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Facts Matter!

Black Lives Matter!

THE
TRAUMA
OF
RACISM

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Facts Matter! Black Lives Matter!

The Trauma of Racism

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Facts Matter! Black Lives Matter!

Research Supports Immediate Action to End Systemic Racial Oppression

In February 2014, President Obama announced My Brother's Keeper,[1] an initiative that aims to create opportunities for boys and young men of color. This initiative prioritizes policy that aids young men and boys of color in achieving six milestones related to education, employment, health, and violence exposure:

1 Getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn;
2 Reading at grade level by third grade;
3 Graduating from high school ready for college and career;
4 Completing post-secondary education or training;
5 Successfully entering the workforce;
6 Keeping kids on track and giving them second chances.

The launch of this initiative placed a brief national spotlight on the systemic disparities in opportunities for and treatment of young men and boys of color and the associated impact on life outcomes for these young men and their families. The need for My Brother's Keeper is well supported by accumulated research findings that create a disheartening picture of the serious challenges that youth of color face, from impediments to opportunities, supports and resources, as well as the too frequent, life-course-altering interactions with our currently configured social welfare, education, health and justice systems. In brief, implicit in this public attention on the challenges faced by Black and Latino boys and young men was the recognition of the serious burden they bear, which directly results from historic and current racial oppression.

The McSilver Institute recognizes the urgent need for policies and programs that immediately address the social inequalities that are driven by race, with poverty being one of the serious consequences of oppression. Below is a summary of select research on the blocked opportunities and oppressive burden that young men of color experience. We hope that these findings fuel action by our government leaders, policy makers, advocacy and provider organizations and communities. In addition, we highlight select promising policy and programmatic interventions that could provide steps to address the serious inequities that appear to be fueling the accumulating number of young men of color whose lives are cut short by violence or diminished by lack of opportunities, resources and supports.

Burden of Racial Oppression for Boys and Young Men of Color

People of color are disproportionately economically disadvantaged.

Nationally, people of color are more likely to live in poverty than their White peers. While 11.6 percent of White Americans live in poverty, 25.8 percent of Black, 23.2 percent of Latino, and 27 percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives live in poverty.[2] Families of color are also between six and nine times more likely than White families to live in areas of concentrated poverty, exacerbating the effects of poverty and impeding opportunities to improve financial situations.[3]

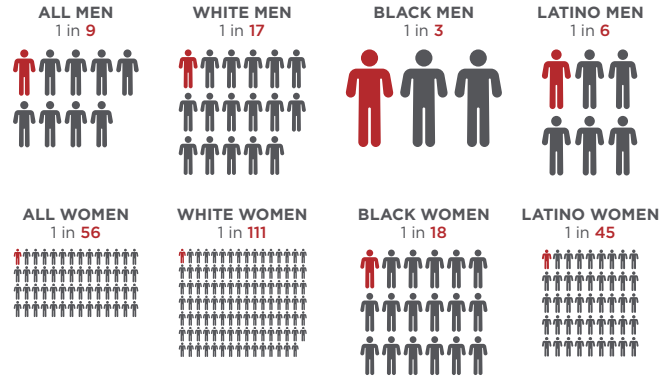**Boys of color achieve the poorest educational outcomes.**

In 2009–10, 52 percent of Black and 58 percent of Latino males graduated from high school in four years, compared to 78 percent of their White male peers.[4] Black men's college graduation rates are the lowest among all genders and racial groups in the U.S.[5] Additionally, only 37.2 percent of Black and 42.2 percent of Latino undergraduates at U.S. colleges and universities were men, thus boys and men of color tend to fare less well in the education system than their female peers.[6]

Black and Latino men experience high rates of unemployment and underemployment.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the first quarter of 2015, the unemployment rates for Black, Latino, and White men between the ages of 20 and 24 were 17.8 percent, 10.6 percent, and 9.1 percent, respectively. Additionally, young people of color are more likely than their White peers not to be working at their full capacity.[7] A 2014 Center for Economic Policy and Research study found that in 2013, 55.9 percent of employed black recent college graduates were "underemployed"—defined as "working in an occupation that typically does not require a four-year college degree"—vs. 45 percent of recent college graduates overall.[8]

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Men of color are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system.

A U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics report showed Black males born in 2001 had a 32 percent likelihood of going to prison in their lives, more than five times the likelihood for White men.[9] A 2012 study found an astounding 68 percent of Black high school dropouts born between 1975 and 1979 had been to prison by 2009.[10] In addition to long-term negative effects on a man's economic mobility, having a family member in prison creates economic and emotional instability in the home, further jeopardizing the well-being of the entire family.

ALL MEN 1 in 9	WHITE MEN 1 in 17	BLACK MEN 1 in 3	LATINO MEN 1 in 6

ALL WOMEN 1 in 56	WHITE WOMEN 1 in 111	BLACK WOMEN 1 in 18	LATINO WOMEN 1 in 45

Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment

Source: Bonzcar, T. (2003). Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974,2001. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Implicit bias and discrimination further impede success for young men and boys of color.

Recent research found that Black boys as young as 10 are viewed as older and less innocent than their peers among a sample of police officers from large urban areas.[11] Another study found that people with "Black-sounding" names (e.g., Jamal and Lakisha) were 50 percent less likely to be called for a job than people with "White-sounding" names when sending identical resumes to a random sample of employers.[12]

Promising Policy & Program Solutions

Initiatives like My Brother's Keeper recognize the urgency of increasing fairness for men of color. Policy solutions are being offered with some promising initiatives described below. This list is offered with the simultaneous recognition, that without addressing the root causes of racial inequity and only intervening in relation to the consequences of oppression, injustice will be perpetuated.

School disciplinary code reform

In New York City during the 2012 school year, 62.5 percent of students arrested by school safety agents were Black and 32 percent were Latino.[13] The majority of these arrests were for discretion-based offenses, where students were cited for obstructing governmental administration or resisting arrest. Mayor Bill de Blasio only recently revised New York City Department of Education Discipline Code B21, which stated that "defying or disobeying the lawful authority or directive of school personnel or school safety agents in a way that substantially disrupts the educational process" could be punishable by a principal's suspension for up to five school days. Nationwide, nonviolent offenses are taking boys of color out of the classroom, putting a population that tends to achieve lower outcomes in school at an even greater disadvantage. Stakeholders across the country are working to persuade policy makers to decrease out-of-class punishments for nonviolent school offenses.[14]

Forward Promise initiative

In July 2013, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation announced the Forward Promise initiative to promote opportunities for the health and success of young men of color in middle and high school.[15] The $9.5 million investment funds a variety of programs aimed at improving health and wellness, dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline through restorative justice, improving school climate, and decreasing penalties for non-violent offenses in school.

Job One initiative

On June 24, 2014, Hillary Clinton announced a new Clinton Foundation youth jobs initiative that will partner with ten companies to hire, train, and mentor people age 16-24 who are out of school and unemployed.[16] The program is expected to reach 150,000 young people and if successful, could provide a market-based model for the improvement of outcomes for this demographic.

Young Adult Internship Program

The New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) created the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) to place 16-to-24-year-old young adults who do not work or attend school into

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short-term, paid internship programs. A September 2014 report from the Center for an Urban Future cited both quantitative and anecdotal accounts of YAIP's efficacy but noted the program currently falls far short of meeting demand, serving only 1,740 of the city's 172,000 disconnected youth in 2013.[17]

CUNY Fatherhood Academy

The CUNY Fatherhood Academy puts young fathers on the path to success by strengthening family bonds; reconnecting families; and helping young fathers earn their GEDs, enroll in college, obtain employment, and learn parenting skills.[18]

Expansion of school-based health centers

Numerous studies have shown that access to school-based health centers (SBHCs) significantly increases adolescents' utilization of physical and mental health services.[19] Improving school-based healthcare can aid in early diagnosis and treatment of mental and physical health issues, improving students' likelihood of success in school. SBHCs have also been related to decreased absenteeism, tardiness, and discipline referrals in schools, further increasing the likelihood of positive outcomes for boys and young men of color.

Project Step Up

Project Step Up, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation and New York City Department of Education, is a youth development and mental health promotion program that aims to promote social-emotional development, academic achievement, on-time high school graduation, and a positive transition to young adulthood for young people of color in East Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Implemented by the McSilver Institute, the program has involved over 470 students who needed additional supports in school, at home, or in their community and achieved a graduation rate of 84 percent over the past seven years, among many other positive educational and mental health outcomes.

Conclusion

Boys and men of color face unique and systemic challenges that negatively affect their own lives, as well as those of their families and communities. These challenges require immediate action through policy changes and innovative programming. Initiatives like Step Up, the Forward Promise Initiative, and school disciplinary code reforms will help to prevent boys and young men of color from repeating grades or dropping out, improving their educational outcomes and reducing their criminal justice contacts. Interventions like the Job One initiative and the Young Adult Internship Program can help combat employer bias, prevent poverty, decrease rates of unemployment and underemployment, and improve outcomes for future generations of boys and young men of color and their families. The inequities that boys and young men of color face are complex, thus it is imperative that organizations and sectors collaborate to reach the shared goal of addressing disparities head-on and improving opportunities for boys and men of color and consequently their families and communities. Finally, this summary is meant to organize existing research in order to underline the burden of racial oppression on boys and young men of color and support immediate action to address the root causes and consequences of racial bias, for only then can we truly achieve McSilver's mission of addressing and eliminating poverty.

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PART TWO

The
Trauma
of Racism

Race is a socially constructed concept that was used to reinforce the rationale for the enslavement of persons of African descent for economic purposes during the Atlantic Slave Trade.[20] The invention of race as an ethnological human stratification, and the racism that followed it, created a historical chain of dehumanizing and traumatic events that continue to hinder human progress.[21] Though historically based on faulty science, the creation of this human hierarchy is now a lived socio-political reality and has severe consequences for people of color.[22-24]

The trauma of racism refers to the cumulative negative impact of racism on the lives of people of color. Encompassing the emotional, psychological, health, economic and social effects of multi-generational and historical trauma, trauma of racism relates to the damaging effects of ongoing societal and intra-social-group racial micro aggressions, internalized racism, overt racist experiences, discrimination and oppression within the lives of people of color.

When repetitive and unresolved, these experiences rooted in racism can create severe emotional pain and distress that can overwhelm a person's and community's ability to cope, creating feelings of powerlessness.[25] For people of color, the burden of the traumatic experiences associated with racism is evidenced by the significant racial disparities in educational achievement, health, criminal justice system participation, and employment. Authors have argued that the too often bleak circumstances that Black males experience are the direct outgrowths of white supremacy operating in the daily lived experiences of people of color.[26]

Trauma of racism is the result of chattel slavery, Jim Crow, lynching, *de facto* and legal discrimination, oppression, employment discrimination, poverty, social alienation, hate crimes, demonization of non-white cultures, discriminatory child welfare practices, mass incarceration, unjust imprisonment, racially biased justice systems, mandatory sentencing, inhumane treatment within societal institutions, unethical medical experiments on ethnic and racial minorities, forced sterilization of Black women, the school to prison pipeline, inferior schools and education, the achievement gap, the sequestering of minority students in special education programs, racial housing segregation, inhumane housing conditions, and discriminatory policing.

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Cumulatively these unjust experiences have affected multiple generations, in ways that have created both resilience and particular societal vulnerabilities.

Body of Knowledge on the Topic of Trauma and Racism

There is an emerging body of research on trauma and racism and their psychological and health implications for persons of color. The similarities of the traumatizing effect of racist experiences and other forms of trauma have been highlighted by scholars in recent times. Clinical practice models are emerging that offer guidance and methods for assessing the impact of racism, contrasting the traditional notion of trauma with overt and covert racist experiences and micro aggressions perceived to be racist by clients.[27]

Several scholars have looked to historical trauma theory while investigating the relationship between trauma and racism. The theory of historical trauma has been used in examinations of disease prevalence and health disparities linked to traumas inflicted upon historically subjugated groups, positing that populations subjected to long-term, mass trauma—colonialism, slavery, war, genocide— have a higher burden of disease than others. Behavioral health scholar Michelle Sotero devised a historical trauma conceptual model to delineate physical, psychological and social pathways that link historical trauma to disease prevalence and health disparities.[28]

Identifying racism and ethnoviolence as catalysts for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and related symptoms has been suggested. Conducting culturally responsive and racially informed assessment and interventions with African Americans, Latina/Latino Americans, Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, Native Americans, and related immigrant groups when they present with symptoms of trauma is advised, particularly when their trauma responses are atypical or the precipitating stressor is ambiguous.[29]

Several scholars have called for the incorporation of a new general category into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, citing a need for the inclusion of an "oppression-based trauma" category to examine "pathologies of oppression" and its health consequences for people of color.[30]

Some scholars who have connected trauma and racism stress the need for new approaches to clinical practice. Specifically, they call for accurately employing the notion of "injury" when assessing crises caused by racist incidents or experiences, in order to better capture the external violation and assault inherent in race-based encounters.[31]

"Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome" describes how the contemporary life experiences and reactions of African Americans to their external environment connect to historical racist trauma. The term PTSS was coined by Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary, a renowned researcher and social work professional, to indicate how the traumatic experiences of enslaved persons adapted their attitudes and behaviors to survive. In her book, she describes how the historical influence of the violence that permeated the lives of the ancestors of African Americans has shaped transgenerational attitudes and behaviors.[32]

Nationally acclaimed public interest lawyer and NYU Law Professor Bryan Stevenson discusses in his book, Just Mercy, how the unjust capital murder conviction of Walter McMillan, an African American man who was framed for murder in Alabama, traumatized his entire community. In this non-fiction work, Stevenson recounts his experiences as an attorney serving condemned poor and Black men on death row, and demonstrates how racial discrimination within America's criminal justice system traumatizes the poor and people of color.[33]

Racism and Its Impact on the Educational Outcomes of Boys of Color

Racism and oppression uniquely impact the lives of boys and young men of color. One of the most glaring examples is their disparate experiences and outcomes within school systems. What has been named "the achievement gap" or the "racial gap in achievement," referring to racial disparities in school test scores, grades, drop-out, graduation rates, and other indicators of academic performance,[34] is a reflection of the impact of the historical trauma of racism on both the lives and families of boys and young men of color and the continuing legacy of a power paradigm of white supremacy which has oppressed people and communities of color and erected the structural racism exemplified in public school processes, pedagogy, curricula and leadership.

June Cara Christian links education, racism and trauma in her comparative study. She argues that formal education has been used to traumatize and dehumanize Black students. She suggests that the academic and policy debate regarding the achievement gap perpetuates a myth that Black students fare poorly academically because of social and cultural beliefs in Black intellectual inferiority. Christian argues that the pervasive nature of racism in the U.S. influences students and schooling processes in ways that implicitly and explicitly dehumanize Black students, which is the true cause of their school performance failure. She suggests that "unearthing" how these processes dehumanize Black students is key to reconstructing Black academic achievement. Christian writes, "For many Blacks, schooling holds innumerable emotionally disturbing racist experiences that were traumatic and continue to unsettle us well after the event(s). Without any acknowledgment or remedy, Black students are expected to attend and excel in an institution that dehumanizes them… Though Blacks suffer a barrage of racist events in school, in addition to racial assault from the broader society…these traumas continuously stab old festering wounds of the past while creating fresh gaping wounds that must be addressed immediately. Across generations, these wounds rarely heal and can often manifest in myriad of ways."[36] Christian suggests the "need for a shift in focus from Black student underachievement… to the racist traumas Black students experience daily in schools, which reciprocally compound other racist traumas Blacks experience outside of the classroom."[37]

Garrett Albert Duncan examines how Black male students are marginalized and excluded at an integrated urban high school in the Midwest known for its caring ethos and academic excellence. In his ethnographic study of City High School (CHS), which has a student population of 300, Duncan examines the different stories

Percentage of 12th Grade Students At or Above Proficient Level on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress

PROFICIENCY IN **MATH**
READING

BLACK
7%
16%

HISPANIC
12%
23%

WHITE
33%
47%
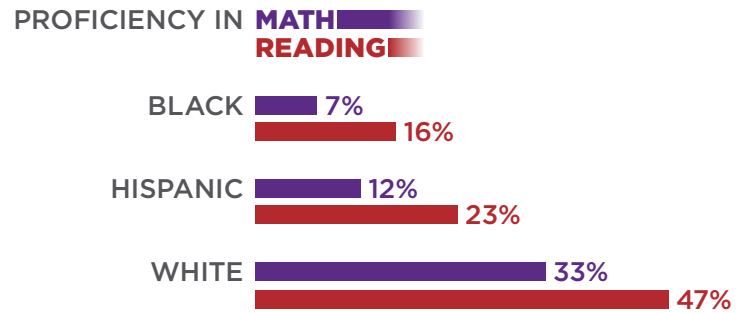
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics. 2013 Mathematics and Reading: Grade 12 Assessments. Retrieved from: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_g12_2013

that students, teachers, and administrators use to explain the marginalization and exclusion of Black male students at CHS. In his study he describes how their sentiments and beliefs about Black males have put them in a predicament that places them "beyond love," a condition where they are excluded from society's economy and care networks and expelled from useful participation in social life.[38] He says their views reflect the prevailing idea within the society that the "exclusion and marginalization of Black males from schools such as City High School is a normal, albeit problematic, aspect of the education of this population of students." Duncan says this pervasive belief has led Black males to be "constructed as a strange population" such that "their marginalization and oppression are understood as natural and primarily of their own doing."[39]

Culturally Responsive Education

The difficulties and setbacks faced by Black students are truly exceptional. The National Education Association (NEA) has said, "The statistics describing Black boys as more likely than their peers to be placed in special education classes, labeled mentally retarded, suspended from school, or drop out altogether is disturbing enough. But the surprising news, at once puzzling and promising, is that we actually have tools to reverse this trajectory and success stories to prove it."[40]

One of the tools the NEA highlights in its February 2011 publication, *Focus on Blacks*, is culturally responsive education. Culturally responsive education links schooling to culture.[41] It creates a reciprocal relationship between teachers and students where "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students are used as conduits for teaching them more effectively."[42] "This theory postulates that the discontinuities between the school culture and the home and community cultures of low-income students and students of color are an important factor in their low academic achievement…consequently, the academic achievement of these students will increase if schools and teachers reflect and draw on their culture and language strengths."[43]

The NEA featured several of the schools using culturally responsive teaching that are exceeding expectations. Newark Tech

in New Jersey, where 85 percent of the mostly Black and Hispanic students qualify for free or reduced lunch, had 100 percent of students graduate. Eight-eight percent of these students were shown to be proficient in math, and 100 percent tested proficient in reading. Similarly, schools with a culturally responsive approach in Maryland's Montgomery County had a 2010 graduation rate of 83 percent, which is 36 percent above the national average for Black males.[44]

According to Professor Geneva Gay of the University of Washington in Seattle, "teachers using this teaching method should know how to use cultural scaffolding in teaching their students. This involves using the students' own cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement. This begins by demonstrating culturally sensitive caring and building culturally responsive learning communities. Teachers have to care so much about ethnically diverse students and their achievement that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish it."[45]

Culturally responsive education takes into account the student's ethnic, cultural, and language background when creating and teaching school curriculum. There are different ways of implementing a culturally responsive approach. Geneva Gay points out the following essential steps:

- **Developing a Cultural Diversity Knowledge Base:** Explicit knowledge about cultural diversity, including knowing specific factors and contributions of different ethnic groups.
- **Designing Culturally Relevant Curricula:** Teachers must know how to convert the first step into something that can be imparted through the curriculum. Each type of curriculum present in the classroom should be used as an opportunity to embrace cultural diversity.
- **Demonstrating Cultural Caring and Building a Learning Community:** the classroom climate must be conducive to learning for ethnically diverse students. This begins by demonstrating culturally sensitive caring and building culturally responsive learning communities.

▶▶

▸ **Cross-Cultural Communications:** Culturally responsive teacher preparation programs teach how the communication styles of different ethnic groups reflect cultural values and shape learning behaviors and how to modify classroom interactions to better accommodate them.

▸ **Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction:** This calls for a delivery that is 'multiculturalized.' An example of doing this would be to match instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse students.[46]

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) highlights ten specific activities for culturally responsive instruction: 1) "Acknowledge students' differences as well as their commonalities." 2) "Validate students' cultural identity in classroom practices and instructional materials." 3) "Educate students about the diversity of the world around them." 4) "Promote equity and mutual respect among students." 5) "Assess students' ability and achievement validly." 6) "Foster a positive interrelationship among students, their families, the community, and school." 7) "Motivate students to become active participants in their learning." 8) "Encourage students to think critically." 9) "Challenge students to strive for excellence as defined by their potential." 10) "Assist students in becoming socially and politically conscious."[47]

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Conclusion

Shirley Chisholm, the first Black U.S. congresswoman, said, "racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal."[48] When you consider mass incarceration, employment disparities, and the achievement gap, racism in the lives of Black males bears resemblance to trauma given its injurious effect to their socio-economic prospects and the powerlessness it can evoke. And yet, there are promising ways to begin healing these harms by implementing an education program that is reflective of their lives, culture, history, and experiences.

The Schott Foundation recommends setting the bar higher, looking to postsecondary attainment and achievement in our reform efforts. It "urges a national standard for high school graduation that indicates students' readiness for postsecondary schooling, rather than varied diplomas, including lesser quality diplomas that are often granted disproportionately to children of color, especially to Black males." The foundation notes that "New York recently ended its…protocol of Local and Regents' diplomas, but too many states continue similar disparities."[49] Given "the competitive global economy, whether a student has meaningful access to postsecondary education and training is a strong determinant of his or her future chances for achievement and economic security."[50]

Given the high stakes in the continuance of the status quo, which comes at an enormous social and economic cost for our nation, it is imperative that we make substantial investments in evidence-based interventions that provide real opportunities for Black males to have long-term successful outcomes. Armed with such evidence, communities across the country can begin to make a measurable impact in reducing these troubling disparities.

PART THREE

Place
Matters

Part One of this report, "Research Supports Immediate Action to End Systemic Oppression," addresses structures of power and privilege that hinder social equity, and the burdens that places on young men and boys of color. Part Two, "The Trauma of Racism," addresses the cumulative negative impact racism has on the lives of people of color. Part Three turns to community conditions and recently released research findings from McSilver Institute collaborators, which highlight the significant association between community location and a range of outcomes, including health, educational achievement, exposure to violence and economic prosperity. In brief, this section highlights a recent example of research that recognizes that "Place Matters." The study summarized below represents a generation's worth of scientific evidence that differences in neighborhood conditions powerfully predict the well-being of local residents. Further, the concept of accumulated disadvantage usefully characterizes differential neighborhood conditions and captures important features of day-to-day life that contribute to health, social and economic disparities. The longer people live under chronically stressful economic and social conditions, the greater the physiological wear and tear they suffer, and the less likely they are to function at full capacity.[51]

The Community Loss Index (CLI)

In their groundbreaking paper, "The Community Loss Index: A New Social Index," published in the December 2013 issue of *Social Service Review*, Dr. Mimi Abramovitz, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, CUNY, and her colleague Dr. Jochen Albrecht, Department of Geography, Hunter College, challenged the premise that the high prevalence of health and social problems within specific New York City communities are driven by individual failings. Rather, they demonstrated the undermining impact of accumulated social disadvantage and adverse living conditions and that these conditions fall heaviest on the residents of Black and Latino communities too often also struggling with poverty. These findings point to the impact of structural racism and social exclusion.

Abramovitz and Albrecht identified six forms of "unpredictable and uncontrollable" loss which are all too common in identifiable communities in New York City. Each of these losses is capable of producing extreme stress on its own. In conjunction with each other, the compounded impact results in serious problematic consequences for both individuals and communities.

Loss of Household Member:

▸ **Foster care placement**

The removal of children from their families—and communities—by child welfare authorities and placement with temporary caregivers, disproportionately affects Black families in New York City and nationwide.[52] For example, data from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services reveals that in 2010, 46.6 percent of the children entering New York City's foster care system were Black, vs. 28.2 percent of the city's child population.[53]

▸ **Incarceration**

According to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, as of January 1, 2014, 53,565 inmates were under custody statewide. 95.6 percent were male, 45.8 percent from New York City, and just under half were Black.[54] Whites and Latinos comprised 23.8 percent and 24.1 percent of the state's inmate population respectively. As Abramovitz and Albrecht noted, the vast majority of those incarcerated are in their prime earning and parenting years, compounding the impact of their loss on families and communities.

▸ **Long-term hospitalization**

Abramovitz and Albrecht cited numerous studies showing higher hospitalization rates according to race and poverty status. The New York State Department of Health's 2012 Minority Health Surveillance Report, for example, reported that of all New Yorkers, Blacks suffered the highest asthma and diabetes hospitalization rates followed by Latinos.[55] As with other forms of loss, long-term hospitalization leaves families and communities without key contributors.

- **Untimely death (e.g., murders, suicides, heart attacks, strokes, and accidents)**

  Abramovitz and Albrecht identified losses due to sudden, unpredictable deaths to be a source of extreme stress and frequent stigma for survivors. They cited studies linking numerous causes of untimely death to low-income communities with race being an important factor. According to New York City's 2010 Population and Mortality Report, "assault (homicide)" is the sixth most common cause of premature death among Puerto Ricans and fourth most common among other Latinos and Blacks.[56] In contrast, it is not among the top ten causes for Whites.

Loss of Financial Assets:

- **Unemployment (loss of job)**

  While New York State's unemployment rate was at 5.8 percent in January 2015,[57] it was as high as 9.6 percent in the Bronx and 7.3 percent in Brooklyn (Kings County), [58] both of which have large poverty impacted and Black and Latino populations. Moreover, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data show that in January 2015, the national unemployment rate for Blacks was 10.3 percent, vs. 6.7 percent for Latinos, and 4.9 percent for Whites.[59] Abramovitz and Albrecht noted that unemployment not only diminishes one's ability to sustain oneself and family, but also diminishes the tax base of one's community.

- **Foreclosure (loss of home)**

  Abramovitz and Albrecht observed that housing has meaning beyond its role as shelter and cited the spiraling individual and community consequences, including damaged reputation, financial instability, and social problems, that result from foreclosure. A June 2014 report by New York State Senator Jeffrey Klein and Assembly Member Helene Weinstein found that in New York City, almost 80 percent of all pre-foreclosure filings—the initial phase of the foreclosure process—were made on properties in neighborhoods primarily composed of Black and Latino residents.[60] An August 2011 report by New York

University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy found more stunning evidence of the link between race and foreclosures. It revealed that "default rates on home purchase mortgages are higher in census tracts with large shares of Black residents, regardless of the borrower's own race."[61]

Abramovitz and Albrecht documented the adverse impact each loss has on an individual's financial security, physical and mental health, family and personal relationships, engagement in illegal activities or other risky behaviors, faith in government and societal institutions, and community economic and social well-being. They argued that in the aggregate, the concentration of losses within a small geographic area, such as a neighborhood, can create a community-wide version of the "loss spiral"—a vicious cycle from which it is very difficult to recover, especially for those who have few resources to begin with. This downward loss spiral was first described by Dr. Stevan Hobfoll in the March 1989 *American Psychologist* paper "Conservation of Resources: A New Attempt at Conceptualizing Stress."[62]

Based on zip code data, Abramovitz and Albrecht measured and mapped the prevalence of these six losses in New York City at the citywide, neighborhood and community level. The authors found clear clustering of high losses in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island, and the neighborhoods of East Harlem in Manhattan and Jamaica in Queens.

Within those high-loss areas, residents were significantly more likely to be Black or Latino relative to those in two low-loss areas looked at for comparative purposes (the borough of Manhattan and the neighborhood of Flushing in Queens).

Also in high loss areas, residents were much more likely to be living below the federal poverty level and/or under age 5—a

The sum of
‣ Foster care placements
‣ Incarcerations
‣ Long-term hospitalizations
‣ Untimely deaths
‣ Foreclosures
‣ Unemployment

LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH
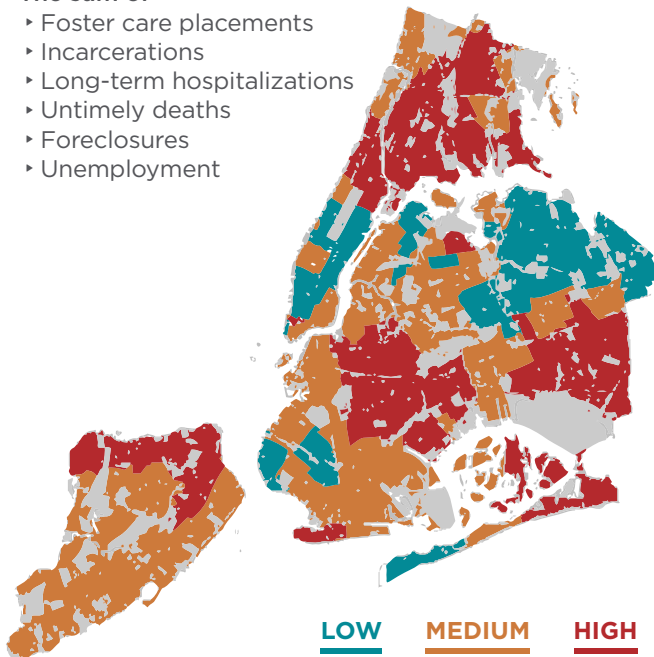
Citywide Accumulated Community Loss

Adapted from Abramovitz, M. & Albrecht, J. (2014, July). Place Matters: Mapping Community Loss as a New Social Indicator. Retrieved from: http://www.alliance1.org/sites/default/files/conferences/workshops/materials/b5_community_loss.pdf

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concentration of young people whose development, the authors noted, is threatened by their community circumstances. In the low-loss areas, residents were significantly more likely to be White or Asian, living above the federal poverty level and over age 64.

By establishing the concept of community loss and developing a methodology for measuring and illustrating it, Abramovitz and Albrecht provided a new means to "unpack poverty" and a new lens for understanding the role of race and place in perpetuating historic systemic oppression.

Abramovitz and Albrecht concluded their paper with an expression of hope that the identification of place-based drivers of social, health and economic challenges "will discourage the development of victim-blaming polices in favor of those that can promote civic engagement and undo accumulated disadvantage through prevention and social change."

Collaborative Research Model to Address Community Conditions

Mobilizing the Adult Protective Shield (MAPS)

The McSilver Institute has partnered with Abramovitz and Albrecht to develop a new study informed by the CLI entitled, "Mobilizing the Adult Protective Shield" (MAPS), which examines the impact of a novel, community-level, participatory research approach designed to strengthen adult protective capacity and reduce youth risk taking in poverty-impacted urban communities.

Accumulated evidence strongly suggests that health-promoting interactions between teens and adults, referred to as the "adult protective shield," can "inoculate" youth from engaging in serious risk behaviors.[63-65] However, the capacity of adults to engage in such interactions with their children depends not only on their own strengths and skills, but also on the availability of resources, the quality of neighborhood life, and the extent to which they are forced to cope with serious, undermining stressors like those that comprise the CLI.[66-67]

Most interventions to reduce teen risk behaviors are grounded on the premise that youth and their families lack prevention-focused knowledge or skills. This premise leads to individual or family level targeted policies and programs to address deficiencies. MAPS begins from the transformative premise, illustrated by Abramovitz and Albrecht, that accumulated social disadvantages and adverse living conditions can undermine family processes. Their approach recommends targeting the undermining influences at the community level with parents as primary change agents.

MAPS relies upon community-based, participatory research methods to organize and communicate information derived from existing census, social, environmental, education, public health, and safety data sources as well as from community members themselves on a range of community-level risk and protective factors. Drawing on Geographic Information Science (GIS) methods and mobile application technology, MAPS conveys community collected findings via interactive risk maps and prepares community members in collaboration with related local governmental agencies to plan, mobilize, and implement strategies that can directly prevent, address or buffer the adverse effects of underlying neighborhood conditions on parents, their children and the community.

Promising Solutions to Prevent Community Loss

Community Mental Health Council Intervention

In 2000, data from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) revealed that African-American children in McLean and Peoria counties were removed from their homes at rates far higher than in the rest of the state.[68] Recognizing an underlying issue related to race within the child welfare system, IDCFS contracted the Community Mental Health Council to monitor and guide the system towards equity and reduce bias.

Based on a root cause analysis, a four-part intervention was developed. First, an effort was made to recruit field office staff

from communities of color. Second, the use of best practices was introduced to the Intake and Investigations Department. Third, family strengthening practices were prioritized as a first line of service. The final step included the development of a technical assistance plan to increase social cohesion and social control through the creation of the Citizen's Quality Assurance Review Panel that included strong community voice with the intention to "reestablish the adult protective shield" by allowing families an option to review a decision made by IDCFS by a committee that now included peers as well as professionals.

Published results reveal that this intervention was associated with a significant reduction in the number of children removed from the home; specifically removals decreased by half. Juanita Redd and colleagues hold this intervention as an example of how research, evidence-informed practice and community collaboration can address complex contextual and structural community issues and contribute to the reduction in the unequal treatment by service systems.

Texas Department of Family Protective Services

The Texas Legislature passed a bill, Senate Bill 6, in 2005 that included a provision requiring the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (TDFPS) to reduce disproportionality statewide. This law was an attempt to address the systemic problem that Black children had a much greater likelihood to be victims of child abuse and neglect than White or Latino children.

In order to meet the requirements of the new law, TDFPS implemented several practice innovations.[69] The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond provided trainings focused on undoing racism to staff. This resulted in a greater awareness of institutional racism and its impact on families struggling with poverty. Additionally, value-based leadership development emphasized empowerment, undoing racism and community engagement. Again, published findings revealed significant reductions in removals of Black children from their families.

The Texas Model is Defined by:

▸ **Data-driven strategies;**

▸ **Leadership development;**

▸ **Culturally competent workforce;**

▸ **Community engagement;**

▸ **Cross systems collaboration;**

▸ **Training defined by anti-racist principles;**

▸ **An understanding of the history of institutional racism and the impact on communities and communities of color.**

Conclusion

Structural community conditions contribute to the oppression experienced by communities of color. Community loss creates an environment that compounds stress and results in barriers to economic and health parity with better resourced neighborhoods.

By engaging caregivers and adolescents to identify areas of need, to prevent adverse conditions and to create potential solutions that can strengthen the adult protective shield, interventions, like the proposed MAPS, are poised to help researchers and policy makers alike to mobilize community-led action.

None of the above interventions go far enough to address the root causes of systemic racial oppression at the core of the harmful disparities. However structural interventions can engage local caregivers, youth, providers, system leaders, policy makers and researchers in joint efforts to identity areas of need, prevent the stressors associated with community loss, and devise potential solutions that will strengthen community life and the adult protective shield. Instead of misplacing blame on individuals, community-level data combined with best practices and participatory approaches can begin to disrupt and transform systems that contribute to accumulated social disadvantages and adverse living conditions.

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There is much that needs to be done to **document** and **actively challenge** the **implicit** and **overt** processes that contribute to **structural oppression**, **social exclusion**, the **trauma of racism**, and the **massive misalignment** between **need** and the allocation of **critical resources**, which **perpetuate** the interrelatedness of race and **poverty**.

Facts Matter!

Black Lives Matter!

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About the McSilver Institute

The McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research conducts and disseminates interdisciplinary, community-based research and advances policy and program solutions to address the root causes and consequences of poverty. Drawing on the intellectual and scholarly strengths of New York University and located within the Silver School of Social Work, the McSilver Institute partners with agencies and communities in New York City, across the nation, and around the world to develop research projects; evidence-informed services and technical assistance; educational programs; and policy recommendations that have short- and long-term social impact. Founded in 2007 through the generosity of Constance and Martin Silver, the McSilver Institute recognizes the significant link between individuals, families, communities, and their external environments, as well as the interrelatedness of race and poverty.

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