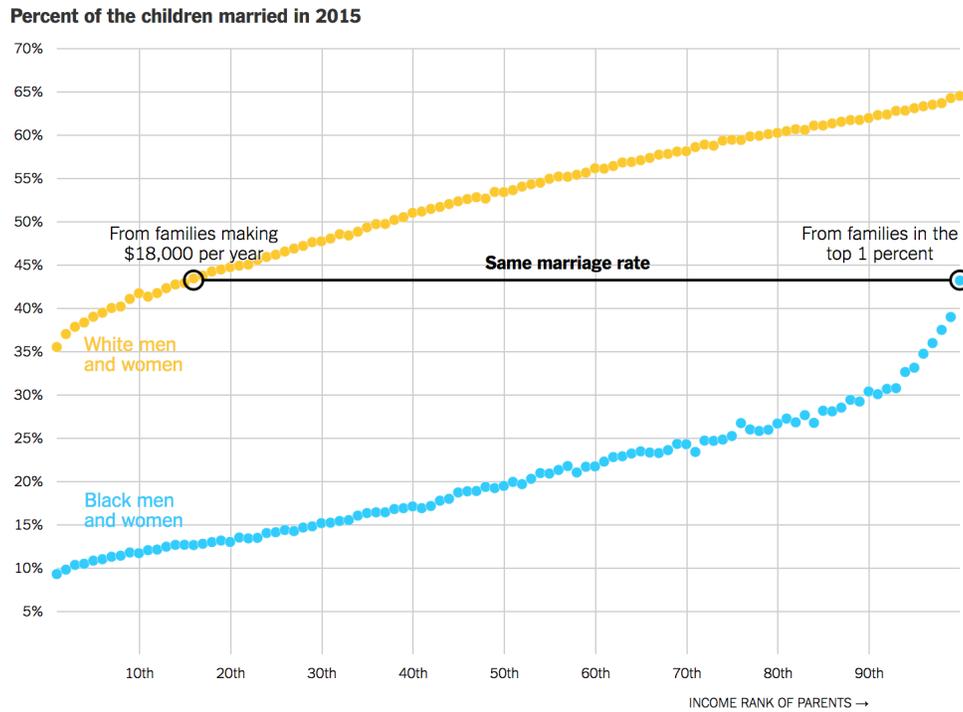


Dear friends:

Black Vs White Income Gaps: The Marriage Gap is Larger!

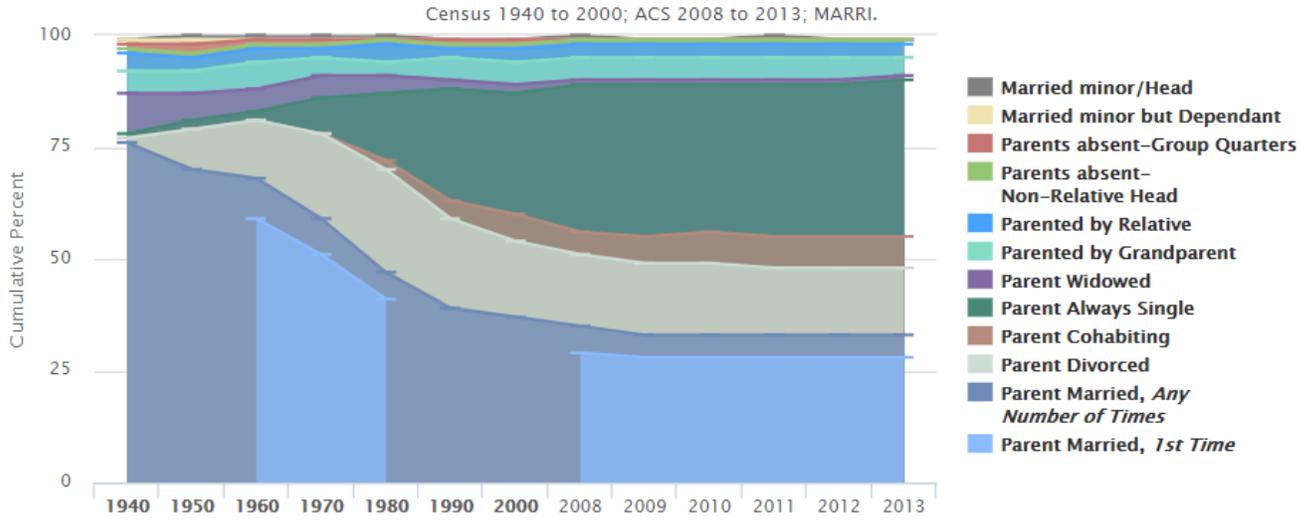
An intriguing New York Times [article](#) tracks the persistent income gap between blacks and whites. The marriage gap is much wider.



Includes men and women who were ages 32 to 37 in 2015.

Trends in the Family Structure in the Black Family since 1940, from [MARRI Demographics](#). This is one of 5,000 charts that you can explore.

U.S.: Family Structure of Black Children Aged 0 through 17



The chart above, part of an [interactive project by MARRI](#), which allows you to explore family trends in America, by highlighting changes in family structure over time.

Blog

Black Income Mobility: Racism or Family Culture?¹



As a young psychologist in the early 1970s I learned that resolving the conflicts between the married parents led to “spontaneous” recovery for 90% of the children referred to me for treatment -- without any direct treatment of the child. Restore order in the parent’s marriage and the children’s internal chaos and its resulting symptoms disappear.

One recent “progressive theme” in today’s discourse is racism targeted at Black Americans. A very good example from some of the best, brightest, and well-intentioned journalists can be seen in this New York Times *Upshot* article, entitled [“Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys”](#). A similar piece on [income mobility by ethnic background](#), using the same data set appeared a week later. Before I criticize the direction of the articles because it avoids the most compelling data, let me be loud in my praise of the journalists and the analysis they are doing. It is wonderful. The New York Times must be praised for giving them the resources to do this quality of work. I invite you to use the it, [by playing around with variables](#) they make available.

Now let’s look at their case for racism against Blacks

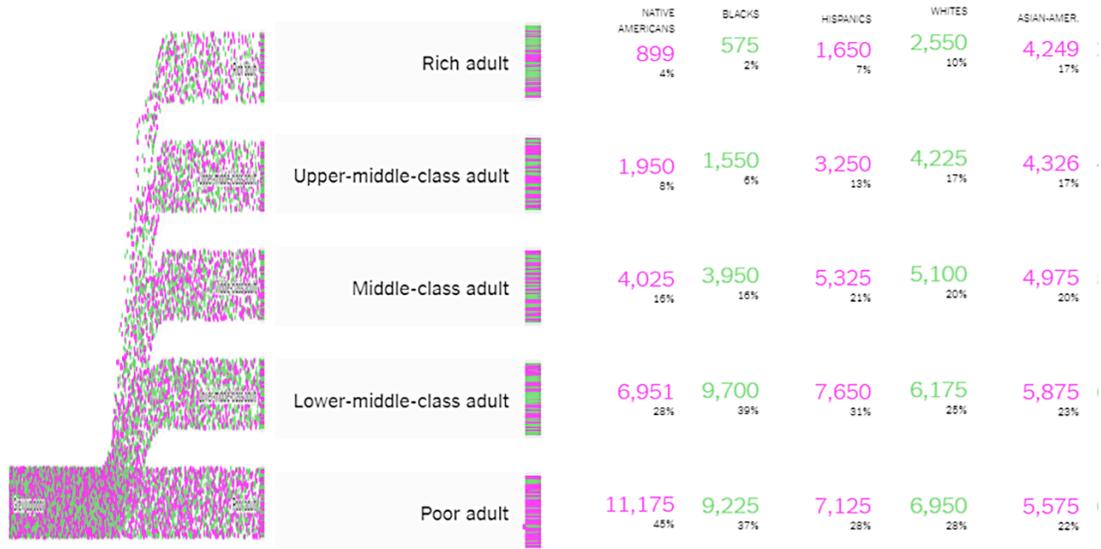
- 1) Looking at those who start out in the bottom quintile (the poor) clear ethnic disparities become apparent when I ran the numbers on their site. Black children struggle the most at making it into the “rich” quintile in adulthood and while (37%) stay in poverty (though American Indians do worst at 45%).

¹ An [earlier Faith and Family Findings](#) has more material related to this issue.

² The title and the red inserts in the chart are my own, they are not part of the NYT original

Starting Poor (Boys and Girls, Native born Mothers) in Childhood, Ending ~ in Adulthood: Individual Income

Source: NYT, Upshot, March 27, 2018



2) Looking at those who start out in the top quintile (the rich) clear ethnic disparities are also apparent: Black children do worst at staying rich in their adulthood.

Starting Rich in Childhood (Boys and Girls, Native Born Mothers), Ending ~ in Adulthood: Individual Income

Source: NYT, Upshot, March 27, 2018



Is this racism?

The NYT editors clearly think so, given their title for the article “*Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys*” and by their quoting a professor who preaches this message:

“One of the most popular liberal post-racial ideas is the idea that the fundamental problem is class and not race, and clearly this study explodes that idea,” said Ibram Kendi, a professor and director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University. “But for whatever reason, we’re unwilling to stare racism in the face.”

I think the professor should study the articles and the data again: Some of the analysis and one of the charts points to the elephant in the room no one wants to name: marriage. It is politically very incorrect and flies in the face of the “progressive” interpretation of the data.

For instance, the article points out:

“The authors [of the underlying study from which the NYT data is drawn] including the Stanford economist Raj Chetty and two census researchers, Maggie R. Jones and Sonya R. Porter, tried to identify neighborhoods where poor black boys do well, and as well as whites. ---The few neighborhoods that met this standard were in areas that showed less discrimination in surveys and tests of racial bias. They mostly had low poverty rates. And, intriguingly, these pockets — including parts of the Maryland suburbs of Washington, and corners of Queens and the Bronx — were the places where many lower-income black children had fathers at home. Poor black boys did well in such places, whether their own fathers were present or not. --- The few areas in which black-white gaps are relatively small tend to be low-poverty neighborhoods with low levels of racial bias among whites and high rates of father presence among blacks [emphasis added]. Black males who move to such neighborhoods earlier in childhood earn more and are less likely to be incarcerated. However, fewer than 5% of black children grow up in such environments.”

These neighborhoods are found in parts of DC and Maryland... close enough to where Professor Kendi of American University works.

But not everyone is happy with the implication that marriage might have something to do with it:

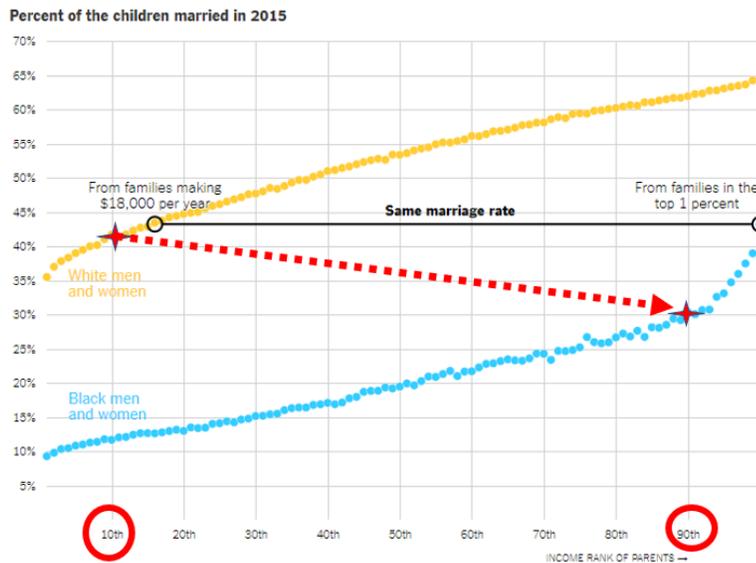
“That is a pathbreaking finding,” said William Julius Wilson, a Harvard sociologist whose books have chronicled the economic struggles of black men. “They’re not talking about the direct effects of a boy’s own parents’ marital status. They’re talking about the presence of fathers in a given census tract.”

But here is the stark reality: Marriage is making the difference in virtually every case (for Blacks, Whites, Asian Americans, Hispanics and Whites). Marriage is non-racist: its benefits apply across all races and its absence hurts across all races. But its absence is greatest in the Black family. Add to this the compounding effects of intergenerational marriage-intactness or non-intactness and the power of marriage and the destructiveness of its absence is multiplied.

The huge differences in rates of family intactness are visible in this [NYT chart](#).²

**Very Large Gap in Marriage Rates :
Average Parental Marriage for Whites in the Bottom Quintile
is Much Higher than the Average for Top Quintile Blacks**

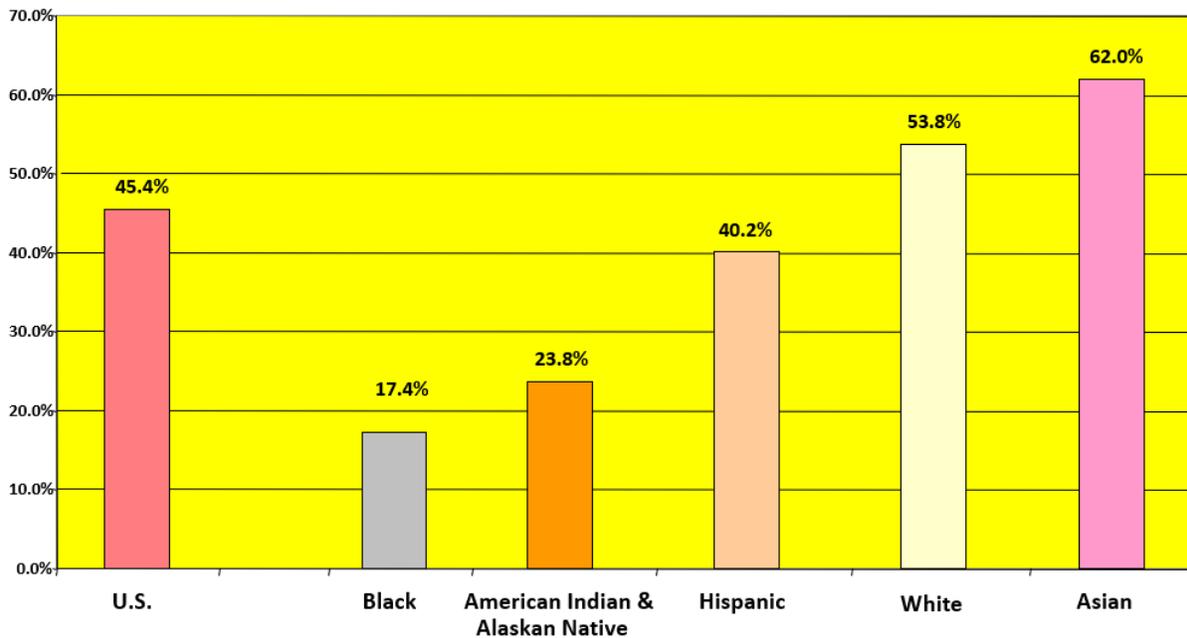
Source: NYT, The Upshot, March 19, 2018



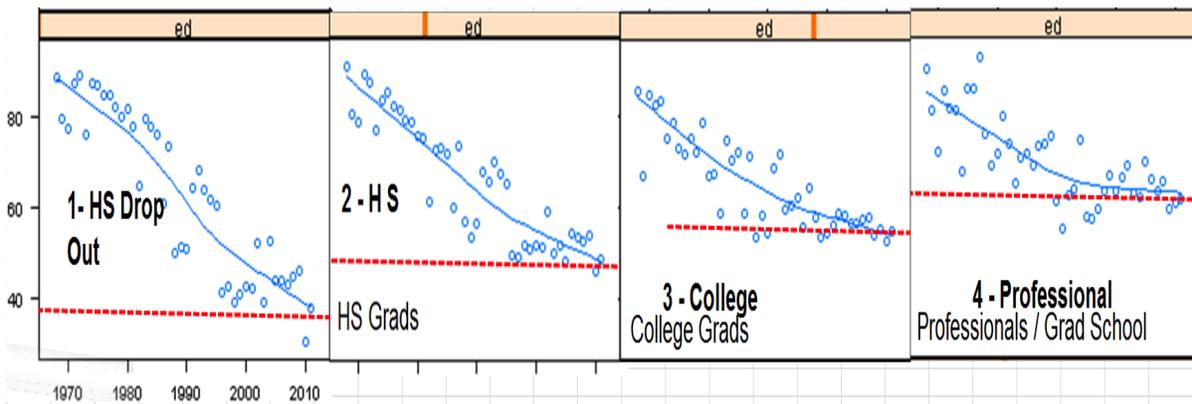
On rates of marriage the poorest whites do better than the richest blacks. Poor white boys have a much higher chance of having their father present than rich black boys do. Is this racism?

Here is the national data across ethnic groups, from the American Community Survey (annual mini-census).

² The title and the red inserts in the chart are my own, they are not part of the NYT original chart.



These ratios have remained relatively stable over the last decade, and it is worth noting that the rate of marriage among Black men in 1965 when Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote, *The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, was as high, if not higher than in the Asian family today (our most intact ethnic group). The following data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics illustrates the fall in marriage rates by level of education among black men aged 25-54 between 1970 and 2010.



From the analysis [MARRI did in 2013](#) we know that marriage rates between the rich districts and the poverty tracts of the District of Columbia (North West vs. South East, DC) differ almost by 10 times (over 900%). This chart above shows the increasing family disintegration (black men not marrying) that black children have experienced since 1970.

The NYT *journalists* are much more circumspect than their editors in drawing conclusions:

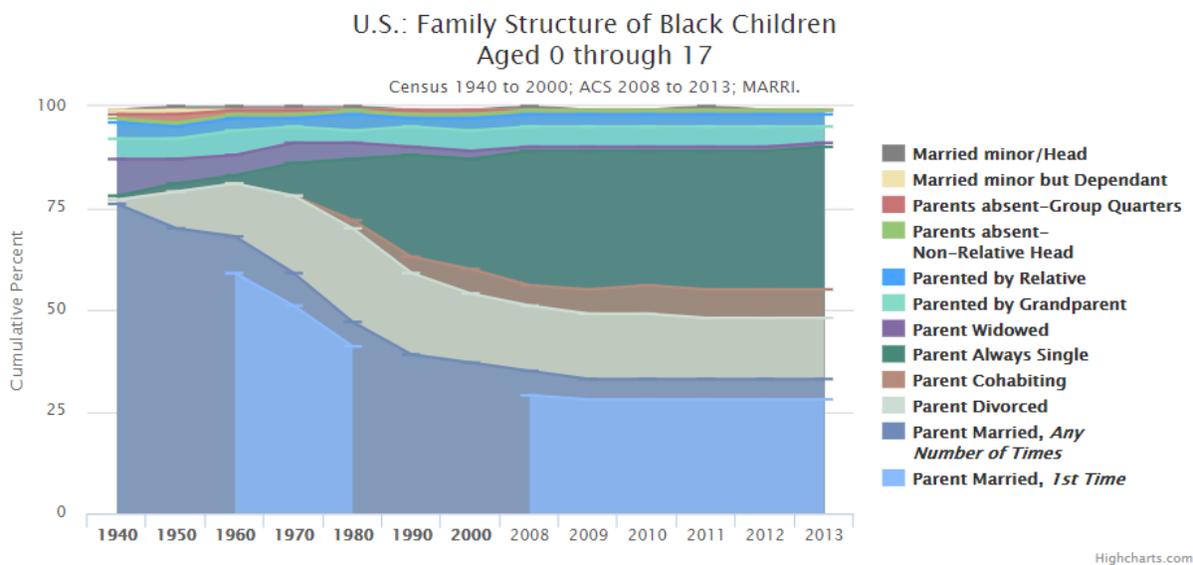
“African-Americans made up about 35 percent of all children raised in the bottom 1 percent of the income distribution. They made up less than 1 percent of the children at

the very top. This picture captures both a source of racial inequality and a consequence of it. White children are more likely to start life with economic advantages. But we now know that even when they start with the same advantages as black children, white boys still fare better, only reinforcing the disparities seen here.”

But one aspect they left out: when you factor in marriage and family, Black children, on average, do not start life with the same advantages

Here is what is really going on in large measure: Marital chaos has increased massively in the Black family over the last eighty years, and especially since the sexual revolution. Nobel Laureate Akerlof has published a study at Brookings Institute on this in 1996. Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned about it in 1965 *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, known as the *Moynihan Report*. (He was vilified for daring to do this report when he was Assistant Secretary of Labor).

The data is incontrovertible. Here is what has happened to Black children since 1940.



Worse still the weakening of human and social capital is compounded over the generations.

Who is to blame? If you want to find blame... One major culprit is the [National Organization of Women](#) who very deliberately and vociferously set out to remove men from their families. Nowhere have they succeeded as they have in the Black Family. Yet they and their allies reign supreme in one major political party (and have many friends in the other).

Though no ethnic group is in the “saints” category, Black men and women have the worst track record at getting married and staying married.

Public policy is no great help here: You don’t go to government for love, especially not the tough love that marriage requires.

The Black Church is no help here either. I have addressed Black pastors' meetings and discussed this with them. They agree. If they speak about marriage teaching what Moses taught, what their grandfathers and great grandfathers taught, and especially what Christ taught (they are Christian pastors) --- they would lose their income! Many in their congregations would seek an easier pastor who would not upset the apple cart.

Is this racism? When black adults embrace family chaos? Most people would say they don't choose it to be so and given their upbringing and early childhood experience within their families there is a lot of truth in that. You cannot choose what you do not experience many would say. But in this discussion, this does not hold. Many people who have not experienced being rich choose to be so and put in the massive effort to pull it off. Are black children urged to make it to the top? In school, in college, at church, by politicians, by the media, by student groups?

Does the same urging and encouragement happen on marriage? Look again at the abysmal rates of marriage among rich Black parents.... It is lower than poor white parents at the bottom of the income scale!

It is not easy to work a way out of cultural weakness. Without a pathway, leadership, and support it is impossible.

It does not take long to go from order to chaos --- in anything. It takes a lot longer to go from chaos to order--- in everything.

Getting to good kids who turn into strong adults requires the tough, suffering of marriage. Why "the suffering of marriage" --- because if marriage was nothing but the effervescence of romance everyone would stay married forever. Learning to live with another, year after year, decade after decade is tough work. It makes for tough character... *the* requirement for moving up the income scale, staying there and holding onto it.



I pray that Black leaders (in church, in public school education, in the media, in Hollywood, in politics, in student associations, in the academy) stand up together and help each other say what needs to be said and--- even more --- do the long hard work of rebuilding Black marriages one at a time, generation after generation.

I hope the New York Times team (who were very prudent in their conclusion³) will continue their analysis and give us another treat in *Upshot*, this time including the variables of always-intact-marriage to permit us to analyze the data that way. I bet it will yield much clarity.

Racism has some influence, no doubt, but it is nothing compared to the weakening of black children visited upon them by the absence of marriage, by the absence of their biological fathers.⁴ Marriage was one of the great strengths that have not been passed down to them by their parents, pastors and teachers. It used to be there.

Remove the chaos in parent's marriage and children thrive --- no matter the racial group. Leave the marital conflict unattended and the children wilt. Compound it over generations and the situation only gets worse. This is not racism. This is human nature.

For the good of the child – and the black child, the future of America,

Pat Fagan

Director of [MARRI](#)

³ “The research makes clear that there is something unique about the obstacles black males face. The gap between Hispanics and whites is narrower, and their incomes will converge within a couple of generations if mobility stays the same. Asian-Americans earn more than whites raised at the same income level, or about the same when first-generation immigrants are excluded. Only Native Americans have an income gap comparable to African-Americans. But the disparities are widest for black boys.”

⁴ Though stepfathers are great and needed even they cannot (on average) cannot have the same impact as the married biological father. Again this is not a racist finding: it holds across ethnic groups. It is a human thing.