and earnings of young Black males in rigorously evaluated, multi-site, demonstration projects that show promise for reducing occupational segregation in Bermuda.

Programs for Young Black Bermudian Males

Bermuda businesses offer some courses and programs designed to increase the number of Black Bermudian students that receive jobs in Bermuda's high-paying industries. For example, for the past three years The Bermuda Employer's Council has offered business skills training to "S4" students at the Cedarbridge Academy. Their WorkReady program teaches resume writing, interviewing, business dress, interpersonal actions and reactions, personal behavior, business writing, e-mail etiquette and customer service perspectives. To make sure the curriculum complies with business standards, the Council supplies its own professional trainers from the business world. The Employer's Council recently expanded the Work-Ready business skills program to non-school and dropout youth at the Adult Education School.

We endorse the training and themes of such a program. However, we recommend that Bermuda replicate Career Academies, which employs the same themes beginning much earlier in the high school years. If successfully replicated, this model could help Black males and many other Bermudian students qualify for jobs in Bermuda's high-paying industries.

Career Academies

The Career Academies model was developed in the United States in 1969 to promote school to work transitions for urban youth who thrive from work-based learning opportunities. Over 2500 Career Academies, each involving 100-200 students, operate in the United States and they organize students' experiences around specific career-based themes (health and hospitals, for example). In pursuing this theme, students take academic, career, and technical courses, while participating in job-shadowing experiences organized by school-local employer collaborations. A rigorous, long-term, multi-site evaluation has shown very positive impacts of the Career Academy model on school completion and earnings, especially for at-risk Black males². This places Career Academies in a class of its own and should be of particular interest to Bermudians.

Job Corps

In the U.S., Job Corps is the largest, federally funded, vocationally focused education program for disadvantaged youth. It mostly serves non-White, high school dropouts between 16 and 24 years old including many with criminal records, especially among Black males. The primary services include vocational training in more than 75 trades, with input from local businesses and labor unions that provide information about specific competencies required by the training. A recent rigorous evaluation with a four-year follow-up showed that Job Corps had large and statistically significant impacts on GED training and small positive impacts on average weekly earnings. There were no overall significant effects on earnings after 1998 when the downturn leading to U.S. 2001 recession began³. However, earnings impacts were significantly positive for older (20-24 year-old) participants even during the 1998-2003 downturn⁴. In the past, Bermudians tried to replicate a Job Corps program for non-school youth, but the effort was never fully implemented. We recommend re-introducing a Job Corps program

with a sufficiently large and committed partnership--among business, government, the schools, and non-profits-- to make the replication work.

Upgrades at Bermuda College

A larger number of Black male students will enroll in Bermuda College than ever before because its tuition is now free and the proportion of boys enrolled in Bermuda's public secondary school is rising for unexplained reasons. Bermuda's knowledge-based economy demands higher education, but many young Black Bermudian men fear that the college will not provide them with a rigorous educational experience and that they will encounter the same negative experiences with peers that prevented them from taking full advantage of what was available in secondary school. There are jobs in the island's economy requiring more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree and these positions go begging. The college is a natural candidate for offering the training to serve this market. What are these jobs? What course/career offerings could Bermuda College provide to enable more young Black Bermudian men to secure them? What is Bermuda College doing to address the concerns of young Black Bermudian males about rigor and negative peer pressure? Put differently, what changes would make Bermuda College a more effective piece of Bermudas' workforce development system, especially in ways that give young Black men the skills they need to secure higher paying jobs?

These are the other critical questions that the island must address to enable young Black men to fully participate in the economic opportunities others now enjoy and in addressing these questions it is clear that businesses in Bermuda must play a leading role, along with other critical stakeholders in government, the schools, and the non-profit sector.

The Funding Question

The business community's efforts to prepare Ber-

muda's workforce for high-paying employment opportunities have been limited and often discontinued because of a lack of funding. To be successful, such efforts need the support of schools, who host and teach Bermuda's students, non-profit agencies, which can provide other supports needed to foster youth development, and government, which can provide leadership, access to information about effective school-to-career policies and practices developed on the island and elsewhere and money to replicate and evaluate new programs. In the long run, however, more effective programs for Bermuda's in-school and out-of-school youth, especially Black males, can be had at no additional cost. Funds currently left behind in the Department of Education's budget when youth drop out of secondary school can be used to provide on-going support for Bermudian versions of a Career Academies model and the Jobs Corps. Each dropout represents between \$8,000 and \$12,000 in unused funds that currently do not go to the National Training Board or the Training and Employment Service to serve out of school youth. These funds are no higher than the per client costs of these programs.

Recommendations

Poor implementation can sabotage excellent programs. Bermuda must commit itself to a multi-sector collaboration between schools, businesses, government, and the non-profit community and use it to implement the eight-part school to career program outlined in this brief and described in further detail in the full report. We believe that the island's business community will be particularly interested in helping Career Academy schools within Bermuda's existing schools. We also suggest that the government play a larger role in implementing a Job Corps program. Finally funding these efforts should be largely a government responsibility while allowing the business and non-profit organizations effective control over youth development and industry-related program content.

Endnotes

- ¹ CRFCFW thanks the Bermuda Employers Council and the Association of Bermuda Insurance Companies for their guidance and feedback in the production of this brief.
- ² Kemple, J.J., & Willner, C.J. (2008). *Career academies: Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment, and transitions to adulthood*. New York: MDRC
- ³ Schochet, P. Z., Burghardt, J., & McConnell, S. (2008). Does Job Corps work? Impact Findings from The National Job Corps Study *American Economic Review*, 98(5), 1864–1886.
- ⁴ When assessing the relevance of these findings to Bermuda, CRFCFW staff note that employment programs typically have small impacts on earnings, especially in the long run, because those who did not participate in the program are able to find similar employment-training services in their communities. Since few such programs are available in Bermuda, this is unlikely and therefore program impacts of Job Corps in Bermuda are likely to be higher.

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Opinions, conclusions, recommendations and points of view expressed in this brief represent a consensus of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the funders of the study on which the brief is based.

For a full discussion on this topic, please see chapters four and five of our research study which may be found at www.crfcfw.columbia.edu/pub/Bermuda_full.pdf.