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# Changing Places

HOW COMMUNITIES WILL IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF BOYS OF COLOR



Christopher Edley Jr. & Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, Editors  
with a foreword by Robert Phillips

## **CHANGING PLACES**





# **CHANGING PLACES**

HOW COMMUNITIES WILL IMPROVE  
THE HEALTH OF BOYS OF COLOR

**Edited by Christopher Edley Jr.  
and Jorge Ruiz de Velasco**

With a foreword by Robert Phillips



The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law is a multidisciplinary, collaborative venture to produce research, research-based policy analysis, and curricular innovation on issues of racial and ethnic justice in California and the nation.

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*Cover:* The cover image was designed by Oakland, California-based printmaker and digital artist Favianna Rodriguez. Using high-contrast colors and vivid figures, her composites reflect literal and imaginative migration, global community, and interdependence. She has lectured widely on the use of art in civic engagement and the work of bridging community and museum, local and international. Rodriguez is coeditor of *Reproduce and Revolt!* with stencil artist and art critic Josh MacPhee (Soft Skull Press, 2008). An unprecedented contribution to the Creative Commons, this two-hundred-page book contains more than six hundred bold, high-quality black and white illustrations for royalty-free creative use. Rodriguez's artwork also appears in *The Design of Dissent* (Rockport Publishers, 2006), *Peace Signs: The Anti-War Movement Illustrated* (Edition Olms, 2004), and *The Triumph of Our Communities: Four Decades of Mexican Art* (Bilingual Review Press, 2005).



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## Foreword

### AN UNHEALTHY LEGACY

In 2009 my boss, Dr. Robert Ross, president and CEO of The California Endowment, sat down at an East Los Angeles elementary school with a group of mostly Latino parents. Their children had taken part in an after-school program called LA's BEST. Over a plate of chicken, rice, and beans, Dr. Ross asked them what it would take for their kids to be healthy. They told him that the neighborhood streets were unsafe for their children to play on and get exercise, and the local park was no better. What's more, the city's Parks and Recreation Department had begun to charge for summer programs that used to be free.

Parents are not alone in lamenting the state of many neighborhoods and communities that make it difficult for young people to grow up healthy. The youth themselves are also talking. At the Oakland, California-based youth development center Youth Uprising, the question "What is a healthy community?" was posed. They described a place where bullets don't fly and their friends don't die young. One young woman described the abundance of liquor stores in her community and the scarcity of healthy foods. Others wished for positive activities for young people.

These answers reaffirm what many of us who work with children and youth—particularly those in low-income communities and communities of color—know to be true: the inequities they face are persistent, profound, and have long-lasting effects. This doesn't mean the deck can't be reshuffled in their favor, but to do so, we first must redefine what it means

to be “healthy.” The absence of illness does not guarantee the presence of good health. According to the World Health Organization, “health” is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” In this volume we define “healthy communities” as homes, schools, and neighborhoods where all citizens experience physical, mental, and social well-being. On the one hand, if you grow up in a neighborhood with a good school, where it’s safe, where you can walk and play outside, and where you have access to good food, you are more likely to live a long and healthy life. On the other hand, if you grow up in a neighborhood where you’re not safe, where your school is failing you, and where you do not have access to a park or a basic grocery store, you are far more likely to live a shorter life, to earn less money, to be a victim or perpetrator of violence, and to be less healthy emotionally and physically.

In California, if you are African American or Latino or Southeast Asian or Native American, you are likely to face not just one of these challenges, but many or all of them. Children from communities of color are dramatically less healthy than the national population as a whole. A wealth of literature documents racial and ethnic disparities across almost all areas of society, showing how these differences have developed—and in some cases metastasized—over time. Bad policies, practices, and programs have institutionalized disadvantage so that, according to the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative in Washington State, the “inequities that exist at all levels of society have persistent, profound, and long-lasting effects.” Within this context boys and young men of color are particularly vulnerable. The consequences are literally a matter of life and death.

If you are an African American male, you have the lowest life expectancy of any racial group of either gender in the country. Latino males are next in line. These grim statistics are driven by a higher prevalence of preventable diseases, homicide, and accidental death. Astoundingly, for example, African American men are sixteen times more likely to die violently than white men. The majority of children growing up in low-income communities and communities of color witness some kind of violence in their youth. This exposure has damaging, long-term effects. African American and Latino boys and young men are three to four times more likely to be diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than their white counterparts—a rate comparable to the incidence of PTSD in veterans returning from Iraq.

When it comes to health care, African American, Latino, and Native American males are less likely than white males to have access to health-care services. When men of color do get health care, that care is more likely

to be inadequate. Add to this the fact that men of color experience higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and incarceration. They are also more likely to experience discrimination, a driving force in these other issues. These inequities in the lives of African American, Latino, Native American, and Southeast Asian boys and young men are one of our country's bleakest legacies, and continue to cast a long shadow over the promise of our nation's future. I don't say this to dishonor the strides made by people of color and others who have agitated and struggled for hard-earned rights. But the fact remains: for several decades now, the health and well-being of males of color have been in steady decline. For the men of color who live in low-income communities, the drop has been even steeper.

### **PLACE, RACE, AND GENDER MATTER TO HEALTH**

So how do we change policies, practices, and systems to give young men and boys of color—as well as their children, their families, and their communities—a fair shot at a healthy life and future? This is the question at the heart of this book. This volume grew out of the shared realization among community leaders, public officials, foundation leaders, researchers, and advocates that a growing body of research has emerged about *young men of color* and that this research tells a very specific—and different—story relative to the research on young people of color in general. This gender distinction exposes a number of stark fault lines that have put young men of color at higher risk for health problems and a host of related issues. The research has fueled an urgent, moral imperative to do more to address these gaps—starting with taking a hard look at the failures and limitations of existing approaches.

One thing is clear: what we're doing is *not* working. Society's efforts to deal with the "problem" of young men of color have been largely reactive. In California, for example, one in thirty-six people is behind bars today—the majority of them being young men of color. Yet when these young men and boys of color are released, they are unprepared and unsupported to assume the responsibilities that come with being a productive member of their communities. At the same time they bring with them harmful health challenges that burden their respective communities and the community at large.<sup>1</sup>

Other researchers have tried to advance the discussion by placing greater emphasis on poverty prevention. Although these steps are laudable, they aren't enough. As the contributions in this book make clear, what's needed is a preventive strategy that starts much earlier and goes much

deeper. We have to get smarter and better at addressing the underlying and interconnected social dynamics that contribute to whether or not people are healthy. What does it mean to go deeper? For starters, it means understanding that positive health outcomes are tied to an individual's ability to participate fully as a member of the community instead of languishing on its fringes. It means taking into account how masculine identity is formed by its societal context and how this construction can affect the attitudes of young men of color toward health, and others' attitudes about their health. Many men, for example, find it difficult to acknowledge trauma and pain or to seek help because doing so would fly in the face of their internalized ideal of manhood. And many systems charged with caring for their trauma and pain inadvertently reinforce their attitudes by interpreting their responses as a sign of delinquency or being sociopathic rather than as a sign of physical and emotional traumatic injury.

Finally, we must find the right balance between personal responsibility and collective responsibility. If we want young men of color to grow up with a strong sense of responsibility to themselves, to their families, and to their community, communities must assume the responsibility for protecting them from harm with the same level of enthusiasm as we would for anyone else. We must level the playing field so that young men and boys of color have every opportunity to be healthy and successful.

### **A PROBLEM WITH SOLUTIONS**

Although a number of the ideas discussed in this volume are not new, few books have told the whole story. This collection attempts to do so by presenting evidence from across disciplines on the unique challenges facing boys and young men of color—and to show what can be done about these challenges. Taken collectively, these contributions constitute an indictment of the status quo in communities across the nation. The disparities and the increasing marginalization of young men and boys of color are not only morally unacceptable; they are untenable. The trends documented here underscore the ways in which the situation is getting worse and how this fact affects us all.

But here's the good news: the poor health and well-being outcomes that face young men of color are not like rare cancers, where the cause and the course of the disease are unknown. The contributors show us throughout this book that we know how to keep a child in school; we know how to help a young man become a productive community member. Raising the prospects for the life outcomes of boys and young men of color will

bring a significant return on investment. Take those overcrowded prisons in California. Ten percent of the California state budget—or ten billion dollars of taxpayer money—is spent on prisons every year. Yet according to the National Center for Education Statistics, if we raise high school graduation rates by just 10 percent, Californians will save a staggering \$1.2 trillion that would otherwise be spent on costs associated with crime and violence, including building and maintaining prisons.

The time has come to make real change to those policies and practices that contribute to the poor health of young males of color. We must look critically at both the health issues affecting them and at the societal influences that shape their health. It is our hope that the ideas discussed throughout this book will help move the nation toward the long-awaited tipping point, where outrage translates into renewed political will and action. Change is not only *possible*; it is *necessary*. The challenge before us is no easy undertaking. But we cannot allow ourselves to walk into the trap of lowered expectations that is too often set for young men of color. Tragedy doesn't lie in failing to reach your goals; it lies in having no goals to reach. It isn't a tragedy to have unfulfilled dreams—but it is a tragedy not to dream.

*Robert Phillips*  
*Director, Health and Human Services,*  
*The California Endowment*  
*April 2010*

## NOTES

1. According to a *And Justice for Some* report and the Urban Institute's research on incarceration, barely 50 percent of Los Angeles County's youth population is Latino or African American, yet members of these populations make up more than 80 percent of those sentenced to adult prison. National Council on Crime and Delinquency, *And Justice for Some: Differential Treatment of Youth of Color in the Justice System* (Oakland, Calif.: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2007). The Urban Institute research refers to several (eleven reports) on incarceration, hence the generic reference.







## Acknowledgments

This volume grew out of a shared sense of urgency to shed light on the conditions and futures of young men and boys of color in America. It was a brief eighteen months from the day the call for chapters first went out to the day this remarkable collection rolled off the press. Anyone who has ever embarked on such a publishing endeavor knows this is lightning speed. It could not have been accomplished without help from the many people who devoted time, knowledge, skill, money, heart, and vision to this project.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our wonderful content editors, Ellen Reeves and Bennett Singer. They went beyond the individual manuscripts to understand what the project was about and to help the contributors write for a broad audience. Likewise, thanks goes to the detailed and nimble work of David Peattie, Amy Smith Bell, Chris Hall, and their collaborators at BookMatters Inc. in Berkeley, California, who took the manuscript the last mile with good advice and a final round of style- and copyedits that transformed the collection into a book.

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Finally, to our visionary authors, their collaborators, and students: thank you. We are honored to work with an ever-growing network of dedicated scholars who combine dispassionate analysis with a conscientious commitment to research that informs social and community change.

*Christopher Edley Jr.*  
*Jorge Ruiz de Velasco*  
*Berkeley, California*  
*October 2010*



**PART I**

**A DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW**

*Race and Gender Disparities*



## LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOYS

*Building a Stronger America  
by Investing in Young Men and Boys of Color*

Angela Glover Blackwell and Manuel Pastor

### ABSTRACT

Even before the Great Recession left a vast swath of Americans without jobs and career prospects, young men of color were struggling. Over the past two decades the social system in which they live has become less forgiving of youthful mistakes. Public schools have become “zero-tolerance” zones equipped with metal detectors, Tasers, surveillance cameras, and even armed security and the criminal justice system has become more punitive, jailing more people than any other country in the world while doing less and less to rehabilitate prisoners and discourage recidivism. Meanwhile, a more demanding economy has continued to sort the highly skilled workers (who earn big paychecks) from the low-skilled workers (who earn increasingly smaller ones). Although many Americans have been affected by these trends, the country’s young men of color have felt the pressures most sharply, resulting in a diminished opportunity to lead productive lives.

We argue that the country needs to refocus its efforts on the success of young men and boys of color, not simply for altruistic reasons but for a very pragmatic one: given the rapidly changing demography, the nation’s future depends on the ability of these young people to meaningfully contribute to refashioning the economy and society. Interventions have proven effective in a number of areas—education, juvenile justice, and employment, to name a few—and taken together, these interventions can help us harness the talents of young boys and men, build stronger families and neighborhoods, and strengthen the economy. Getting there will require new policies, but it will also require new politics—particularly the courage to declare that America cannot afford to ignore the crisis of young men of color and the understand-

ing that addressing this crisis is essential to building a broad-based transformational coalition around equity and opportunity.

---

## INTRODUCTION

The Great Recession has provoked America's middle class to seek answers to questions it has never before asked: What will happen to college graduates who can't land their first job? Who will hire older workers who have been out of the labor force for long periods of time? What effect will prolonged bouts of joblessness have on job skills, on people's spirits, on the tax revenues that keep neighborhoods afloat? There is nothing new about these questions except perhaps who is asking them. Long before the housing bubble burst in 2007—or before the number of workers who are either jobless, involuntarily working part-time, or marginally attached or discouraged from seeking employment had climbed to more than twenty-eight million—low-income, low-skilled, and predominantly minority workers (or nonworkers, in many cases) had discovered that a loosely regulated free market had largely abandoned them and that a high school diploma and hard work no longer guaranteed the realization of the American dream.<sup>1</sup>

In mainstream media and popular discourse it is commonplace to dismiss these hard-hit low-income families in our inner cities as the “urban underclass” whose troubles are intractable, isolated, a thing apart from the rest of the country. But it's never been that simple. In reality, America's poorest neighbors—particularly African Americans and Latinos—are the canaries in the coal mine, signaling the danger ahead. Imagine, for example, how much better off the nation would have been if we had recognized the gathering storm in the first wave of foreclosures that began to strike African American and Latino homeowners in 2006. What if we had responded with a sense of urgency about the destruction of their wealth? How much better prepared would our young people be for the pressures of technological changes and globalization if we had understood years earlier that the educational crisis confronting inner-city public schools would one day spread to the suburbs? How much more robust and productive would our nation's metropolitan regions be if policymakers had understood that the poverty in our central cities would eventually spill over into our older suburbs?

These links serve as reminders that the grave recession that began in December 2007 did not create our economic distress; it merely deepened

it. Although the road to recovery will be long, we should be mindful that America's future does not lie in returning to its past. Where we were before the crisis was not the best we could do as a nation. We need a different approach. If we can refocus the economy to incorporate the talents of those who have historically been left behind—if we can lift from the bottom, so to speak—we will build a stronger and more sustainable America, one where everyone is producing, contributing, and navigating a path to economic growth and prosperity. And key to that future will be the readiness of young people of color.

### WHY YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR—AND WHY YOUNG MEN?

By 2023 this demographic group—young people of color—will no longer represent a “special-interest” group; rather, they will by this time be a majority of children in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, a public-policy focus on the success of this population is necessary not simply for altruistic reasons, but for pragmatic ones: from the workload to tax revenues to gross domestic product, the future of the nation depends on the very people who are often least prepared by their current conditions to shoulder the burden. In 2006, for example, 35 percent of black children and 28 percent of Latino children lived in poverty, compared with 11 percent of white children (CDF 2007: 30). A 2008 study of one hundred large U.S. metropolitan areas found that black and Latino children are more than twelve times as likely as white children to live in “double jeopardy,” meaning that they are both poor and living in neighborhoods where poverty is the norm and opportunities for advancement scarce (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008: 327).

As candidate Barack Obama noted when he was running for president, poverty breeds a host of problems: “What’s most overwhelming about urban poverty,” he told us, “is that it’s so difficult to escape—it’s isolating and it’s everywhere. If you are an African American child unlucky enough to be born into one of these neighborhoods, you are most likely to start life hungry or malnourished. You are less likely to start with a father in your household, and if he is there, there’s a fifty-fifty chance that he never finished high school and the same chance he doesn’t have a job. Your school isn’t likely to have the right books or the best teachers. You’re more likely to encounter gang activities than after-school activities. And if you can’t find a job because the most successful businessman in your neighborhood is a drug dealer, you’re more likely to join that gang yourself. Opportunity is scarce, role models are few, and there is little contact with the normalcy of life outside those streets.”<sup>3</sup>

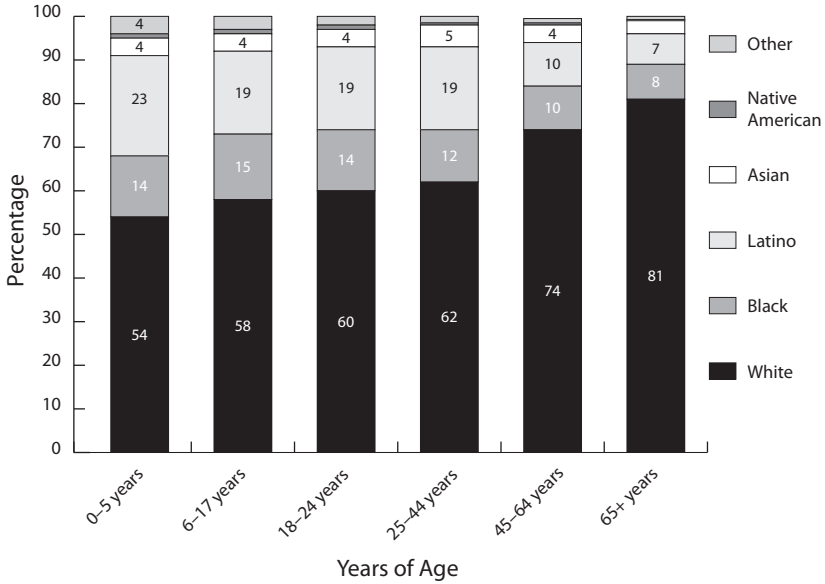
This is not news. The life outcomes of young people of color have been worse than whites—and just plain bad—for decades. The Pew Center reports that 62 percent of black children born between 1955 and 1970 were raised in high-poverty neighborhoods, compared with only 4 percent of white children. Of children born from 1985 to 2000, these rates are 66 percent and 6 percent respectively (Sharkey 2009: 2). This pattern suggests not just the persistence of disparity but a slight worsening of outcomes for everyone. It also hints at what lies ahead if we continue along the same track, the twin rails of a shifting economy that values strong technological skills more than a strong back and the diminished quality of our educational systems to prepare boys and young men of color for that future.

Although this is a crisis that affects young people of both genders and of all races, we focus here on young men and boys of color for several key reasons.<sup>4</sup> Members of this population have poor economic outcomes, yet the success of America in the near future turns in part on how prepared boys and young men of color are to meet the challenges of a twenty-first-century economy. Young men of color under twenty-four currently make up only 7.4 percent of the entire U.S. population, a seemingly small group. However, they are a growing part of the youth population—that is, the future generation of workers and taxpayers—currently representing 46 percent of male children under age five and 42 percent of children six to seventeen years old (see figure 1.1).

But why focus on *boys* of color and not *girls* of color? Certainly African American girls and young Latinas have their own issues and are deserving of help. But America's growing preoccupation with crime, especially since the 1980s, has toughened schoolhouse policies and penal responses to what might have been labeled "boyish" mischief in the past. Making a mistake—or straying even slightly from the traditional path to success—is often more costly for boys than for girls. For instance, a young girl from a low-income household who gets pregnant will have difficult consequences to deal with, but she also has access (albeit limited) to a social safety net that can lessen her struggle and provide her with alternatives. She and her infant may be eligible to receive aid from the federally funded Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (known as WIC), temporary cash payments and job counseling from a welfare program, and in some cases health care and childcare. And she will, in many cases, be encouraged to stay in school and complete her education.

Boys often face less institutional support and fewer interventions to help them get back on track. Family and communities matter, of course, but often young boys of color are living in distressed neighborhoods and





**Figure 1.1** Age and demographic distribution of men in the United States, 2006–08.  
 Source: Ruggles et al. 2010, IPUMS American Community Census (ACS) pooled 2006–2008 data.

in families under economic and social strains. Many boys who drop out of school seem to vanish, and when they resurface, all too often it’s in the criminal justice system, branded as predators and sent to adult jails. Between 2002 and 2004 African Americans accounted for 16 percent of the U.S. youth population under the age of eighteen, yet they represented 28 percent of all arrests for that age group, 37 percent of those detained in juvenile jails, and 58 percent of all juveniles sent to adult prison (NCCD 2007: 3).

Since 1992, every state except Nebraska has made it easier to prosecute youths as adults, and many states have instituted tougher laws against juveniles (Chura 2010; Rich 2000). This trend has been fanned by hysteria partly about the rise of “superpredators”—“street criminals” who were characterized by a group of influential conservative social science theorists (one of whom, John Dilulio Jr., went on to head President George W. Bush’s White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives) as the “youngest, biggest and baddest generation” of any society (Bennett, Dilulio, and Walters 1996: 206). The increasing concern about the uncontrollable nature of these youths has fueled a rise in the U.S. prison population and an increasing criminalization of young men. This has created

a pattern in which young people may be harassed for minor infractions and in which a measure of mercy for more significant crimes—even when appropriate—has been rare.

In 1996, for example, Dwayne Betts was sixteen, a good student growing up in a lower-middle-class African American family in metropolitan Washington, D.C. He had dreams of going to college and had never even held a gun until the day he and a friend decided to carjack a man at gunpoint. It was a bad decision, to be sure—and within thirty minutes Betts was arrested. Under the laws of Virginia, he was deemed a “menace to society,” tried as an adult, and sentenced to nine years in an adult prison (Betts 2009).<sup>5</sup> Upon his release, Betts obtained a college degree, wrote a critically acclaimed book about his experience, and now works to curb mandatory-sentencing laws. It’s a wonderful story of redemption and reinvention. But how many Dwayne Bettses have been locked up without creating the elements for a path out? How many young men are we losing—and losing out on? Looking beyond the criminal justice system, what do we sacrifice as a nation when we do not counsel these young men to higher education, when we do not provide safe and healthy neighborhoods, when we do not help fathers stay better connected to families?

Our society has become more unforgiving of “mistakes.” For a boy born into a low-income neighborhood, the likelihood is too high that he’ll go to a bad school, drop out, and get arrested. Any one of these three events will probably have him entering adulthood as a low-wage worker, doing time in the criminal justice system, or joining a gang rather than attending college, learning a trade through apprenticeships, and making decent money. The results of bad teenage circumstances and decisions can take years of nearly unassisted struggle to overcome. Together these events are not just “mistakes” for the boys and young men of color—they’re mistakes for America. When they end up without degrees, in low-wage jobs, or in prison, they are paying with their lives, but we are paying as a society, partly because the economy is losing their talents and energies. It’s not just the numbers and the finances that matter: we have to wonder about an America where our iconic dream is based on the reinvention of self and yet we make it so hard to recover from youthful disadvantages and poor choices.

There is a way out, though. Interventions have proven effective in a number of areas—education, juvenile justice, employment, the physical or “built” environment, and health—which, as part of a comprehensive strategy, can help us support young men of color, build stronger families and neighborhoods, and strengthen the economy. Getting there will require

new policies to be sure, but it will also require new politics—the courage to declare that America is hemorrhaging talent and the determination to right the present course.

### **UNFORGIVEN: STRANDING YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IS COSTLY FOR EVERYBODY**

Since the early 1990s, U.S. society has gotten tougher on people who make mistakes. Public schools have adopted “zero-tolerance” policies backed up with schoolhouses equipped with metal detectors, Tasers, surveillance cameras, and even armed security. Although the U.S. criminal justice system jails more people than any other country in the world—including China, whose population is nearly five times as large as ours (Pew 2008: 5)—it does less and less to rehabilitate prisoners and discourage recidivism. The economy continues to divide the highly skilled workers who earn big paychecks from the low-skilled workers who earn small (and increasingly smaller) ones. The American middle class is withering, particularly in communities of color. Minority males feel the effects of these trends even more sharply.

Let’s begin with the public schools. In 2006, 4.8 percent of all white students were suspended from the nation’s public schools, but the figure for African American students was 15 percent and 6.8 percent for Latino students.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, in 1972, 6 percent of black students and just 3 percent of white students were suspended from school.<sup>7</sup> Why the disparity and why the dramatic growth? On the one hand, for more than three decades research has consistently indicated that harsh school disciplinary policies disproportionately affect children of color. In her contribution to this volume, educational equity scholar Susan Eaton addresses this trend (see chapter 6), asserting that “acting out” in school may result from trauma and stress experienced at home. Treating behavioral problems at school with more sensitivity can help kids stay in school until graduation and set them up for success after that.

But the United States hasn’t taken this approach. Instead, the “get-tough” stance means that schools are turning relatively minor rule infractions over to the judicial system and have introduced policing to the schoolyard culture even though school violence has not noticeably increased (DeVoe et al. 2004). This is the entry point for what some sociologists and advocates have called the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Some studies have suggested that children who are suspended or expelled are more likely to become

incarcerated (Skiba et al. 2003), although the link is more firmly established between dropping out and incarceration.<sup>8</sup> There is also a strong correlation between disparities in school suspension and overall juvenile incarceration rates by race (*ibid.*). According to federal Bureau of Justice Statistics from 1997, young black men have an almost 30 percent chance of incarceration at some point during their lifetime, and this percentage “rises above 50 percent for black high school dropouts” (Pettit and Western 2001 in Pager 2003: 939).

Some scholars, like Pedro Noguera (1995), have questioned the basis of zero-tolerance school policies, pointing out that they emerged in tandem with get-tough criminal justice policies that were not in fact rooted in reality but based on unsubstantiated fears of violence rising to unheard-of levels. Unfortunately, the impact on young people of color has been huge. One study found that Latino youth are 40 percent more likely than white youth to serve time in an adult correctional facility; one of every four incarcerated Latino youths is serving time in an adult prison or jail (Arya et al. 2009). Similarly, another study found that African American juveniles are nine times more likely than their white counterparts to “receive an adult prison sentence” (Arya and Augarten 2008). Studies have demonstrated that prosecuting youths as adults contributes to higher rates of recidivism and that teenage boys serving time alongside grown men are at increased risk for sexual assault and suicide (Campaign for Youth Justice 2007).

Between 1987 and 2007, as harsher criminal justice policies took hold, the nation’s prison population nearly tripled (Pew 2008: 5), far outpacing the country’s overall population growth of 24 percent (an increase from 242 million to 302 million over that same period).<sup>9</sup> From 1974 to 2001 the percentage of African American adults who have ever been incarcerated jumped from 8.7 percent to 16.6 percent; for Latinos the rate increased from 2.3 percent to 7.7 percent.<sup>10</sup> Both groups are overrepresented in prison as compared with whites, young and old alike.<sup>11</sup> In 2007, although 7 percent of California’s youths were African American, they represented 17 percent of youths arrested and 26 percent of juvenile cases referred to adult court. During the same year Latinos represented 47 percent of youths in California, yet 51 percent of youths arrested and 62 percent of cases referred to adult court. In 2007, African Americans represented 14 percent of Texas youth, yet they represented 24 percent of those arrested and 43 percent of youth transferred to adult court. African Americans are also overrepresented in the juvenile justice system in New York. According to statewide data, although 18 percent of youth in 2000 were African American, they represented 35 percent of juveniles arrested in New York

and 60 percent of juvenile cases involving secure detention.<sup>12</sup> The number of youths being held in adult prisons has grown by 208 percent since the 1990s (Chura 2010; Act 4 Juvenile Justice 2007).

While the nation's prison and incarcerated juvenile population has swelled, rehabilitation has nearly dropped off the agenda. One of the starkest examples of this is that Congress has cut college aid to prisoners by scaling back Pell Grant eligibility, even though inmates who participate in such educational programs have significantly lower rates of recidivism (Marable 2000). As a result of these and other service cuts, an ex-offender's chances of reintegrating into mainstream society following his release are quite low. A 2008 study by the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center found that before incarceration, 61 percent of an inmate's income was derived from legal employment, but this drops to 30 percent within two months of his release; eight months later the number has only increased to about 41 percent (Visher, Debus, and Yahner 2008). Princeton sociologist Devah Pager has found that criminal convictions are all but insurmountable barriers to employment for black men. Of white ex-offenders who applied for a job, 17 percent received callbacks, compared with only 5 percent of black ex-offenders (Pager 2003: 955).<sup>13</sup> The dilemma is that landing a job is central to avoiding recidivism.<sup>14</sup>

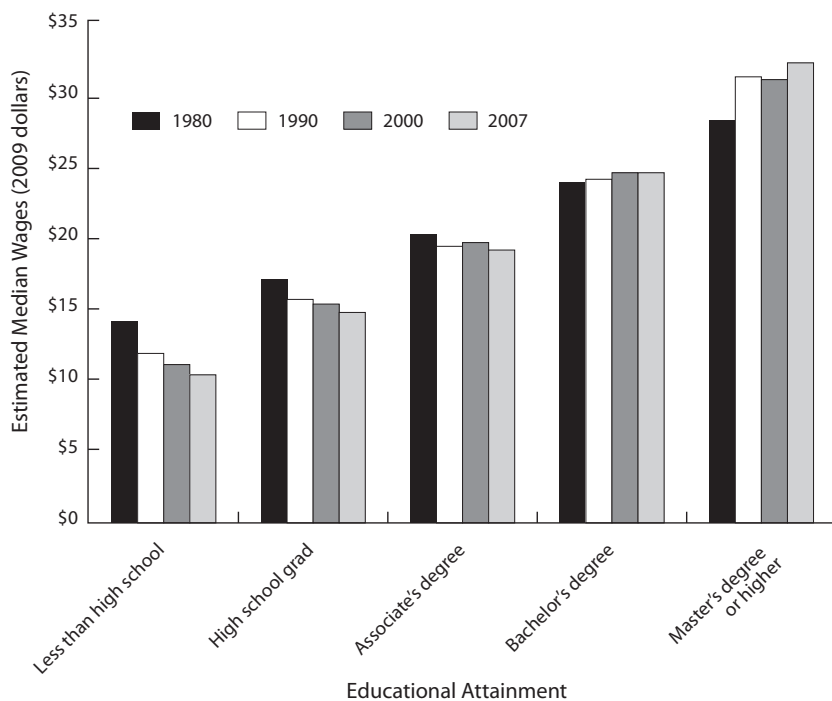
Unfortunately, it's not just criminal histories that keep young men and boys of color from getting a decent-paying job. As the United States has shifted more of its manufacturing overseas in the past thirty years, employers don't value broad shoulders and a high school diploma the way they used to at the height of the country's industrial production. Workers with low skills typically remain low skilled (and low paid), while the better-educated and better-connected workers move up. The U.S. economy's two-tiered structure has decidedly deepened, with wealthy and well-paid professionals higher than ever and nearly everyone else far below. As a result, the middle class is shrinking, a shift intimately linked with a broad economic story of growing inequality.<sup>15</sup> From 1930 to 1950, the period concurrent to and following the New Deal, the gap in earning inequality by skill level narrowed (Williamson and Lindert 1980 in Levy and Murnane 1992). The 1950s through the 1970s marked a period of relative stability, wherein the "annual income of the median worker more than doubled . . . and those at the bottom of the earnings scale made even greater progress" (Morris and Western 1999: 625). The economy was robust, with jobs available at every level. But starting in the 1980s, middle- and lower-income workers' real wages first stagnated and then started losing ground precipitously (*ibid.*). Nongovernment workers took "pay cuts" because of inflation from

1972 through the mid-1990s, and even though inflation-adjusted wages have increased since then, these workers are still being paid as though it is 1980.<sup>16</sup>

Part of this is an oft-told story of structural change: the well-paying manufacturing jobs that characterized the American economy in the post-war era have gradually been replaced by lower-paying service-sector jobs. In terms of projected job growth, the top two positions—registered nurses and retail salespersons—are representative of the new gilded age: these jobs offer salaries that are respectively “very high” and “very low.” Of the top twenty jobs of the future, five will have “very high” earnings, two will have “high” earnings, six will have “low” earnings, and seven will have “very low” earnings (Blackwell, Kwoh, and Pastor 2010: 174).<sup>17</sup> All but one of the “high” and “very high” earning jobs require an associate’s degree or better.

This growing income inequality is bad for everyone. Over the past century Americans have seen the economy hit the skids in a major way twice: the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Great Recession currently plaguing the nation. Each of these crises has been predicated, in part, on increasing income inequality. That has often been thought to be simply a side effect or unimportant factor in the crash, but it’s not: with one group rich and speculating, another strapped and suffering, and markets unregulated and bubbling, we have the perfect storm for everything to come tumbling down.<sup>18</sup> The change in the shape of the economy driving the current inequality—particularly the premium paid for skills and the penalty paid for lower education—is another way in which the cost of making a mistake has risen. Figure 1.2 shows that failing to finish high school today means a much lower wage than it did in 1980 (and it deserves mention that African American and Latino men without a high school degree earn even less than white men with that same educational disadvantage). The opposite is true as well; higher levels of education—particularly at a master’s degree or more—pay better than ever. In short, the returns on education are increasing.

The loss of jobs paying decent wages coincided with declining investment in the social safety net intended to help poor families. Beginning with John F. Kennedy, each successive president has chipped away at the New Deal era’s Aid to Families with Dependent Children and welfare programs until they were essentially abolished by the Clinton administration and replaced with the far more stringent Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). By 2005, 22 percent of poor children received aid through the main federal “welfare” program, compared with 62 percent only a decade earlier (Bhargava et al. 2009: 1). Arloc Sherman, an expert on income-support policies, has recently writ-



**Figure 1.2** Wages by educational attainment in the United States, 1980–2007. *Source:* Ruggles et al. 2010, IPUMS 1980, 1990, 2000 U.S. Census and 2007 ACS data.

ten, “If the safety net had been as effective at keeping children out of deep poverty in 2005 as it was in 1995, there would have been 1.1 million very poor children in 2005; instead, there were 2.4 million” (Sherman 2009: 1). Although the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) did allocate some emergency dollars to programs that would support low-income families, this onetime spending allocation cannot fix a system that is broken (Gais, Dadayan, and Bae 2009; Bhargava et al. 2009).

We are not advocating for welfare over work. A good job has always been a more efficient antipoverty tool than even the most generous welfare system. But with the economy misfiring, we need a safety net to catch those whom the marketplace has failed. What is the result of our collective failure to act mercifully—to instead lock people up, make our schools harsher and less nurturing, and celebrate rather than tame a cutthroat economy? Fewer students are learning, more people are in jail, and fewer workers are in good jobs. The nation is depriving itself of the talent of many young men and boys of color even as businesses are calling for multicultural and mul-

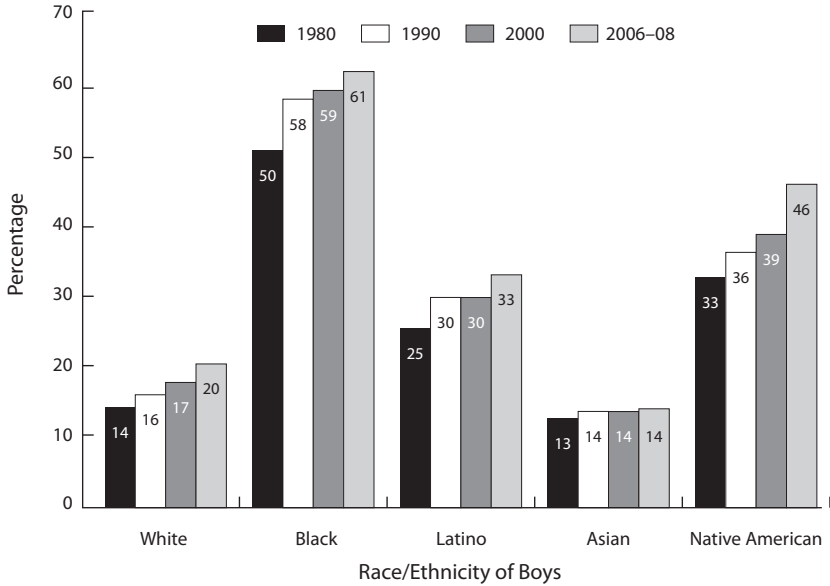
tilingual skills to compete in the global economy. Moreover, these young men and boys of color are people who understand most clearly what is wrong with society, because they have experienced it personally. We need to help them help us to form a more just society.

In many ways the wasted potential of young men of color comes down to a lack of investment. Cities don't invest their revenue in low-income neighborhoods, and low-income neighborhoods don't have much to offer their residents in terms of open space, public health, safety, or education. The Harlem Children's Zone in New York City is one exception to this rule, and as such is a model for change (discussed later in this chapter). Prisons are more of a holding tank than places for youth rehabilitation and redirection. Employers offering low-skill, low-wage jobs don't typically invest in staff development, creating a vicious circle regarding the development of human capital.

Young men of color also tend to not have been invested in by a strong father figure. Fatherlessness is a manifestation of all the trends previously described. The unforgiving nature of public schools, the criminal justice system, and the new economy have taken their toll on grown men of color. After all, one in thirty-six Latino men and one in fifteen black men are behind bars (Pew 2008: 6). Figure 1.3 shows that African American, Latino, and—perhaps surprisingly—Native American boys are most likely to grow up without a father at home. Since 1980, half of all black boys under eighteen in the United States have not had a father at home. Although there are some creative programs to help, many of these young men simply don't have male role models or male mentors. Fixing the broken system will not only help today's young men of color but the next generation as well.

These young men and boys of color are not prepared for their futures—and not being prepared is damaging to and costly for everyone. They are literally missing out on wages. While U.S.-born Asian and white workers who have dropped out of high school make a median wage of more than \$12.50 an hour, their African American counterparts earn on average about \$10.75 an hour, 53 cents less per hour than U.S.-born Latinos and \$1.75 less per hour than U.S.-born Asian and white workers.<sup>19</sup> Although young men of color bear this cost, so do their communities. America's Promise Alliance, a nonpartisan youth advocacy group, has estimated that cutting the number of dropouts in half would generate forty-five billion dollars annually in new tax revenue.<sup>20</sup> A 2009 Columbia University study concluded that for each high school student added to the graduation rolls, there is a lifetime benefit to taxpayers of \$209,100, accrued from the graduate's contributions to the tax rolls as well as fewer public-health costs,





**Figure 1.3** Boys (under age eighteen) without fathers in their household in the United States. *Source:* Ruggles et al. 2010, IPUMS 1980, 1990, 2000 U.S. Census and pooled 2006–2008 ACS data.

fewer welfare payments, and lower criminal justice costs borne by taxpayers. When the costs of intervention were included, the savings to taxpayers still added up to \$127,100 per student (Levin et al. 2007).

As young men of color make up a growing share of the United States—as they will in time—perpetuating our policy mistakes will be increasingly costly. But the foregone talent and overlooked lives mean more than economic costs to us as a nation. The laws that once codified racism have been largely struck down and racial attitudes have shifted so dramatically that a black candidate was able to win an election to the highest office in the land. Yet the country remains dramatically unequal in terms of racial outcomes, and we are increasingly unconnected from the fates of our youth. This carries a moral and spiritual cost as well as a financial burden for the nation—one we cannot and should not sustain as we head into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

**THE WAY OUT: BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY**

Fortunately, there are proven measures—a policy tourniquet, if you will—to stop the hemorrhaging. Consider the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), which

acknowledges the sheer complexity of modern life and offers families within a hundred-block area in New York City parenting classes, schools, adult education, job counseling, childcare, tutoring, cooking classes, and health clinics.<sup>21</sup> President Obama has recognized the potential of expanding HCZ, saying during the 2008 presidential campaign: “There’s no reason this program should stop at the end of those blocks in Harlem. It’s time to change the odds for neighborhoods all across America.”<sup>22</sup> His administration is modeling its Promise Neighborhoods initiative—a program scheduled to be launched in twenty cities nationwide—after the Harlem effort (Dodakian 2010). This chapter explores several excellent approaches to helping young boys and men of color and the communities in which they reside to thrive, prosper, and more effectively contribute to the American future.

### **Make Education Policies More Forgiving and More Connected to Neighborhood Employment Pipelines**

One place to start is dismantling zero-tolerance policies in the public schools. Research has indicated that more visible policing and security devices have failed to make schools safer. One study even concluded that reliance on such devices actually increases the risk of disorder within a school (Johnson, Boyden, and Pittz 2001). A 2002 study analyzing the effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies fifteen years after their introduction found no evidence of a positive change in student behavior or in school safety, real or perceived (Skiba and Knesting 2002). In her essay in this volume, Susan Eaton (see chapter 6) has argued that in many cases, educators may be dealing not only with disruptive classroom behavior, but with serious underlying and untreated mental health issues resulting from physical or emotional trauma. Relying on punishment rather than understanding can lead us to miss these warning signals. Eaton thus suggests alternative disciplinary measures, including restorative justice “in which the offender, the victim and the larger community discuss the crime and determine what type of retribution should be paid” (Player and Eaton 2009: 10). She advocates for providing students and teachers with incentives for low suspension and expulsion rates.

But just making it through school without expulsion is not enough: students need to see hope ahead in the labor market and therefore a reason to stay in school. Noting that students in poor areas sometimes fail to envision themselves in college, a “multiple pathways” approach prepares students for college *and* careers by carving smaller, more concentrated academic programs from larger public schools and blending career and

technical training with college preparatory classes. Opened in the fall of 2009, for example, the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (ACE) Academy at Locke High School in Los Angeles prepares a largely African American and Latino student body for high-paying careers in the skilled and building trades. The academy was developed by the Youth and Workforce Development Alliance (YWDA), a broad-based partnership of community, business, and labor organizations.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the Cypress Mandela Construction Program prepares young adults for careers in the construction industry. Cypress Mandela serves as the primary education provider for the Oakland Green Job Corps, a new job placement program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, providing certification in solar installation, energy-efficient retrofits, and green construction. Cypress Mandela has longstanding and close relationships with the Alameda County Building Trades Council, the building trades unions, and community and social-justice organizations, including the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Oakland Community Organizations, and the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy.<sup>24</sup> Such community-based pipelines to employment can be the lifesaver that young men need, giving youth a sense that the future will be brighter and providing a reason to *thrive* not just survive in school.

### **Make Juvenile and Criminal Justice Policies More Forgiving and More Comprehensive**

Dismantling zero-tolerance policies in schools goes hand in hand with taking a more forgiving approach to juvenile justice. Research shows that not much has been gained from a crackdown on juvenile offenders, other than helping to boost the United States's incarceration rate to the highest in the world, at seven times the worldwide average (Pew 2008). In his 2007 book *Punishment and Inequality in America*, the Harvard sociologist Bruce Western wrote that harsh policies do not help communities but end up hurting them. Incarceration, he contends, breaks up families, deepens inequality, and further shuts out low-income people of color from the economic mainstream.

One program seeking to change this equation is the McCullum Youth Court in Alameda County, California. Working with police departments and probation officers throughout Alameda County and with the Oakland Unified School District, Youth Court offers young, nonviolent offenders an opportunity to avoid prison time if they agree to a peer-led court process that includes case management, prosecuting and defending attorneys, jury

deliberation, and sentencing. Defendants found guilty by the court must accept responsibility for their actions, undergo substance abuse treatment or parenting courses, and repay their victims, families, and communities for damage to property and relationships.<sup>25</sup> Nearly 80 percent of the young men who went through the court did not recidivate, and almost 70 percent of those who were not in school when they started in the program had reenrolled upon completion.

In another part of the country, Clayton County, Georgia, is also backing away from zero-tolerance policies. With a large number of students overwhelming the capacity of its juvenile courts, for such minor offenses as fistfights and disorderly conduct, the county has taken steps to change the way school counselors are trained, getting them to recognize some forms of misconduct as normal childhood misdeeds. The county has also created a more graduated system of punishment under which the first offense gets a warning, the second results in a mediation session, and the third triggers a court complaint. Under this system the number of children referred for fighting and disruption has dropped by about 50 percent and graduation rates have increased by 20 percent.<sup>26</sup> The results have caused other school districts in the region to take notice. For instance, court and school officials in Birmingham, Alabama, have recently instituted a similar type of reform.<sup>27</sup>

Just as critical to the effort is helping adult ex-offenders reintegrate into their communities. Improving ex-convict reentry is essential for young boys of color, because it means that their fathers have an opportunity to return to their families and possibly have a stable and positive influence on their sons' lives.<sup>28</sup> In Arizona, for example, the Getting Ready program begins to prepare offenders for their return the day they begin their prison sentence, providing job training and employment in Arizona industries. Started in 2004, the program has reported great success in reducing recidivism rates, reducing prison violence, and easing ex-offenders' reentry.<sup>29</sup>

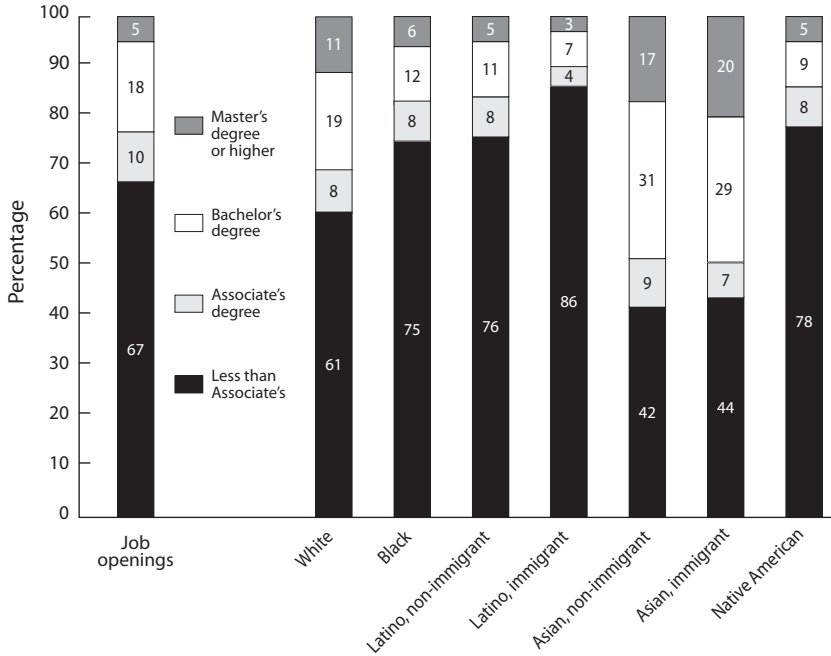
Sociologist Shelli Rossman (2003) has recommended cross-institutional and interagency reentry programs that can address the multiple needs of ex-convicts, including physiological and mental illness, substance abuse, family collapse, employment, and poverty. She highlights the efforts of the Safer Foundation in Illinois, which offers nearly wraparound services to deal with the multiple needs of ex-offenders; the Fortune Society's Empowerment Through HIV Information Community and Services Coordinated Health Care, with support for HIV-positive offenders; the Women's Prison Association, which recognizes that the needs of women are different from those of men; and La Bodega de la Familia in New York, an organization that is especially careful to prepare families to support their returned fam-

ily members. Research has found that these and other such “community-based re-entry programs” may help reduce recidivism (Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan 2006). Reducing recidivism is good for those who have been incarcerated, but it’s good for everyone else as well—it means safer neighborhoods, more intact families, and more dedicated workers. Reducing recidivism signals a commitment to making sure that everyone has a road back home—not only to his or her own community but also back to the broader society.

### **Enhance Opportunities for Employment**

Even if we get school discipline, student retention, and the criminal justice system right, we may still lose the talents of the next generation unless we address the broader issue of educational attainment. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that new jobs from 2008 to 2018—which includes new jobs that add to economic growth—will require that 5 percent of us have a master’s degree or higher, 18 percent have a bachelor’s degree, 10 percent have an associate’s degree, and 67 percent have less than an associate’s degree. Yet there are sharp differentials in educational attainment between whites and Asians on the one hand and blacks or Latinos on the other (figure 1.4). This disparity means that blacks and Latinos will be increasingly competing for positions requiring less education—and that there may be shortfalls in meeting the overall skill needs of businesses that increasingly have to compete in the global economy with brains not brawn. We need to develop new approaches that target education and training resources toward young blacks and Latinos lest we perpetuate a pattern of continuing racial inequality—and disadvantage the whole nation as it relates to the world economy.<sup>30</sup>

A continuing concern for people of color in the labor market is discrimination. Researchers have found that employers still make assumptions about the capacity of applicants of color (Moss and Tilly 2001). Despite antidiscrimination laws enacted decades ago, African Americans and Latinos make lower wages even when you control for educational background and work experience (Blackwell, Kwoh, and Pastor 2010: 165). Enforcement of civil rights laws to secure fair employment is therefore important. But so is the creation of career pipelines for youth of color—which will require an investment in their educational and vocational skills. Green for All and the Apollo Alliance, among other organizations, have been doing just this. They are trying to connect disadvantaged groups (Green for All has a particular eye for youth) to the growing “green” sector in America.



**Figure 1.4** Educational requirements for projected U.S. job openings versus educational levels for population older than twenty-five, 2008–18. *Source:* Ruggles et al. 2010, IPUMS ACS pooled 2006–2008 data, “Educational Attainment of 25 and over Population” and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t09.htm>.

In their view this means preparing youth in high school through education and internships, establishing lower-time-commitment certificate programs at community colleges for working youth, and connecting low-skill workers with on-the-job training. It also means thinking through “career ladders”—the pathways in which workers move up through the ranks from the starting rungs (say, as a solar panel installer) to the more secure and skilled employment (perhaps as a carpenter and building retrofitter) that can often provide a ticket to the middle class.

In developing and targeting new avenues for employment, we must focus on school dropouts, one of the most vulnerable groups among young men and boys of color. In their contribution to this volume, Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield and Linda Harris (see chapter 9) point to opportunities at the state and federal policy levels to help young people of color connect to the education, training, and community support needed for success. What’s missing is not the tools but the political will, and this requires a reframing of the issue as well as the necessary organizing to focus attention.

### Connect Racial Justice to Spatial Justice

Urban sprawl isolates inner-city communities and siphons public resources and attention from the central cities toward the suburbs. Geographically concentrated poverty is much higher for people of color, partly because of preexisting patterns of residential racial segregation (Sharkey 2009). In Los Angeles, for example, a third of both Latino and black kids are poor—a startling gap above the 9 percent rate for white children. These poor Latino and black children are much more likely to live in communities of concentrated poverty: compared with 12 percent of white children in Los Angeles, 59 percent of black and Latino kids live in poor neighborhoods.<sup>31</sup>

This means that many kids whose families are just above the poverty line are also living in distressed areas. These areas generally experience lower levels of investment in neighborhoods, schools, and community safety. The chapter by Dolores Acevedo-Garcia and her colleagues (see chapter 12), as well as that by Deborah L. McKoy, Jeffrey M. Vincent, and Ariel H. Bierbaum (see chapter 16) highlight the multiple ways in which geography affects access to opportunity, one of which is a “spatial mismatch,” a damaging disconnect between the physical location of people and that of jobs.<sup>32</sup> Youth-based solutions are emerging to revitalize these inner-city neighborhoods and counter the forces of inequity. Figuring out spatial equity is therefore key to figuring out racial equity.

Investing in these neighborhoods is possible. For example, Market Creek Plaza is a ten-acre, \$23.5 million commercial real-estate development project in a culturally diverse, underinvested neighborhood of San Diego. It is among the nation’s first real-estate development projects to be designed, built, and ultimately owned (in the most literal sense) by community residents. In early 2006 a historic initial public offering allowed community members to become stakeholders and stockholders in the development, creating a unique asset-building opportunity for the neighborhood. Among many achievements, the plaza drew five hundred thousand dollars in investments from more than four hundred local investors, contracted 69 percent of the construction from local minority-owned enterprises, hired 91 percent of its initial employees from the community into unionized jobs with generous benefits, and included two thousand adults and more than a thousand youth in planning and implementation of the project, funneling a portion of the development’s profit back into the neighborhood.<sup>33</sup>

Market Creek Plaza is an example of a place-based antipoverity solution. Such solutions have historically taken one of three approaches: move the poor out of their neighborhoods to opportunity, bring opportunity

to low-income neighborhoods, and now—what seems most promising—craft “place-conscious” solutions. This third strategy taps into broader opportunities because at the regional level there is a larger pool of possible resources and possible alliances (Pastor and Turner 2010). For example, Bethel New Life, a faith-based Chicago community-development corporation, fought the closure of a commuter rail line in the West Garfield Park neighborhood. Bethel realized that the closure would hamper residents’ efforts to find jobs in both the city and the suburbs. In 1992, Bethel formed a coalition of inner-city and suburban residents. Their campaigning was responsible for successfully lobbying the Chicago Transit Authority not only to keep the line open, but also to invest three hundred million dollars in capital improvements and upgraded services. Today the Lake-Pulaski station is a transit hub, with a twenty-three-thousand-square-foot commercial center that houses day-care facilities, a community bank, employment and job training centers, and other commercial enterprises (Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009).

Place-conscious solutions are not just about bringing development to particular places but also about opening up the metropolitan landscape of opportunity. Organizers associated with the New Jersey Regional Coalition recently pulled together city and suburban congregations to change a state policy that permitted suburbs to avoid building their fair share of affordable housing, thus opening up more parts of the metropolitan landscape to lower-income residents. Transit riders in multiple metropolitan areas have begun to focus on “transit justice,” noting that low-income individuals can only break the constraints of spatial mismatch if public transportation can help them do it. The politics of all this is tricky: organizers are challenging decades of policy that have promoted segregation and separation. But this is exactly why boys and young men of color were ignored—they were not “seen” by many policymakers and voters. Reconnecting our metropolitan regions in terms of housing, transportation, and jobs is one step to reconnecting America.

### **Enhance Opportunities for Broader Health**

Good health is as important as good mass transit and good jobs in building a modern economy and creating solid ground for boys and young men of color. If you live in a place that lacks resources and opportunities for healthy living—parks and playgrounds, grocery stores that sell nutritious food, clean air, safe streets, ample health care and social services—you are more likely to suffer from obesity, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and



other chronic conditions. The legacy of disinvestment and urban sprawl means that many low-income, inner-city communities are unhealthy places to live.

Studies have consistently shown that low-income communities have fewer supermarkets than wealthy communities, and predominantly black neighborhoods in particular have limited access to supermarkets, farmers' markets, and grocery stores (PolicyLink, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, and California Center for Public Health Advocacy 2008). In Albany, New York, for example, 80 percent of residents of color live in neighborhoods where low-fat milk or high-fiber bread are not readily available (Hosler et al. 2006). Low-income communities of color in Los Angeles have less than half the number of supermarkets as upper- or middle-class neighborhoods (Shaffer 2002). Nearly two-thirds of all children in Los Angeles County—almost all of them children of color living in low-income neighborhoods—have no park or playground near their homes.<sup>34</sup>

In northern California the predominantly black community of West Oakland straddles a busy freeway, a major port, and an airport. A 2003 study found the air inside some West Oakland homes five times more toxic than in other parts of the city. Years of research have shown that air pollution can trigger wheezing, coughing, gasping for breath, and even asthma, with one Los Angeles-based study showing that the closer children live to a freeway, the more likely they are to develop asthma (Gauderman et al. 2005). In California, African American males have an asthma rate 63 percent higher than that of the overall male population. In addition, young African American boys are hospitalized for asthma at a rate 3.7 times greater than their white counterparts (Rand Corporation 2009). Furthermore, 21.7 percent of Latino males and 27.6 percent of African American males are overweight or obese, compared with 11.1 percent of white males.<sup>35</sup>

In their contribution to this volume, coauthors David Williams and Natalie Slopen (see chapter 11) identify transportation, land use, parks, and the availability of green spaces as key factors in the health of men and boys of color. They suggest strategies that can be implemented by schools, community-based organizations, nonprofit agencies, and local, state, and federal government to help families and boys achieve success. Let us add a few other examples. Since 2004, the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative has helped to open eighty-three supermarkets and fresh-food outlets in underserved urban and rural areas throughout the state. A partnership that includes state and local officials, and nonprofit groups and the business sector, the initiative has also created or retained five thousand jobs

in those communities—and it is important to note that grocery-store jobs often include the entry-level jobs that are critical to young men securing their first chance at employment. This required just thirty million dollars in state seed money, which has leveraged projects totaling \$190 million, dramatically improving access to healthy food statewide while also bolstering community economic development.<sup>36</sup>

Through coalition building, policy advocacy, and litigation if necessary, the City Project of Los Angeles works to create a network of parks, playgrounds, high-quality school buildings, beaches, forests, and transportation that serves diverse low-income residents of Los Angeles communities who for years have had little or no access to such amenities.<sup>37</sup> A new approach known as PhotoVoice helps illustrate the importance of involving youth themselves in documenting disparity and promoting new policy. Part of the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, PhotoVoice trains cohorts of ten to twelve youths in photography, ethics, research methods, and communications so that they can effectively challenge the barriers to healthy eating and active living in their communities.<sup>38</sup> The youth, many of them Latino, present their photos and findings at exhibits designed to stimulate discussion and encourage activism among their peers, community members, and policymakers.<sup>39</sup> Many of the youth completing a statewide PhotoVoice project have also joined California's Youth Board on Obesity Prevention, a project that engages youth in state programs and policies.<sup>40</sup> This is exactly the sort of engagement that improves youth self-esteem and can shift policy in a more positive direction.

### **PUTTING IT TOGETHER: UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCE**

While these strategies are key for success, we understand that they do not cover the full range of interventions that are needed to turn around the lives of young men of color. Any comprehensive effort to make improvements for young African American and Latino men would include attention to improving young women's outcomes, tackling the scourge of homophobia (which vilifies young gay men and hampers their development and growth), and reducing and eventually eliminating hate crimes. A comprehensive approach also needs to understand difference. Young Latino and African American men and boys experience crumbling infrastructure, inadequate public transportation, and neighborhood violence. Both groups need a better-performing education system at all levels and a rethinking of the criminal justice system so that correction does not become destruction. Labor market analysts know that differences exist among both groups and

are important: African American men, for example, are more likely to be jobless, while immigrant Latinos are more likely to be working but still poor (Pastor and Carter 2009: 149).

Latino youths have issues that affect them uniquely. Latino boys (and girls) have significantly higher high school dropout rates. In 2008, for example, 19.9 percent of Latino men but only 8.7 percent of black men aged sixteen to twenty-four had dropped out and had not completed a GED. The gap is smaller for women, but Latinas' failure to complete at least a GED at 16.7 percent is still higher than the 11.1 percent experienced by African American women.<sup>41</sup> Another issue is immigration. Many Latino youths have parents who are undocumented immigrants. In California there are 1.2 million children of unauthorized Latinos—about 13 percent of all the state's children, many of whom are citizens (Pastor et al. 2010: 1). Creating paths to legalization will be critical to keeping families together and increasing the opportunities for these young people.

This does not mean that groups should not work together, however. Rather, different approaches are sometimes needed. Barrios Unidos in Santa Cruz, California, is an organization working with former gang members and other out-of-school youth as well as with young prisoners. The group works actively on building black-brown alliances, including in the difficult terrain of the prison system, but its youth members are largely Latino. An important part of helping these young people recover their drive to succeed is recovering their cultural pride, often through the practice of indigenous spiritual traditions. It's a different set of icons and worship practices that prove to be effective, even as it has its obvious parallels in numerous programs based in African American churches.

Although understanding the differences between blacks and Latinos is important, there is also significant work to be done with Muslim youth who feel threatened by current political and cultural fears; with young men and women struggling in poor enclaves of Southeast Asians, Filipinos, and others; and with Native Americans facing poor job opportunities and distressed health systems on reservations. All of this will require a common agenda along with an appreciation of the nuanced needs and aspirations of these individual communities. What does seem to unite, however—particularly across the various strategies covered here—is the role of community organizing as a central means by which to make change. Most of these promising strategies have been crafted by or in concert with community organizers and translated into action by their community bases. Such organizing, particularly if it engages youths themselves, can also serve to empower as well as to create accountability.

### NEW COALITIONS, NEW WILL, AND A NEW AMERICA

These solutions will go a long way to opening opportunities for young men and boys of color. These approaches will help reconnect them with the mainstream economy and give them the opportunity to make use of their talent. But this process will require concerted efforts and big investments. As coauthors Tia Martinez, Susan Colby, and Lisa Quay's chapter in this volume on philanthropy notes (see chapter 17), it's exactly because the necessary investment in young boys of color is so large for such a relatively small group that so many—particularly philanthropic institutions—shy away from such interventions. But choosing to invest in young men and boys of color will right our institutions so that they benefit *everyone*.

It's a big job, no doubt. America can make “boutique progress” through superficial fixes or it can make transformational progress—and the latter will require sticking with the job at hand. It takes time to move a project like the Harlem Children's Zone from a concept to a place where its lessons are influencing national policy. It takes time for the Los Angeles Apollo Alliance to test the career ladders for green industry and then for these ideas to be implemented nationally. It takes time to move the lessons from a demonstration project of community reentry programs to national scale. It will also take political will. To move from a demonstration project to something more widespread and transformational requires a lot of backing. It also requires courage. The country can choose to work on the “safer” issues, like education reform, and we might end up not much better off than where we are today. Or we can step up to tackle some of the tougher and often explosive challenges, like juvenile-justice reform. We can pronounce platitudes about helping everyone with decent schools—an important goal that deserves serious, sustained attention—or we can own up to the way we've tried to lock up a significant share of the young and then try a different approach to community safety and security.

Addressing this challenge will require an extraordinary effort from Americans of every race and ethnicity who recognize that the country is at a crossroads. The most strategic and productive way forward is by focusing on equity—just and fair inclusion for all. The coalition that can advance these issues is a broad one, unified by an interest in racial equity and social justice. The black-Latino alliance is particularly important, partly because of the traditional role of the black community in pioneering racial equity and social justice and partly because of the growing power that Latinos hold as they constitute the largest minority group in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

An alliance with older white baby boomers is also important. In his

book *Immigrants and Boomers*, author Dowell Myers has reminded us that as boomers age and come to rely on Social Security and Medicare, they will really be depending on the taxes of the younger generations and immigrants and people of color who keep the economy afloat. But boomers and seniors aren't voting this way. They aren't supporting social services they themselves enjoyed, such as a good public education, that could help immigrants and youth of color prosper. A new social compact between youth of color and baby boomers is not only feasible; it makes sense for both groups.

Finally, we need the participation of youths themselves. Almost half of America's youths are people of color. Of those under eighteen, 14.3 percent are African American, 20.7 percent are Latino, 4.1 percent are Asian, 0.8 percent are Native Americans, and 3.3 percent are mixed or of other races.<sup>43</sup> Some have argued that the diverse mix means that this generation is "post-racial," but racial disparities still persist and what young people seem to be looking for instead is a new way to talk about race.<sup>44</sup> Communicating clearly about structural racial injustice, working toward tangible solutions, and finding mentors who can move beyond the civil rights framework are all ways to appeal to young leaders, many of whom are extraordinarily open to political advocacy and see the government as able to solve problems.<sup>45</sup>

These young leaders will also require new kinds of training to lead multiethnic coalitions and movements. As we become an increasingly diverse country by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of our lived experience, these young people will need to be able to speak for the multihued and multi-interest America. They will need to lead beyond their own distinct groups, to be familiar with issues that do not directly affect them but their allies, and to be skilled at creating a common narrative and a shared agenda that pulls everyone together. These young leaders will need not only to pinpoint what's wrong, but also to build up what's right.<sup>46</sup> These youths and other affected groups must be involved in policymaking because they know what it's like to be poor and excluded in America. Part of the success of the Harlem Children's Zone is that the founder, Geoffrey Canada, actually understands at an intimate level what concentrated and protracted poverty does to a person and his community, since he grew up in the South Bronx. For policymakers who have never experienced poverty, it's more of a stretch to craft appropriate policies, despite their best intentions.

There are more players in the coalition for racial equity—space limitations preclude going into more detail here—but these three groups (the black-Latino coalition, baby boomers, and youth leaders) are key and are not always remembered. Equity comes through building a transforma-

tional base of support in communities across the country and connecting people in those communities, from the inner cities and the suburbs, to policymaking opportunities for change. It helps to have a black man leading the country, but face to face and race to race is how we can start building a better and stronger America.

Studies increasingly show that doing good may also mean doing well. Making progress on indicators like racial inclusion and income inequality actually makes for stronger growth, at least at the metropolitan level (Pastor and Benner 2008; Eberts, Erickcek, and Kleinhenz 2006). It's a lesson bubbling up to the national level, as the hangover from the Great Recession has taught us what happens when America's inequality and disconnection go too far. If part of America's obsession with criminalization has been driven by fear, it may be useful to stress a simple fact: it's safer to grow together than it is to grow apart.

Finally, most people would probably prefer to live in a nation that is more forgiving—where you can make a mistake, face the consequences, but also recover. We advocate a new approach for young men of color, arguing that part of the current dilemma is that mistakes are now more costly. Behavior that would once have gotten detention now gets expulsion; a crime that was once viewed as an error of youth is now cause for trial as an adult; and a high school education that was once the ticket to the middle class is now the route to limited opportunity. The price of a mistake has not just risen for these men and boys of color—the stakes are rising for all of us. If we make a policy mistake now—if we decide that we can allow a generation's talent to continue to go to waste—we will not just wound them, we will also threaten the viability of our twenty-first-century economy.

We know what we need to do. If we take action now and do it right, we can help not just young men and boys of color but all of us. Let's invest in them—and let's invest in ourselves.

## NOTES

1. This housing data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, "Median and Average Sales Prices of New Homes Sold in the United States, 1963–2009," available online at <http://www.census.gov/const/uspriceann.pdf>. The labor market data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "The Employment Situation—February 2010," available online at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empisit.pdf>.

2. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, "An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury," document released on August 14, 2008, available online at <http://>

[www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cbo8-123.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cbo8-123.html). The official estimate remains the year 2023, although more recent releases project that this tipping point may come a bit later, partly because of lower levels of immigration since the recession. See reporting on the unofficial estimate at Hope Yen, “Census: Whites to Hold U.S. Majority Eight Years Longer Than Expected; Economy Slowing Immigration,” *San Francisco Examiner*, available online at <http://www.sfexaminer.com/politics/ap/census-whites-to-hold-us-majority-8-years-longer-than-expected-economy-slowing-immigration-79417112.html>.

3. Presidential candidate Barack Obama’s speech on urban poverty, “Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Changing the Odds for Urban America,” delivered on July 18, 2007, available online at [http://www.barackobama.com/2007/07/18/remarks\\_of\\_senator\\_barack\\_obam\\_19.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2007/07/18/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_19.php).

4. See, for example, Tamara Draut’s remarkably prescient book *Strapped* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005) on the economic travails of Americans under the age of thirty-five.

5. Dwayne Betts tells his story in *A Question of Freedom* (New York: Avery/Penguin, 2009).

6. This data is from the National Center for Education Statistics, “Contexts of Elementary and Secondary Education, School Characteristics and Climate, Table A-28-1,” available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2009/section4/table-sdi-1.asp>.

7. Data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2000.

8. See Lochner and Moretti 2004; and Freeman 1996.

9. These calculations are from the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) of 2007 American Community Survey (ACS) nationwide data and U.S. Census Bureau Historical National Population Estimates. Population growth was calculated using the percent-increase formula.

10. Thomas P. Bonczar, “Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974–2001,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report, August 2003.

11. Of men ages eighteen and older, one in thirty-six Latino men, one in fifteen black men, and one in 106 white men are incarcerated. The numbers for women are also disproportionate (Pew 2008: 6).

12. These numbers are from the Haywood Burns Institute, available online generally at [http://www.burnsinstitute.org/state\\_map.php](http://www.burnsinstitute.org/state_map.php). California data can be accessed at <http://www.burnsinstitute.org/state.php?custom1=California>; Texas data at <http://www.burnsinstitute.org/state.php?custom1=Texas>; and New York data at <http://www.burnsinstitute.org/state.php?custom1=New York>.

13. For men without criminal histories, these rates were 34 percent for white men and 14 percent for black men, showing an entrenched bias, even without criminal history.

14. According to coauthors Cristy Visher, Sara Debus, and Jennifer Yahner (2008: 8): “Predicted probabilities of re-incarceration were 8 percent for those earning more than \$10 per hour; 12 percent for those earning \$7 to \$10 per hour, and 16 percent for those earning less than \$7 per hour—compared with 23 percent for those who were unemployed.”

15. For one perspective on the ebbs and flows of income inequality and how that is related to public policy and the current recession, see Wallis 2010: 81–93.

16. These calculations are from the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics Survey, Series CEU0500000008, "Average Hourly Earnings of Production and Nonsupervisory Employees."

17. Occupations are ranked by the change in the number of jobs between 2006 and those projected for 2016.

18. See Levy and Murnane 1992 for historical data. For more recent data, see the U.S. Census Bureau, "Table F-4. Gini Ratios for Families, by Race and Hispanic Origin of Householder: 1947 to 2008," available online at <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/families/fo4.xls>. Income inequality actually hit its highest peak in 2006, although 2008 was higher than inequality in any year before 2004.

19. These calculations are from the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) of Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) 2007 American Community Survey (ACS) nationwide data.

20. See Fields 2008.

21. For more on the Harlem Children's Zone, see <http://www.hcz.org>.

22. "Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Changing the Odds for Urban America."

23. For more on the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (ACE) Academy, see <http://www.cocosouthla.org/programs/constructiontechnologyacademy>.

24. Cypress Mandela, Inc., "Green Jobs Program," available online at [http://www.cypressmandela.org/our\\_programs/green\\_jobs\\_program](http://www.cypressmandela.org/our_programs/green_jobs_program).

25. For more on the McCullum Youth Court, see "About Us," available online at <http://www.youthcourt.org/AboutUs>.

26. See "Test, Punish, and Push Out: How 'Zero Tolerance' and High Stakes Testing Funnel Youth into the School-to-Prison Pipeline," *Advancement Project*, January 2010, 37.

27. "The Trouble with 'Zero Tolerance,'" *New York Times*, November 11, 2009, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/11/opinion/11wed2.html>.

28. Coauthors D. R. Rose and T. R. Clear (2003: 334–35) have written that returning ex-convict parents could help or hinder their families, and that few studies have shown anything conclusively. They note that without a job, the returned family member would stretch resources even thinner, which again reminds us of the importance of building a strong and robust economy.

29. "Arizona's Department of Corrections Wins Innovations in American Government Award," 2008, available online at <http://www.allbusiness.com/crime-law-enforcement-corrections/corrections-prisons/11554234-1.html>.

30. These calculations are from the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity.

31. These calculations are from the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity.

32. See Stoll 2005, for example.

33. See "Achieving Policy Impact: San Diego's Market Creek Plaza," *PolicyLink*, available online at <http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5137443/apps/s/content.asp?ct=6996201>.



34. As cited in a *PolicyLink* interview with Robert Garcia, the executive director, counsel, and founder of The City Project, January 2010.

35. See “California Health Interview Survey,” UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2003.

36. For more on this project, see “A Healthy Food Financing Initiative: An Innovative Approach to Improve Health and Spark Economic Development,” *PolicyLink*, available online at <http://www.policylink.org/factsheets/hffi>.

37. For more on the City Project of Los Angeles, see “Equal Justice Principles for Healthy Parks, Schools, and Communities,” available online at <http://www.cityprojectca.org/ourwork/mappinggreenaccess/equaljusticeprinciples.html>.

38. Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, “PhotoVoice Flier,” PhotoVoice, 2009.

39. Lorena Ramos, community health specialist, Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program, interview with *PolicyLink*, October 2009. Ramos notes that many male participants in the statewide PhotoVoice program often focus on barriers to safety, such as unsafe streets, parks, and neighborhood hangouts.

40. For more on California’s Youth Board on Obesity Prevention, see [http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes\\_programs/CCROPP/activities/sybop.shtml](http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CCROPP/activities/sybop.shtml).

41. This likely contributes to poorer educational attainment later in life. Data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009*, Table 108, “The percentage of high school dropouts among persons ages sixteen through twenty-four (status dropout rate), by sex and race/ethnicity, selected years through 2008,” available online at [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dto9\\_108.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dto9_108.asp).

42. For various views, both optimistic and pessimistic, on the black-Latino alliance, see Vaca 2004; Mindiola, Flores Niemann, and Rodriguez 2002; Pastor and Carter 2009; and Shulman and Smith 2005.

43. These calculations are from the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) of IPUMS 2006–2008, American Community Survey (ACS) nationwide pooled data.

44. Teresa Cheng and Vanessa Carter, staff from the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at the University of Southern California (USC), interview with Rinku Sen, president and executive director of the Applied Research Center, January 13, 2010.

45. *Ibid.*; and Vanessa Carter, interview with Ange-Marie Hancock, associate professor at the University of Southern California, October, 13, 2009.

46. Teresa Cheng and Vanessa Carter, interviews with Benjamin Torres and Miesha Watson of Public Allies Los Angeles, January 12, 2010.

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## TWO

### YOUNG LATINO AND AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

*Their Characteristics, Outcomes, and Social Conditions*

Belinda Reyes and Monique Nakagawa

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the characteristics, outcomes, and social conditions of African American and Latino males between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five and the factors that put them at risk of long-term disconnection from the worlds of work and school. Through an analysis of research and secondary data, we explore the household conditions and productive activities of young males as they transition into adulthood. We then examine the conditions and social barriers facing disconnected young men. Disconnected non-Hispanic whites are more likely than others to be in rural areas and to have higher levels of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), veteran status, and welfare participation, which signal a disability, a need for adjustment time following a return from war, or a mental condition that puts them at risk of long-term disconnection. In contrast, disconnected African American and Latino youth are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be high school dropouts living in environments that hamper their progress toward healthy and stable lives. Unless scholars and policymakers pay close attention to the social contexts in which young men of color live and address the social barriers hindering their progress, a significant number of youths could remain isolated, disenfranchised, and disconnected from the world of work and school.

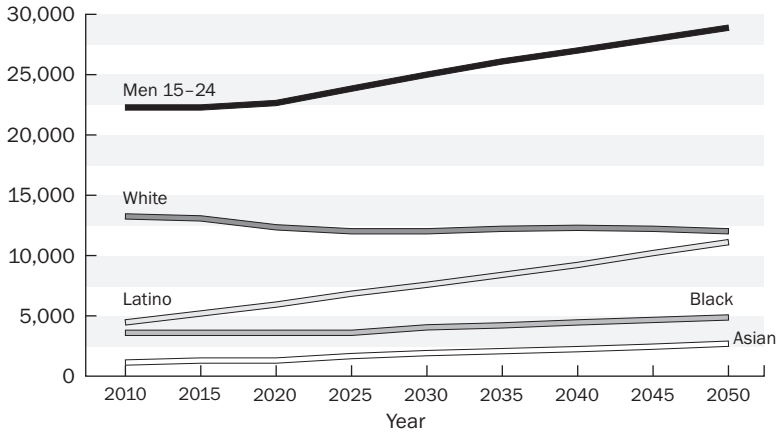
## INTRODUCTION

The future of the U.S. economy is linked to the effective transition of Latinos and African Americans from youth to adulthood. As the baby boomers who were born between 1946 and 1964 retire, and as fertility rates decline, a growing proportion of the U.S. population will depend on fewer working adults. While in 2005 there were fifty-nine elderly persons and children for every hundred Americans of working age, by 2050 there will be seventy-two dependents for every hundred people of working age in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2008). Moreover, the young population in the United States is changing. Once mostly non-Hispanic white, this population is increasingly multiethnic. In 2010 about 60 percent of Americans between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are estimated to be non-Hispanic white; by 2050 non-Hispanic whites will make up less than 40 percent of young adults in the United States (U.S. Census 2008b). Meanwhile, Latinos, who in 2010 comprise 20 percent of young Americans between fifteen and twenty-four, will double their rate to about 40 percent by midcentury (*ibid.*). In California a majority of residents younger than twenty-five are other than non-Hispanic white: 45 percent are Latinos, 10.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 6.8 percent African American (U.S. Census 2007).

In the face of these demographic realities, understanding and improving opportunities for all young adults, particularly Latinos and African Americans, becomes imperative. Most adolescents succeed in their transition to adulthood: they graduate from high school, go to college, and/or get a job that enables them to avoid poverty. Most do not have serious problems with the judicial system. But some young people, a disproportionate number of whom are black and Latino males, are trapped in a cycle of prison, poverty, and disadvantage. For these young adults, deteriorated schools and neighborhoods, dysfunctional social support, and limited employment opportunities increasingly hamper their progress. Through an analysis of the existing research and secondary data, this chapter explores the characteristics, outcomes, and social conditions of young Latino and African American males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five and the factors that put them at risk for long-term disconnection.<sup>1</sup>

## CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG MALES

In 2010 there were 22.3 million persons between fifteen and twenty-four years old in the United States. By 2040 the U.S. population as a whole will



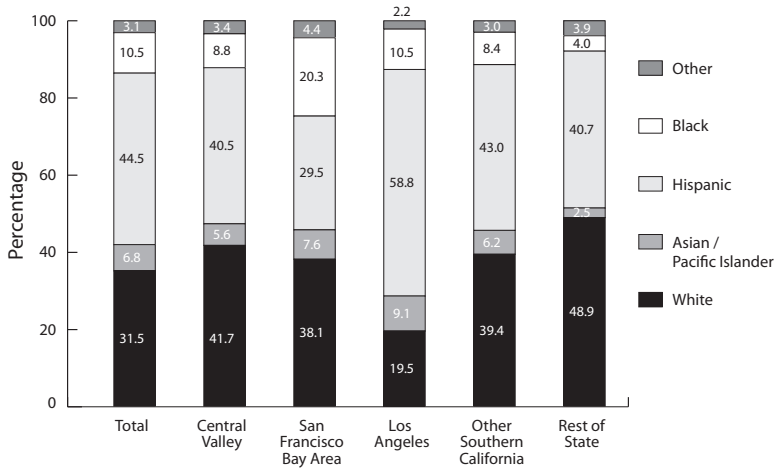
**Figure 2.1.** Number of men ages fifteen through twenty-four in the United States, 2010–50. *Source:* Figure generated from Tables 12, 14, 20, 24, and 25 of the U.S. Census projections, 2008

be majority minority. However, the population of men between fifteen and twenty-four will become majority minority within the next fifteen years (U.S. Census 2008a). Although the number of young white men between fifteen and twenty-four is expected to decline over the next fifty years, the numbers of young Latino, African American, and Asian men will continue to increase (figure 2.1). By 2050, 39.5 percent of young men will be non-Hispanic white, 37.9 percent Latino, 12.8 percent African American, and 6.7 percent Asian.

The 2010 California population includes approximately three million men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. Latinos are the largest ethnic group in the state, constituting 44.5 percent of the population. There is, however, ethnic variation across the state (figure 2.2). For example, 60 percent of young men in Los Angeles are Latino and only one in four is white non-Hispanic, while in the Bay Area there is no majority group. The ethnic presence is smallest in the “Rest of state” category, which comprise of counties in the northern and Sierra region of the state. Whites are almost half (48.9 percent) of the young population in those counties, while Latinos are 40.4 percent.

*Living arrangements.* Young men of different racial and ethnic groups experience a range of situations at home. Table 2.1 shows the characteristics and resources of U.S. households where young people lived in 2008. For the most part young men lived in two-parent households. Some young men reside with their parents or guardians; others are married themselves.





**Figure 2.2.** Ethnic distribution of men ages fifteen to twenty-four in California. *Source:* State of California, Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000–2050. Sacramento, July 2007.

Of white non-Hispanic men, 53.7 percent live in a two-parent household and 15 percent live in a female-headed household with no husband present. Meanwhile, only a third (33.5 percent) of black men between fifteen and twenty-four live in a two-parent household, while 46.2 percent live in a female-headed household. In the Midwest and the Northeast, approximately half of black youths live in a female-headed household (50.9 and 49.9 percent, respectively). Most Latinos live in two-parent households (52.2 percent), but such is not the case for Latinos in the Northeast, where only 40.5 percent of Latino young men live in households headed by two parents.

Close to one in four youths live with nonfamily as housemates, lodgers, or roommates, unmarried partners, foster children, institutional inmates, or in another nonfamily arrangement.<sup>2</sup> Generally, youths leave homes once they complete their schooling to go to work or further education, but others go into institutional environments—including prisons, youth detention centers, reformatories, or mental institutions—that put them at risk of disconnection. Among young men between fifteen and nineteen, about one in eight live in nonfamily households, as do one in five men between twenty to twenty-five. Meanwhile, more than 8 percent of African Americans between twenty and twenty-four years old live in some institutional inmate setting in the United States and 7 percent in California.

*Urbanicity.* Most young people live largely outside of central cities.

**Table 2.1** Characteristics of disconnected men, ages fifteen through twenty-four, in the United States and California

	United States				California			
	Total	Whites	Latinos	Blacks	Total	Whites	Latinos	Blacks
Regional Distribution	53.7	58.5	52.2	33.5	54.9	54.9	57.4	31.4
Northeast	17.8							
Midwest	22.0							
South	40.3							
West	24.4							
Married couple household	53.7	58.5	52.2	33.5	54.9	54.9	57.4	31.4
Female-headed household	21.2	15.3	23.1	49.9	20.7	15.3	21.9	45.2
Living with nonfamily	18.4	19.2	16.1	17.7	16.8	20.1	13.7	18.5
Ages 15 to 19	12.2	12.7	9.7	12.0	9.5	11.1	7.3	10.9
Ages 20 to 24	24.9	25.8	22.4	24.2	20.0	28.8	20.0	26.4
Institutional inmates	2.1	1.2	2.6	5.8	1.9	1.0	2.3	5.3
Ages 15 to 19	1.4			3.6	1.1			3.5
Ages 20 to 24	2.9	1.6	3.7	8.4	2.6	1.5	3.3	7.2

Central city	26.0	16.9	37.7	43.9	30.3	23.0	32.6	42.0
Nonmetro	26.1	32.4	14.1	19.1	5.0	7.8	3.9	2.7
Below the poverty line	17.1	14.1	19.7	25.3	16.2	13.2	17.4	21.8
No health insurance	26.3		44.9	31.5	30.0		41.9	29.3
Of every 1,000 youth number of								
Veterans*	17.3	19.6	11.7	16.4	13.96	19.6	9.7	15.7
Receiving SSI	10.3	9.1	7.3	20.7	7.14	6.7	6	20.2
Receiving welfare	4.5	3.6	3.77	8.97	5.9	5.38	4.98	21.1

\* These numbers are for all seventeen-through twenty-four-year-old males.

SOURCE: Regional distribution was generated from the State of California, Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000–2050. Sacramento, July 2007. Household type and relationship to head of households, educational attainment, metropolitan status, poverty status, welfare, veteran, and SSI status were all generated from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2006–2008 3-Year. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau; Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010).

This is particularly the case for young white males (26 percent live outside a metro area, and 51 percent live in the suburbs), young people in the Northeast, the West, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the area outside of Los Angeles. Latino and African American youths, however, tend to concentrate in central cities. Forty-four percent of African Americans and 38 percent of Latinos lived in central cities in 2008.

*Poverty.* Overall, 17.1 percent of young men lived below the federal poverty line in 2008. Blacks had the highest poverty rate, at one in four (25.3 percent), while roughly one in five Latinos (19.7 percent) and one in seven non-Hispanic whites (14.1 percent) lived in poverty. In the Midwest, however, 30 percent of young black males lived below the poverty line, a rate twice that of Midwestern non-Hispanic whites (14.5 percent). In California, the Central Valley, which is composed of a predominantly Latino population, had the highest poverty rates in the state.

*Crime and safety.* Boys and young men of color are also at increased risk of exposure to crime and threats to personal safety. Nationally, African American and Latino children are three and two times more likely, respectively, than white children to have been exposed to shootings, bombings, or riots (RAND 2009). Furthermore, both African American and Latino children are more than seven times more likely than white children to have had someone close to them murdered (Finkelhor et al., cited in Rand 2009).

African American and Latino children are also at greater risk of maltreatment, which includes physical and sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. In California, African American children are at 2.5 greater odds of substantiated maltreatment, and Latino children at 1.3 greater odds, than white children (Rand 2009). The effects of child maltreatment are carried into adolescence and young adulthood. In a study of 10 California counties, Jonson-Reid and Barth found that “children initially reported for neglect were more likely to be incarcerated in the California Youth Authority (CYA) later in life,” and that “(a)mong children investigated for maltreatment, African American children had the highest rate of CYA entry, followed by Latino children” (cited in Rand 2009).

*Foster care.* Children for whom a child welfare agency has substantiated abuse or neglect and who cannot be adequately protected from harm are placed in foster care. In California, African American children are disproportionately represented in the foster-care system by four times (Rand 2009). In 2009, 2.7 percent of African American children in California were in foster care, and they are more likely than other children to be placed in foster care after a substantiated report of maltreatment (Danielson and Lee 2010). They stay longer in foster care, and a smaller share of African

American children than other children and youths are reunited with their birth parents (Needell et al. 2010, referenced by Danielson and Lee 2010). Not only do those in foster care risk poor outcomes stemming from abuse or neglect, but research suggests that their adjustments to adulthood after they leave the foster-care system are also substantially different than those not in the system (Farruggia et al. 2006).<sup>3</sup>

*Access to health insurance and social safety nets.* In addition to high poverty rates, many young African American and Latino men have no health insurance. Almost half of Latino and 31 percent of African American males between fifteen and twenty-five had no health insurance in 2008 (see table 2.1). In California, Latino youths are 4.8 times more likely than white youths to be uninsured, and among all uninsured children they are the least likely to be enrolled in such public insurance programs as Medi-Cal or Healthy Families (RAND 2009). Many African American and Latino youths also have some form of disability, as measured by the proportion receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).<sup>4</sup> Of every 1,000 African American young men, 20.7 received some SSI income. Few, however, received “welfare.”<sup>5</sup> Although more than 250 African American and almost 200 Latino young men of every 1,000 were poor in 2008, only about 9 African American and 4 Latino young men of every 1,000 received welfare.

## PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG MALES

Productive activities are those that help young men successfully transition into adulthood. Education and employment are two important such activities.

### Education and Employment

Enrolling in school improves the skills and experience of young men in the labor market. In fact, young men who are not successfully engaged in school run a risk of having lower earnings later in life, a less stable employment history, and more vulnerability to economic fluctuations (Ivry and Doolittle 2003). In their investigation of the impact of education on young people of all races and ethnicities between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four, child welfare researchers Michael Wald and Tia Martinez (2003) found that only 3 percent of young adults with an associate degree or higher experienced long-term unemployment, whereas 27 percent of high school dropouts were unemployed for a year or longer.

High school dropouts are also at a risk of poor adult life outcomes,

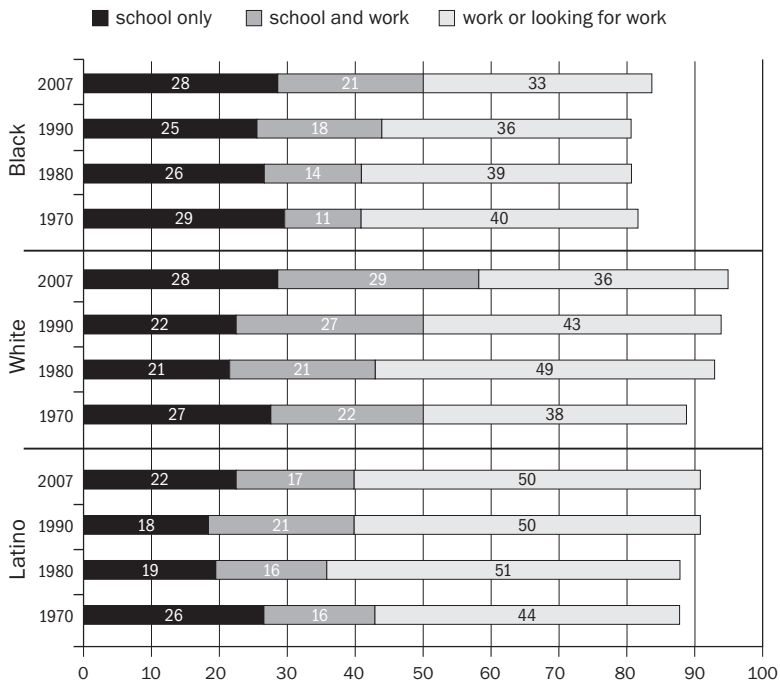
including drug, alcohol, and cigarette use; incarceration; poor health; and lack of civic engagement (Brown, Moore, and Bzostek 2003). An analysis of outcomes for a cohort of youths between ages sixteen and twenty-four using the 1979 Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that a third of young men without a high school degree were incarcerated at some point before age twenty-five (Brown 1996, as quoted in Wald and Martinez 2003). Although we find significant progress for Latino and African American young adults, differences still persist among young children and adults by race and ethnicity, and many young men of color remain disconnected from the world of school or work.

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, all young men ages sixteen through twenty-five were more likely to be engaged in school and/or work in 2007 than in previous decades. For Latinos most of the growth in productive activity has been due to increases in employment, while enrollment in school declined slightly between 1970 and 2007 (figure 2.3).<sup>6</sup> Although African Americans increased their engagement in school and work, most of the increase took place among black men who were working as well as studying. The proportion of young men who were simultaneously working and studying increased over time for all groups, but particularly for black men. While 27.5 percent of young black men in school were working in 1970, by 2007, 42.9 percent were working and studying.

These patterns of work and study are critical. Studies have found that the postsecondary dropout rate is higher for those who work and study (Johnson et al. 2009; Chen 2007). In a national survey of young adults ages twenty-two to thirty, education researcher Jean Johnson and colleagues found that the top two reasons given for leaving college are the need to work while attending classes and the lack of affordability of tuition and fees. Given the rise in tuition at major universities across the nation, young men—especially African American men—face increasing barriers to completion of a higher education.

The proportion of teenage males between sixteen and nineteen who are in school has been increasing over time. By 2007 a large majority of young men were attending school: 84 percent of whites, 77 percent of African Americans, 78 percent of U.S.-born Latinos, and 53 percent of foreign-born Latinos (figure 2.4). Although the majority of students focused on their studies, the proportion of teenage males working and studying has also been increasing over time, even as the percentage exclusively working has been declining. By 2007 more than 30 percent of teenage males in school were also working.

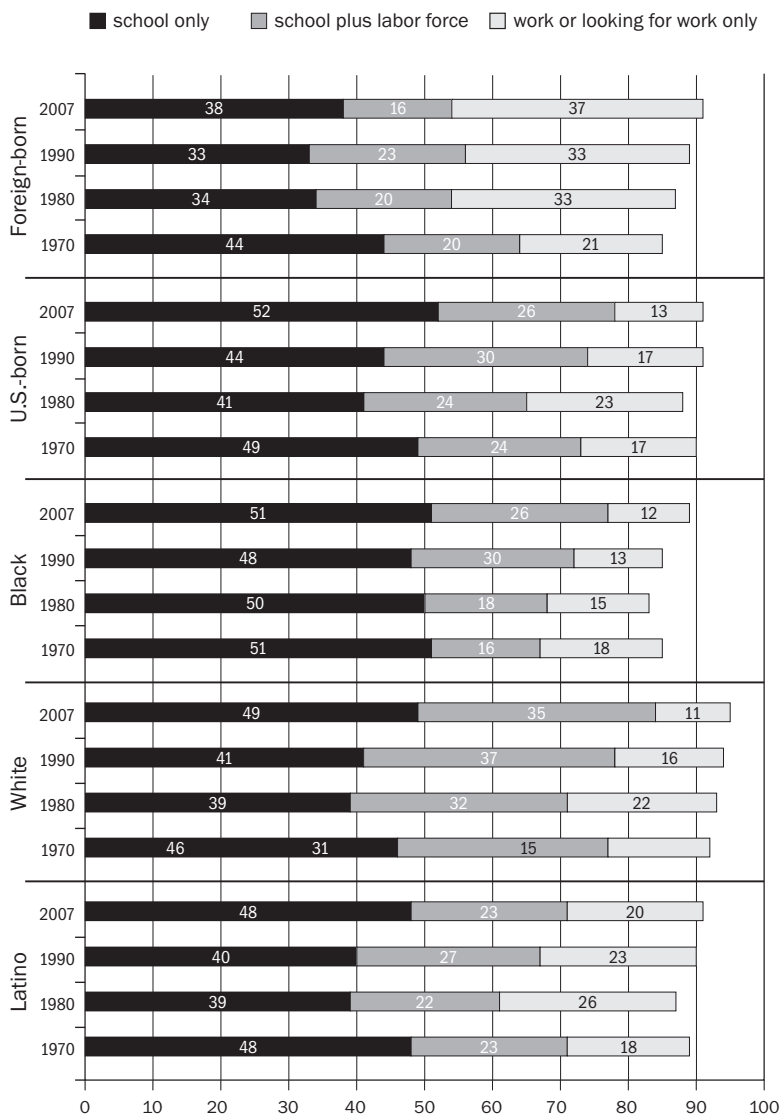
As teenage males enter young adulthood, most begin working: 78



**Figure 2.3.** Productive activity of young males ages sixteen through twenty-five, 1970–2007. *Source:* Figure generated from data provided by Fry 2009.

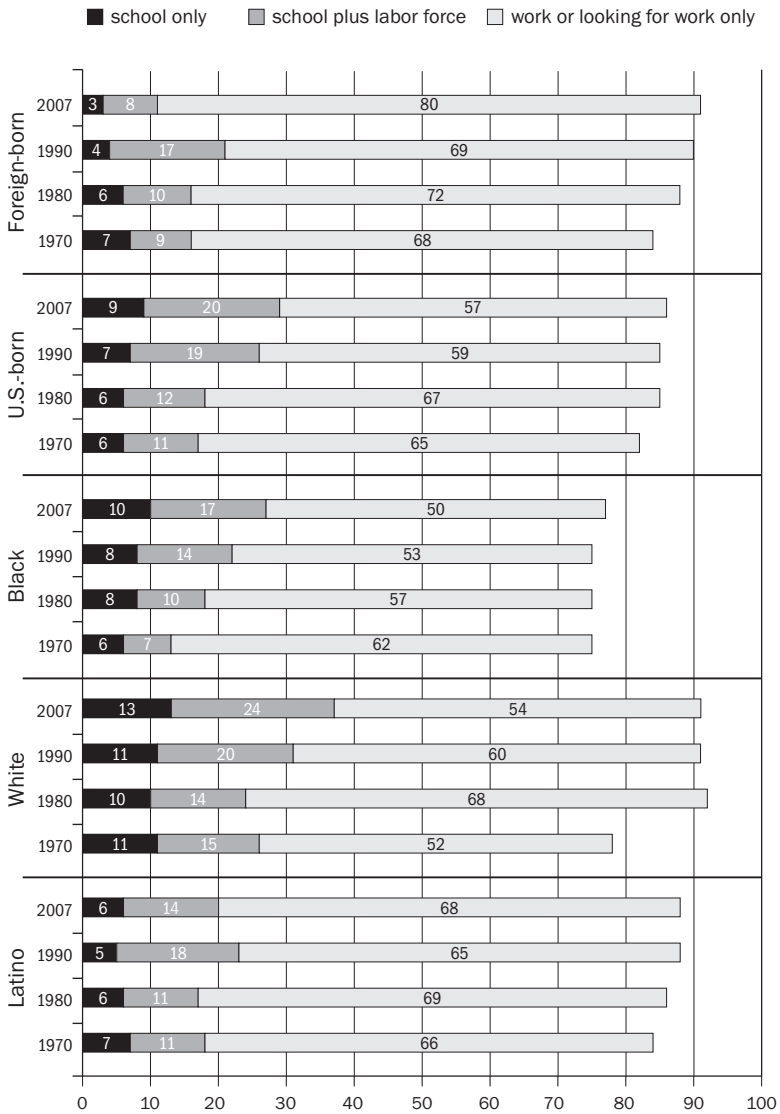
percent of whites, 67 percent of African Americans, 77 percent of U.S.-born Latinos, and 88 percent of foreign-born Latinos between twenty and twenty-five years old were employed (figure 2.5). But there has also been an increase in the proportion of young men in school. Many more young adults than in years past are working and studying. As of 2007, 65 percent of whites, 63 percent of blacks, 69 percent of U.S.-born Latinos, and 73 percent of foreign-born Latinos attending school were working as well as studying.

Despite increases in the number of African American and U.S.-born Latinos who are employed and/or enrolled in school, the achievement gap between white and nonwhite young adults has worsened since 1970. The difference in employment rates between African American and white young men is dramatic. While about two-thirds of white and Latino men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five were working or looking for work, only a little more than half of African Americans worked in 2007. A school-enrollment gap also persists between non-Hispanic whites and African Americans: 49 percent of African American men between the ages



**Figure 2.4.** Productive activity of teen males ages sixteen through nineteen, 1970–2007. *Source:* Figure generated from data provided by Fry 2009.





**Figure 2.5.** Productive activity of young males, ages twenty through twenty-five, 1970–2007. *Source:* Figure generated from data provided by Fry 2009.

of sixteen and twenty-five were in school in 2007, compared with 57 percent of whites. Such gaps, however, are not restricted to African Americans and whites. While Latinos have the highest employment rates, they represent one of the lowest proportions of youth enrolled in school. Only 39 percent of Latinos between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five were in school in 2007, compared with 57 percent of whites. In addition, there are significant differences in school enrollment and educational attainment between U.S.-born Latinos and foreign-born Latinos. Among U.S.-born Latinos school enrollment is increasing, particularly for teenagers, whose rates of school enrollment rose the most of any group in the past thirty years. However, foreign-born Latinos were the only group with a decline in school enrollment between 1970 and 2007.

### **Educational Attainment Rates**

A critical question is whether increases in school enrollment are leading to increases in educational attainment. Table 2.2 examines high school completion and college attendance rates. High school dropout rates declined for all racial and ethnic groups between 1970 and 2007. The greatest declines were among African Americans and U.S.-born Latinos. In 2007 one of every eight African American and U.S.-born Latino males between sixteen and twenty-five dropped out of high school, compared to about one in three in 1970. Despite this tremendous improvement in the dropout rate, still twice as many African Americans and U.S.-born Latinos drop out of high school than do non-Hispanic whites today. Graduation rates have also increased for eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds of all racial and ethnic groups. As of 2007, 94.6 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 88.7 percent of African Americans, 92.7 percent of Asian or Pacific Islanders, and 77.6 percent of Latinos completed high school (Cataldi, Laird, and KewalRamani 2009).<sup>7</sup>

Among high school graduates, college-going rates have been increasing since 1970, except for foreign-born Latinos. While less than 30 percent of African American and U.S.-born Latino high school graduates between sixteen and twenty-five were enrolled in college in 1970, by 2007, 39 percent of African American and 41 percent of U.S.-born Latino high school graduates were enrolled in college. Nevertheless, a gap still persists between whites and nonwhites. Almost half of white high school graduates between sixteen and twenty-five were enrolled in college in 2007, while only about 40 percent of African American and Latino young adults were enrolled in college. Among young adults between sixteen and twenty-five,

**Table 2.2** High school dropout and college-going rates for young males, ages sixteen through twenty-five, 1970 and 2007

	High school dropout rates (%)		College-going rates (%)		College enrollment next October after high school graduation (%)	
	1970	2007	1970	2007	1980	2007
	Latinos	32	22	31	34	52
U.S.-born Latinos	27	12	30	41	—	—
Foreign-born Latinos	43	37	34	23	—	—
Whites	15	6	38	48	50	70
Blacks	31	13	23	39	43	56

SOURCE: Data for high school dropouts and college-going rates were generated from Fry 2009. The numbers for college enrollment the next October after graduation was generated from Cataldi, Laird, and KewalRamani 2009. Data not available for all categories.

70 percent of whites enroll in college right after graduation, while only 56 percent of blacks and 64 percent of Latinos do the same.

### Incarceration Rates

One alarming trend is the increase in incarceration among young men, particularly African American men. In 2007, 7 percent of African American males between sixteen and twenty-five were incarcerated (Fry 2009). In California prisons, 28 percent of males eighteen to twenty-four years old are African American. In juvenile facilities, 30.5 percent of the males fifteen to twenty-four years old are African American. Yet African Americans comprise only 7 percent of those age groups in the state (CDCR, Offender Information Services Branch 2008; CDCR, Division of Juvenile Justice 2008). Latinos are also overrepresented in juvenile facilities. While they account for 45 percent of the state’s fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, Latinos are 53.6 percent of youths in juvenile facilities (CDCR, Division of Juvenile Justice 2008). Incarceration rates are higher among young adults than among teenage men. Almost one in ten African Americans and one in twenty U.S.-born Latinos between twenty and twenty-four was incarcerated in 2007. Not only is the prison experience difficult for young adults and their families, but those who leave prison have difficulties re-entering society. It has been estimated that about 50 percent of former prisoners return to prison, and many have a difficult time finding employment and completing school (Petersilia 2003).

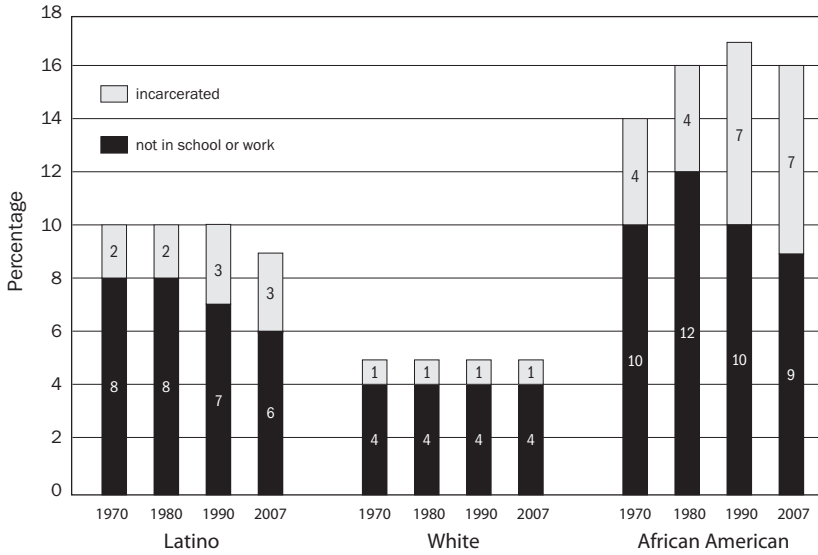
## DISCONNECTED YOUTH

If we combine the number of incarcerated young adults with the number who are out of school and work, we get an idea of the proportion of young adults at risk of remaining disconnected for long periods of time. In 2007 almost one in ten Latino and one in six African American males between sixteen and twenty-five was incarcerated or out of work or school (figure 2.6). Latinos are two times more likely to be out of school and the labor force or incarcerated than non-Hispanic whites, and African Americans are three times more likely than whites.

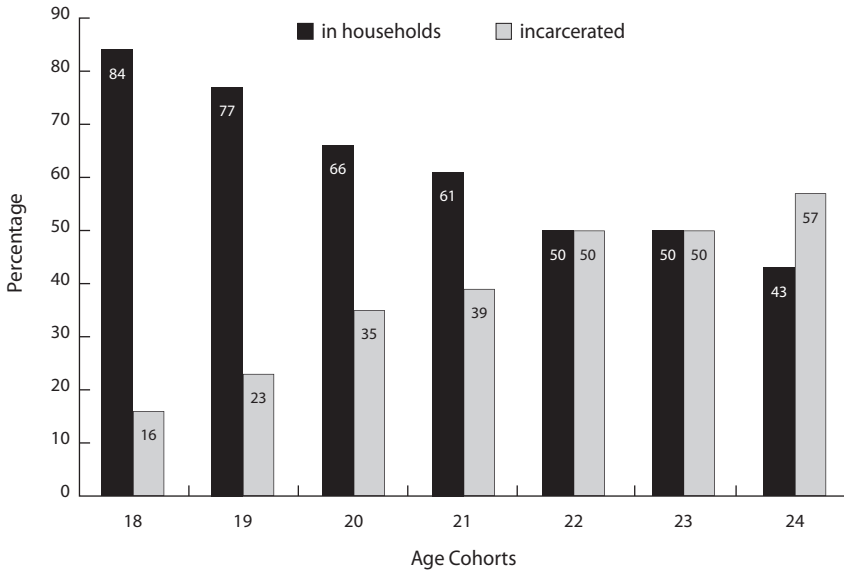
Few young adults remain disconnected from the world of work and school for long periods of time, either because they enter the labor force or they earn a high school diploma or other credential (Wald and Martinez 2003). However, there are more young adults between twenty and twenty-five out of work and school or incarcerated than the teen cohorts between sixteen and nineteen. In 2007 one of every five African Americans and one of every eight Latinos between twenty and twenty-four was incarcerated or out of school or work as compared with about one in ten Latino and African American teens between sixteen and nineteen (Fry 2009). For the older cohort, incarceration is a larger part of the explanation for disconnection than for the younger cohort. Fifty-seven percent of disconnected twenty-four-year-olds were in jail or prison, as compared with 16 percent of eighteen-year-olds (figure 2.7). The prison experience makes it even more difficult for young adults to reconnect with the worlds of school and work (Wald and Martinez 2003).

In 2008 nearly 653,000 young males across the United States were disconnected from the worlds of school and work; of these about 248,000 were non-Hispanic whites, 212,000 African Americans, and 165,000 Latinos (U.S. Census 2007).<sup>8</sup> In California an estimated 84,000 youths were not working or studying and did not have a high school diploma; this group was composed of close to 18,000 non-Hispanic whites, 43,000 Latinos, and 11,000 African Americans (*ibid.*). Latinos and African Americans are disproportionately represented among the disconnected in California (figure 2.8). Although African Americans comprise 7 percent of the state's fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, they make up more than 14 percent of disconnected youth. This is particularly the case in the Central Valley and the Bay Area. African Americans, for example, account for 7.8 percent of Bay Area youths, but 24 percent of the region's disconnected young people.

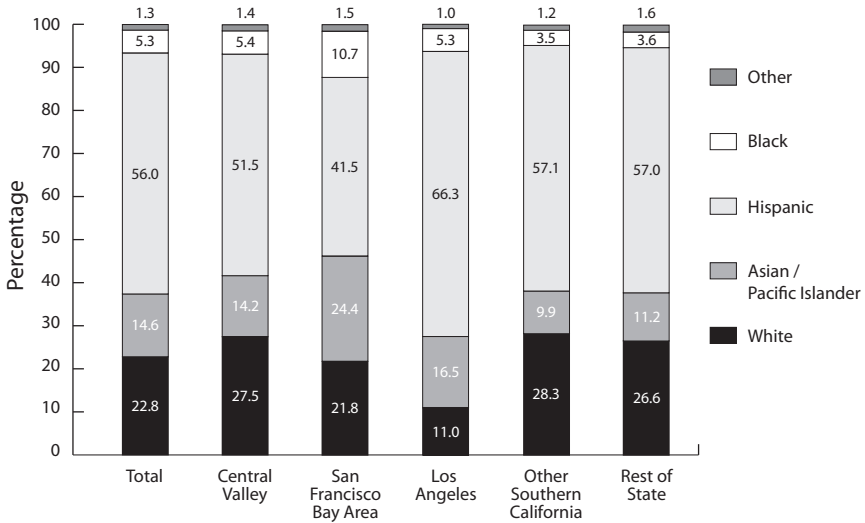
Disconnected youths face more precarious conditions than the typical fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds (table 2.3). Although one of every five young



**Figure 2.6.** Proportion of males ages sixteen through twenty-five incarcerated or out of school and work, 1970–2007. *Source:* Figure generated from data provided by Fry 2009.



**Figure 2.7.** Percentage of disconnected men in households versus jail/prison across age cohorts. *Source:* Wald and Martinez 2003. They generated these data from a pooled sample from the March CPS 1997, 1999, 2001; October CPS 2000; Survey of States and Federal Facilities 1997; Survey of Inmates in Local Jails 1996; National Prisoner Statistics counts; and the Annual Survey of Jails 2000.



**Figure 2.8.** Geographic distribution of disconnected males, ages fifteen through twenty-four, in California. *Note:* We define “disconnected” as being out of work or school and having no high school diploma. *Sources:* U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2006–2008 3-Year; Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010).

persons lived in a female-headed household in 2008, more than two in five (41 percent) disconnected youths lived in a female-headed household, equal to the share living in a household headed by a two-parent household. Of disconnected African American youths, 64 percent lived in a female-headed household, as did more than 64 percent of those living in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the South. Many disconnected youths live without relatives, including a significant number of institutional inmates. Nearly one in three disconnected youths lives as an institutional inmate, and more than two in five disconnected African Americans were institutional inmates. In the Northeast more than 45 percent of disconnected African American youth live as institutional inmates. Among disconnected Latinos, nearly one in three is an institutional inmate; that figure increases to 35 percent in the South.

### Poverty, Welfare, and Other Economic Factors of Disconnection

Disconnected youths are poor, disabled, or on welfare at twice the rate of other youths. While one in six (17.1 percent) of fifteen- to twenty-four-

year-olds was poor in 2008, more than two in five (40.3 percent) disconnected youths were poor, including 43.4 percent of Latinos and 48.5 percent of African Americans. Poverty was particularly high among African Americans in the Midwest and South, and among Latinos in the Northeast and South. Access to health insurance was also limited. Half of disconnected youths had no health insurance, including 56.8 percent of African Americans and 65.5 percent of Latinos.

Disconnected youths are eight times more likely to receive SSI than other fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds. On average 83 of every 1,000 disconnected youths received SSI in 2008, including 116.5 per 1,000 disconnected non-Hispanic whites, 75.1 per 1,000 disconnected African Americans, and 45.1 per 1,000 disconnected Latinos. California saw even higher percentages of SSI recipients, with 123.2 of every 1,000 disconnected African Americans statewide and 224.4 of every 1,000 disconnected African Americans in the Central Valley receiving SSI. Disconnected youths, particularly non-Hispanic whites, are more likely to be on welfare than other fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds. Although disconnected African American youths are 1.8 times more likely to be on welfare than other fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, disconnected non-Hispanic whites are 7.3 times more likely to be on welfare.

### **Short-term and Long-term Disconnection**

When disconnection occurs, it is primarily a short-term phenomenon. Most disconnected youths move in and out of school and employment but eventually connect to the world of work or school. One group of youths, however, remained disconnected for long periods of time. In their study of disconnected youth, Wald and Martinez (2003) found that the majority of young males who remain disconnected for long periods of time and do not make a successful transition to adulthood fall within one or more of the following three groups: (1) those who have not completed high school; (2) youths who have been incarcerated in the juvenile justice systems; and (3) adolescents who have experienced foster placement.

Wald and Martinez (*ibid.*: 6) found that completing high school greatly improves life outcomes for young adults: “Youth who drop out of high school are at a very high risk of long-term disconnection. . . . While the majority of high school dropouts do manage to eventually connect with the labor force, the great majority experience long periods of unemployment.” Incarcerated youths are also at high risk of long-term disconnection. However, for youths on probation the outcomes are significantly better as compared with those arrested and incarcerated (*ibid.*). Finally, youth in fos-

**Table 2.3** Characteristics of disconnected young males, ages fifteen through twenty-four, in the United States and California

	United States				California			
	Total	Whites	Latinos	Blacks	Total	Whites	Latinos	Blacks
U.S. regional distribution	3.0	37.9	25.3	32.5	3.0	22.8	56.0	14.6
Northeast	15.7							
Midwest	18.6							
South	42.5							
West	23.2							
Two-parent household	40.5	49.8	45.1	19.6	47.0	45.4	52.4	15.0
Female-headed household, no husband present	40.8	30.2	35.2	64.4	36.3	34.9	32.8	68.0
Living with nonfamily	38.9	31.7	39.7	48.3	38.8	36.8	38.1	50.5
Institutional inmates	30.9	21.7	31.9	42.6	29.4	20.8	30.0	44.4



Central city	31.9	15.6	40.3	44.2	33.7	28.3	31.9	47.3
Nonmetro	35.3	47.5	22.3	30.7	11.5	17.6	10.6	9.9
Below the poverty line	40.3	33.8	43.4	48.5	34.0	29.9	35.4	37.7
No health insurance	54.5	46.5	65.5	56.8	58.9	58.5	64.1	52.2
Of every 1,000 youth number of								
Veterans*	7.0	7.0	4.0	8.0	8.0	17.0	5.0	6.0
Receiving SSI	83.1	116.5	45.1	75.1	69.4	114.6	38.4	123.2
Receiving welfare	19.4	26.4	12.2	16.0	24.3	31.9	19.5	36.2

\* These numbers are for all seventeen- to twenty-four-year-old males.

SOURCE: Regional distribution was generated from the State of California, Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000–2050. Sacramento, July 2007. Household type and relationship to head of households, educational attainment, metropolitan status, poverty status, welfare, veteran, and SSI status were all generated from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2006-2008 3-Year. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau; Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database] [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010].

ter care are especially vulnerable. They receive limited social support and “many suffer from mental and physical health problems and/or substance abuse” (ibid.: 10). Teenagers who remain in the foster-care system until they reach eighteen experience particular difficulties (Wertheimer 2002).

Among disconnected non-Hispanic whites, African Americans, and Latinos, non-Hispanic whites have higher levels of disability, veteran status, and welfare participation, and each of these factors puts youths at risk of long-term disengagement. Meanwhile, disconnected African American and Latino youths are more likely to be high school dropouts and to live in environments that put them at risk of disconnection—female-headed households, poor, in central cities, and institutionalized. An accumulation of disadvantage hampers the progress of these groups of young adults. The dimensions of this cumulative disadvantage are explored below.

### THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF DISADVANTAGE

Although African American and Latino young adults have made great strides over the past forty years, many move in and out of school and work, while others remain isolated and disconnected. Some survive through illicit activities, such as gang membership, prostitution, and drug trafficking. Others are not involved in illicit behavior but suffer from depression, abuse, and mental-health and addiction problems. Social scientists and policymakers point to individual deficiencies as a reason for these outcomes and advocate such approaches as prevention of teen pregnancy and of juvenile delinquency to address these issues. But broader social and institutional factors are also affecting the resources and opportunities available to young adults.

The human ecology theory argues that although the individual’s behavior is important, behavior is not generated in isolation. Rather, it is embedded in a social and economic environment. The theory suggests that although it is important to pay attention to families and individuals, we must also address the social contexts in young people’s lives (Aspen Report 2005; Davis, Kolburn, and Schultz 2009; Northridge, Sclar, and Biswas 2003). A 2005 analysis published by the Aspen Institute, a progressive think tank, reported: “While we treasure the notions of individual accomplishment, meritocracy and equal opportunity, in fact, individuals are members of families, communities, and social groups, and their individual trajectories will be affected—though not necessarily totally determined—by the overall status of their group. Those born into disadvantaged communities cannot be blamed for the . . . consequent challenges they face. . . . Where

one starts out in life affects where one ends up to a greater degree than our national sense of economic mobility would have us believe” (ibid.: 22).

Community resources, environmental hazards, and social inequalities create a combination of disparities that limit young people’s access to opportunities and place them at risk of disconnection (Sampson 2009; Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008; Cohen and Northridge 2008; Geronimus 2000; Massey and Denton 1993). There is also evidence of differential treatment of, and persistent discrimination against, youth of color in the educational sector, the housing sector, the juvenile justice system and the labor market (Aspen Institute 2005). Meanwhile, structural changes in the U.S. and world economies are transforming youth pathways, which may make it more difficult for youths—in particular African American and Latino young adults—to transition into adulthood (Mortimer and Larson 2002).

Communities provide young people entry into the world. They provide access to resources, including transportation, schools, parks, and health-care services; they also connect youths to social networks, jobs, and community-based organizations. At the same time, however, communities expose youths to environmental and social stressors, including crime, gangs, environmental hazards, economic instability, and inadequate housing. In many communities opportunities are plentiful, while in others resources are limited and deteriorating. For example, although some youths barely see the police unless there are problems, others are in a virtual state of siege by the police. “The problems for health that people confront everywhere are intensified by the density and diversity of urban settings,” wrote coauthors Hillel W. Cohen and Mary E. Northridge (2008: 518). There is extensive evidence of the impact of income differences and community conditions on youth outcomes (Sampson 2009; Wilson 2009; Holzer 2009; Northridge et al., 2003; Cohen and Northridge 2000; Krieger and Fee 1996; Williams and Collins 1995; and Navarro 1990).

In addition to differences in the social and institutional factors, there is also evidence of a different treatment. The Aspen Report highlights evidence of social structure inequalities, not just in outcomes but in treatment within the educational sector, the housing sector, the juvenile justice system, and the labor market (Aspen Institute 2005).<sup>9</sup> It documents differences between students of color and whites in funding per pupil, access to advance courses (even when one compares students with the same test scores as whites), and disciplinary policies. In the juvenile justice system, it finds that youth of color are referred to juvenile court more often than their non-Hispanic white counterparts. Once referred to juvenile court, youth of

color are more likely to be locked in detention facilities, even when charged with the same offense as white youth. And youth of color are less likely to be placed on probation than their non-Hispanic white counterparts. These persistent and institutionalized differences hinder the progress of youth of color and perpetuate their relative disadvantage vis-à-vis non-Hispanic whites.

Demographic, institutional, and structural changes taking place in the world present another set of challenges for young adults.<sup>10</sup> Demographic changes, including declines in non-Hispanic white fertility rates, and the retirement of the Baby Boom generation indicate a growing, predominantly white elderly population soon to be supported by a younger multiethnic population (Mortimer and Larson 2002). As the adolescence researchers Reed Larson and Suzanne Wilson (2002: 164) have noted: “It is critical that nations provide services for the elderly, but do not compromise the provision of health care, education, and other services for children and adolescents in the process. Cross-generational understanding and collaboration is needed to ensure the well-being of all and the future of society.”

Moreover, young adults are facing a more competitive and a more unequal labor market. Economic globalization has increased international competition and put pressure on businesses to reduce jobs, reduce wages, and export jobs to distant places. The decline in employment opportunities has been particularly severe in communities of color (Wilson 2009; Holzer 2009). These facts combined with new occupational and technological demands in the United States are increasing the educational requirements for jobs and the wage differences between educated and uneducated workers (Mortimer and Larson 2002). Meanwhile, an emphasis in individualism and neoliberalism has taken hold in our society and has led to disinvestments in social-support programs, a move to privatize public education, the elimination of affirmative action programs, school resegregation, and a punitive juvenile justice system that limits the opportunities to rehabilitate and acquire the skills needed to succeed in a new world of work and school. These structural changes could severely affect the pathways of young men of color to adulthood.

## CONCLUSION

Despite significant advances in the educational progress and work involvement of young African American and Latino men, a troubling achievement gap persists. It is encouraging that young African American and Latino males were more likely to be in school and/or to work in 2007 than in

previous decades, that their high school dropout rates have declined dramatically since 1970, and that their college-going rates and employment have increased. However, both groups are more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic whites. African American and Latino youths continue to drop out of high school at twice the rate of non-Hispanic whites. Beyond high school, African American and Latino youths continue to lag behind non-Hispanic whites in college enrollment. African American gains have been primarily among those who are both working and studying, making them vulnerable to tuition increases and to a greater likelihood of dropping out. Most troubling are the increasing incarceration rates, primarily among African Americans but also among Latinos.

In light of the changing demographics in the United States, and in California in particular, the success of our society rests on the productivity of young men of color. In California nonwhites already make up 62.1 percent of the population under twenty-five years old. Although most young men successfully negotiate the transition into adulthood, a segment of this population—those who are not working, not in school, or incarcerated—have found themselves vulnerable to economic and housing instability, poverty, poor health, incarceration or recidivism, and substance abuse. In California these disconnected young men are disproportionately African American and Latino.

Effectively reaching disconnected young adults will require intervention strategies based on ethnicity and place. Disconnected non-Hispanic whites are more likely to live in rural areas and to have higher levels of Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI), welfare participation, and veteran status, signaling a disability, a need for adjustment time after returning from war service, or a mental condition that puts them at risk of long-term disengagement. In contrast, disconnected African American and Latino youths are more likely to be high school dropouts living in environments that hinder their progress, including female-headed households, poor households, central cities, and correctional institutions. An accumulation of disadvantages constrains the evolution of these groups of young adults. Policy has concentrated on incentives and approaches that target individuals, including teen pregnancy prevention, school dropout prevention, and juvenile delinquency prevention. Such approaches ignore the conditions in which young people live and the structural factors that make them fail. Although it is important to pay attention to families and individuals, we must also pay attention to the social contexts that shape young people as they come of age. Otherwise, it is unlikely that the life outcomes of young men of color will improve.

## NOTES

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1. In most of the figures in this chapter we look at males ages fifteen through twenty-five, but data were not available for consistent age groups. Some of the results are for males ages sixteen through twenty-four and others from seventeen through twenty-four. We describe the specific age group under analysis in each of the figures and tables. We define “disconnected youth” as those between fifteen and twenty-four who are neither enrolled in school nor in the labor force and have not completed a high school education. In earlier research these youths are considered most at risk of remaining disconnected for long periods of time. Wald and Martinez (2003) have employed a more restrictive definition that includes involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice systems, involvement with the foster care system, and unemployment greater than one year in length. We gathered information for incarceration but found such a definition hard to work with as there are limited data available at the state and local levels for such a restrictive definition.

2. As much of this section cites American Community Survey data, we use the U.S. Census Bureau’s definitions of family types, in which a family “includes a householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption”; a nonfamily “includes a householder living alone or with nonrelatives only.”

3. The long-term outcomes of fostered youth have yet to be studied.

4. SSI includes federal, state, and local welfare agency payments to low-income people who are elderly, blind, or disabled. This is a proxy for disability. However, not all disabled persons receive SSI.

5. The U.S. Census collected information on income received from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and General Assistance (GA). Not included are payments for hospitalization or other medical care.

6. For this section we borrowed significantly from Fry 2009.

7. For more information on high school enrollment and graduation rates among different ethnic groups, see Cataldi, Laird, and KewalRamani 2009.

8. We define “disconnected” as young adults who have no high school diploma and are out of the labor force and not in school. It has been estimated by Peter Edelman, Harry J. Holzer, and Paul Offner of the Urban Institute that roughly three million low-educated young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four—about half of whom are young men—are disconnected from the worlds of school and work for substantial periods of time. There were about 1.8 million long-term unemployed or incarcerated young adults, ages eighteen to twenty-four, at any given time in the years 1997 and 2001, approximately one million of whom were young men (Wald and Martinez 2003). And looking at youth ages fourteen to seventeen using data from 1997 to 2001, Wald and Martinez have estimated that there were approximately a million youth who belonged to at least one of

these groups—high school dropouts, adolescents in the juvenile or criminal justice systems, adolescents in the child welfare system, and unmarried mothers under age eighteen (ibid.). They further estimated that approximately 3.2 million youths will fall into one of these categories at some point before they turn eighteen, 59 percent of whom are men.

9. Also see Northridge et al. 2003.

10. See Jeylan T. Mortimer and Reed Larson, “Macrostructural Trends and the Reshaping of Adolescence,” in Mortimer and Larson 2002.

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**PART II**

**PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS  
AND THEIR COMMUNITIES**



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## THREE

### INVISIBLE STUDENTS

#### *Bridging the Widest Achievement Gap*

David L. Kirp

#### ABSTRACT

The achievement gap is greatest for African-American male students, and that gap has not narrowed appreciably since the early 1980s. Nonetheless, there's evidence that a surprising number of strategies—ranging from equipping parents with new skills to addressing adolescents' vulnerability to stereotyping—can in fact reduce this gap. Although these promising approaches differ in many respects, they share one key element: they emphasize individual attention, whether for infants or adolescents. Such intensity of engagement can benefit all youngsters, but it is especially important for African-American boys. These interventions are sometimes advanced singly, but such thinking betrays a misunderstanding of how children develop. What's needed is a progression of age-appropriate strategies.

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#### INTRODUCTION

In assessing strategies to bridge the achievement gap separating African-American males from all other students, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* provides a sensible starting point. To a unanimous Court, the royal road to equality, both in education and life chances, required ending the regime of Jim Crow in public schools. “Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments’: this encomium to education is as well-known as any judicial text, as familiar as a constitutional catechism. Education is the

very foundation of good citizenship . . . a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Brown* opinion speaks to what is now commonly called the “achievement gap.” Then, as now, black students fared worse in school than whites, and the decision was partly intended to close that gap. Fast-forward to today. The opening passage in *The Price We Pay*, an influential 2007 assessment of the consequences of inequity in education, edited by economists Clive Belfield and Henry Levin, reprises *Brown*: “A person’s educational attainment is one of the most important determinants of his or her life chances in terms of employment, income, health status, housing, and many other amenities.” Like the justices, Belfield and Levin have assigned education pride of place in the movement for racial equality, for they regard it as the most feasible way to bridge not just the achievement gap but the “life-success gap” as well. “Unlike other attributes, such as background and personal characteristics,” they write, “educational attainment can be influenced by public policy.”<sup>2</sup> Close the black-white achievement test-score gap, assert Katherine Magnuson and Jane Waldfogel, the editors of *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*, and “the single greatest remaining challenge to racial equality . . . a major determinant of unequal [life] outcomes” will have been overcome. The stakes could not be higher: “Explaining achievement gaps is not just an academic exercise; it is an economic and social imperative.”<sup>3</sup>

The weak performance of African-American male students has been a perpetual concern for policymakers seeking to equalize opportunity. On every measure of educational attainment, these youth fare the worst, and despite waves of reform, their situation hasn’t changed appreciably in the past thirty years. This gap, perceptible from the first day of kindergarten, widens in subsequent years.<sup>4</sup> In the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation’s report card, the reading scores of African-American boys in *eighth grade* were barely higher than the scores of white girls in *fourth grade*.<sup>5</sup>

Black male students are 2.4 times as likely to have been suspended and twice as likely to have had to repeat a grade as white males.<sup>6</sup> At age sixteen 54 percent of African-American males, compared with 24 percent of white males and 42 percent of Hispanic males, scored below the twentieth percentile on the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS).<sup>7</sup> Having

well-educated parents doesn't close the gap, either: 43 percent of black high school seniors with at least one college-educated parent scored below even the basic level of reading comprehension, nearly twice the percentage of whites. High school graduation rates tell the same story—just 42 percent of black males, compared with 71 percent of white males and 48 percent of Hispanic males, graduated on time.<sup>8</sup> Many of these young men become disconnected from both education and the workplace: among sixteen- to twenty-four-year-olds not enrolled in school, fewer than half have jobs and about a third are in prison or jail or on probation or parole.<sup>9</sup>

It's a double whammy to be black and male. While there's a lively debate over whether boys or girls have it worse in school, there's no argument over where African-American boys stand in the schools' pecking order. Compared with black females, they are three times more likely to be suspended, their high school graduation rate is 9 percent lower, and they are just half as likely to receive a college degree.<sup>10</sup>

### IS IT ALL IN THE GENES?

To geneticists of the *Bell Curve* school of thought, the explanation for the achievement gap is simple: it's all in the genes.<sup>11</sup> That way of thinking has been influential—*The Bell Curve* has sold more than half a million copies since its publication in 1994—but many of its most gloomy implications have been debunked by a new generation of researchers. The case for genetic determinism has rested on the finding, consistently reported over the course of a century, that identical twins, who share all their genes, are far more alike in intelligence than fraternal twins, who share only half of their genes. But those studies have a fatal flaw—they focus only on middle-class twins.

Research conducted in the 1990s by psychologist Michel Duyme showed that when four- and five-year-old French children who were abused and neglected as infants were adopted by caring families, their IQs increased by as much as twenty-five points.<sup>12</sup> So much for *The Bell Curve*'s assertion that intelligence is immutable. What's more, the youngsters who were raised in well-to-do homes—where parents presumably took fuller advantage of the teachable moments—gained the most. Even more startling were the findings from a 2003 study of thousands of twins from poor as well as middle-class American homes, carried out by psychologist Eric Turkheimer.<sup>13</sup> Among twins with well-off parents, nearly all the variation in IQ could be attributed to genes. But the story was exactly the opposite for twins from poor families. The IQs of identical twins didn't vary any less than the IQs of fraternal twins. In other words, heredity explained

almost *none* of the IQ variation for these children; the impact of growing up impoverished, with little social or economic capital, overwhelmed these children's genetic capacities. Change social capital and you can change the arc of children's lives. In light of these findings, parents (who are children's first and most important teachers) as well as educators have an enormously important job to do.

This conclusion—that nurture shapes nature—is confirmed by a large-scale study of mental ability among eight- to twelve-month-old infants. If racial differences in IQ were mainly genetic, they would show up in these tests, but there are no measurable cognitive differences between black and white babies, as economists Roland Fryer and Steven Levitt have reported. (Asian babies do slightly but statistically significantly worse.) That finding links the cognitive gap recorded at the start of school to a child's earliest educational experiences, confirming the vital importance of good parenting and good early education.<sup>14</sup>

#### **“SKILL BEGETS SKILL”: FROM BIRTH TO FIVE**

The good news is that, despite the wide and persistent achievement gap, there is a salmagundi of promising strategies—high-quality and intensive approaches that enable African-American youth generally, and African-American boys in particular, to thrive.<sup>15</sup> Ferreting out these initiatives has proven to be surprisingly hard, however, because the researchers had not isolated the “race-plus-gender” effects of programs that benefit poor and minority youngsters. The “what works” agenda includes several previously unpublished analyses of data, undertaken by the studies' authors for this analysis, which *do* take both race and gender into account.

These approaches—ranging from equipping parents with new skills to addressing adolescents' vulnerability to stereotyping—are sometimes advanced singly, as a solution to the achievement-gap problem. But such thinking betrays a misunderstanding of how children develop and why a progression of age-appropriate strategies—the kinds of support that parents want for their own children—is needed.<sup>16</sup> The effort to bridge the gap needs to start early, well before these youngsters come to school, with support for good parenting and high-quality early education maintained from kindergarten through high school. While these promising approaches differ in many respects, they share one key element; they emphasize individual attention, whether for infants or adolescents. All youngsters can benefit from such intensity of engagement, but it is especially important for African-American boys.



### Support for Good Parenting

What happens early in life profoundly affects everything that follows. That's why it makes sense to focus policy attention on children's first years. "It is social and economic inequality in family characteristics and environments in the preschool years, together with differences in preschooling opportunities that seem critical to the origination and formation of substantial parts of the score gaps," economists David Grissmer and Elizabeth Eisman have asserted.<sup>17</sup> More than anyone else, mothers and fathers shape their children's futures, and so, as the old joke goes, the smartest decision a child can make is to pick the right parents. Youngsters whose parents are authoritative, rather than authoritarian or distant, are likely to have learned more in the time before preschool, when the first effects of the achievement gap are already evident.

In this context, money matters—family wealth and neighborhood quality account for nearly half the IQ gap at age five—but more than half that gap is attributable to how mothers relate to their children.<sup>18</sup> In a large-scale observational study of parent behavior, psychologists Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Lisa Markman found that as a group, black mothers rank lower on seven measures of parenting—ranging from nurturance to the availability of books in the home—than white mothers. Critics of this research complain that these metrics reflect middle-class values, yet while that is indeed the case, these are the right metrics if school readiness is viewed as the benchmark of effectiveness. The most striking differences concern children's exposure to language. A landmark study by psychologists Betty Hart and Todd Risley showed that children from poor, mainly black families engaged in literally thousands fewer conversations than children from wealthier, mainly white families; by the age of three those children had vocabularies just half the size of their well-off counterparts.<sup>19</sup> These multiple differences in the style of parenting generate a six- to twelve-point racial gap on a school readiness test with a score of 100 as the median. For black boys the gap is presumably at least as great.

Parents want what's best for their offspring. The perpetually booming market in how-to books, as well as the ceaseless search for advice from kith and kin, suggest that they are open to learning more productive ways to raise their kids. Here's where policy enters the picture. Well-conceived parenting programs can have positive effects on how parents relate to their offspring. Evidence-based home-visiting programs (like the Nurse-Family Partnership, which relies on specially trained nurses to coach parents from pregnancy through the first two years of a baby's life) as well as center-based programs

that include home visiting (like Early Head Start) have been shown to enhance parents' sensitivity to their infants' and toddlers' cues, to discourage negativity, to lessen reliance on spanking, to promote reasoning with toddlers, and to increase the number of age-appropriate materials around the house as well as the amount of time spent reading to kids. The effect is to boost children's performance in the early grades. Although the specific impact of the Nurse-Family Partnership on African-American boys has not been isolated, in a study in Memphis, where the participants were overwhelmingly African American, the youngsters whose parents participated in the program did better during their first years at school than the control group.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, such high-quality parenting support is available only to a handful of poor families.<sup>21</sup> The biggest program, Early Head Start, is so meagerly funded that it can enroll fewer than 1 percent of eligible (below-poverty-line) infants. Its expansion, to which the Obama administration is committed, is an essential element in any strategy to bridge the black male achievement gap.<sup>22</sup>

### Early Education

The argument for investing in early education as a way to close the achievement gap rests on the extraordinary results of three groundbreaking studies: the Perry Preschool, Abecedarian, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC).<sup>23</sup> In each instance children who enrolled in a high-quality early-education program were tracked into their twenties—in the case of the Perry Preschool study, into their forties—and their life trajectories were compared with a matched control group. Although these three experiments differed in some particulars (the Abecedarian children remained in the program from the time they were infants through kindergarten, for instance, and Perry enrolled three- and four-year-olds), in each instance highly trained teachers, assigned to a small number of children, used carefully crafted curricula and engaged parents to bolster their efforts.

The effect on the participants was eye-opening. Compared with the control groups, significantly fewer of the participants were left back or assigned to special education classes, and significantly more youngsters graduated from high school and enrolled in college. More remarkable still were impacts on their later lives, including significantly lower crime rates, better health self-reports, less reliance on welfare, and greater earnings. Economists converted those findings into a cost-and-benefit metric: for every dollar spent, the investment generated between five and seventeen dollars. No other educational intervention—indeed, no other social policy

innovation—has yielded remotely comparable results. These findings fueled a nationwide movement to expand prekindergarten. In recent years evaluations of state-funded prekindergarten—widely implemented programs with substantially lower per-pupil expenditures than experiments like Perry Preschool and Abecedarian—have shown that participants had substantially better reading and math test results than youngsters who weren't enrolled in the state-supported preschool.<sup>24</sup>

Because almost every child who attended Perry, Abecedarian, or the Child-Parent Centers was African American, these findings confirmed that high-quality early education could narrow the racial achievement gap. But what about the boys? A reanalysis of the Perry Preschool findings suggested that almost all the educational benefits accrued to females; the main benefit to the males was lower rates of incarceration.<sup>25</sup> (The small size of the sample has, however, led some economists to challenge these results.) Among the Abecedarian participants an unpublished analysis shows that 25.9 percent of the boys and a similar number of the girls who were enrolled in Abecedarian attended college, compared with just 4 percent of the boys in the control group. (Data on gender differences among high school graduates is not available.) But it's problematic to make too much of these numbers: Abecedarian, like Perry Preschool, enrolled barely more than a hundred children.

There can be no question, though, about the impact of the third iconic preschool initiative—the Chicago Child-Parent Centers—on the life trajectories of black youths. Unlike Perry and Abecedarian, which were structured as short-term experiments, these prekindergartens have been run by the Chicago public school system since 1967 and have enrolled tens of thousands of students. What's more, unlike the Perry and Abecedarian preschoolers, these poor, mostly black youngsters live in inner-city neighborhoods, where the life stresses are especially acute. Since their inception, the Child-Parent Centers have placed great emphasis on language, because verbal and reading skills are the main determinants of how students fare in school. Engaging parents as learners and as collaborators in their children's education is also a hallmark of the CPCs' approach.

The CPC study followed 1,520 children, half of whom participated in the program, into their mid-twenties, and it found significant effects on education, incarceration, and income. The largest impact is on high school completion. Although the girls in the program had graduation rates identical to those who didn't participate, 74 percent of the boys who attended a Child-Parent Center, compared with 57 percent of the nonparticipants, graduated by age twenty-four, and they were half again as likely to attend

college.<sup>26</sup> Because the CPCs are staffed by school district staff, not specially trained professionals, and have been operating for more than forty years—that is, they aren’t small-scale experiments over which researchers can exercise tight control—there’s cause for confidence that the model can be scaled up. But the fact that only 10.4 percent of the CPC youngsters attended college, compared with 6.6 percent of those in the control group and 16.2 percent of the girls who enrolled in a CPC, offers a pointed reminder that although this program has been a success, it’s no solution. Investing in the futures of young black males can’t stop with preschool.

Unlike the Child-Parent Centers and state-funded preschools, which place a heavy emphasis on language, Head Start, the seven-billion-dollar federal early education program, has historically stressed child development rather than academic preparation. Although that approach seems intuitively sensible, because these children often lack basic health care and have a hard time regulating their emotions, its implementation has been uneven, and multiple evaluations have generated mostly disappointing results. A 2010 report on an ongoing random-assignment national evaluation, the first of its kind, found that while Head Start modestly boosts reading and math skills while children are in the program, those gains largely disappear by first grade.<sup>27</sup>

That’s a gloomy picture, but it’s not the entire picture. Short-term cognitive effects are not what ultimately matters, and it may be that the full impact only becomes apparent years later. No long-term experimental studies of Head Start have been conducted, but in seminal articles published in 1995 and 2000, economists Janet Currie, Duncan Thomas, and Eliana Garces adopted an ingenious research approach. They compared the life histories of siblings who were of Head Start age in the mid-1970s, only one of whom attended Head Start, and found “sleeper effects”: the children who had been in Head Start were more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.<sup>28</sup> A 2009 follow-up study by public policy professor David Deming tracked these youngsters into their early twenties, and by then the differences were even more striking. Head Start participants were significantly less likely to have been left back or assigned to special education, more likely to have graduated from high school or earned a high school equivalency diploma, enrolled in college, had some work experience, and stayed healthy.<sup>29</sup>

These effects vary by race and gender. Although the studies do not specify the outcomes for black males, they do show that African-American youngsters and boys gained the most. Black students who participated in the program were 10.7 percent less likely to repeat a grade, 7.1 percent less

likely to be diagnosed with a learning disability, 11.1 percent more likely to graduate from high school, and 13.6 percent more likely to begin college. Male students were 20.4 percent less likely to repeat a grade, 11.4 percent more likely to graduate from high school, and 10 percent less likely to be out of school and not working. Given these outcomes, it's a reasonable assumption that Head Start had powerful long-term benefits for black males.

“Large reductions in the probability of learning disability diagnosis and grade retention,” Deming has argued, “indicate that the gains in Head Start may operate through improvements in school readiness [the noncognitive elements of the program] rather than content knowledge or cognitive ability. . . . If poverty affects stress, and stress affects test performance, then Head Start could generate academic gains . . . by permanently improving children’s reactivity to stress or making them more familiar with the school environment prior to kindergarten.”<sup>30</sup> Economists James Heckman and Flavio Cunha have made a similar claim: “Investing in early education could generate large effects by inducing ‘multiplier’ effects in later periods. . . . Skill begets skill.”<sup>31</sup> In all the preschool studies black males benefit; in the evaluation of the Child-Parent Centers, they benefit the most. One plausible explanation is that the close-grained attention that children receive in these programs is precisely the kind of caring relationship that young black males need most and from which they can benefit most. The bonds they form become the foundation for social capital and engender trust at an early age, a time when the potential for learning is greatest.<sup>32</sup>

This is an important start, but it’s just a start. In a 2010 paper public policy professor Rucker Johnson examined the life histories of several thousand children who had attended Head Start programs in the 1970s. By the time they were in their thirties, those youngsters who had gone to well-funded elementary and secondary schools were more likely to graduate, had higher earnings, and were in better health. For them Head Start mattered a lot. But for those who attended poorly funded schools, Head Start made absolutely no difference; whatever advantage they had acquired as three- and four-year-olds was subsequently undone.<sup>33</sup> The conclusion is obvious: for African-American boys, as for children generally, there are no quick fixes, no birth-to-five “solutions.” Continuity from the earliest years on is the key to success.

### REPARABLE HARM: K-12

As early as kindergarten, nearly a quarter of African-American boys, three times more than their white counterparts, are already convinced that they

lack the innate ability to succeed in school.<sup>34</sup> From the outset they do badly and the achievement gap continues to increase in elementary school.<sup>35</sup> Researchers are generally pessimistic about the prospects for reversing the pattern. “None of the various school-related policies is likely to play a major role in reducing the black-white achievement gap,” policy analyst Helen Ladd has asserted, reciting the conventional wisdom.<sup>36</sup> This conclusion, while understandable in light of the persistent pattern of failure, is premature—several evidence-based strategies show promise of narrowing the gap. Some approaches, like reducing class size, are well-known; others, like comprehensive school reform or increased reliance on charter schools, have received little attention from researchers in the field.

Reformers from the “no excuses” camp, conservative and liberal alike, believe that the problem is largely teacher-made—that all it takes to close the achievement gap is the willingness on the schools’ part to act effectively. In 2000 the conservative Heritage Foundation identified twenty-one high-poverty and high-performing schools that accepted “no excuses,” such as poverty, to rationalize students’ failure.<sup>37</sup> But these twenty-one schools turned out to be decidedly atypical. One of them housed the “gifted and talented” program for its entire district, for example, while another enrolled children whose parents were poor-on-paper Harvard and MIT graduate students.<sup>38</sup> A year later, the Education Trust, a liberal think tank, reported on 1,320 “high flyer” schools, at least half of whose students were nonwhite and poor, with math and reading test scores in the top third of their state. These “high flyers” represented 10 percent of all schools with this demographic makeup. That’s a sizable number, and the report attracted lots of attention, but the findings didn’t survive closer examination. Those 1,320 schools did indeed have high scores—but only for one year, in one subject, math or reading, in one grade. A reanalysis of the data found only twenty-three schools—less than half of 1 percent—that recorded high reading and math scores for two years running, in two grades.

The takeaway message is straightforward: “Get tough with teachers” isn’t the hoped-for easy fix for the schools, and certainly not for black students. A linked sequence of interventions, from infancy through high school, is essential.<sup>39</sup>

### **Small Classes**

A straightforward logic underlies the proposition that reducing class size can boost academic performance. When classes are small, teachers can pay more attention to each pupil. The students experience continuing pressure

to stay engaged; their attention to learning improves, as does their performance.<sup>40</sup> But whether class size really improves student outcomes has been much debated by policy researchers.<sup>41</sup> The most carefully designed test of the effect of reducing class size is the Tennessee STAR Project. During the 1980s 11,600 students, from kindergarteners through third graders, and 1,300 teachers in seventy-six schools in forty-two districts participated in the experiment. Students were randomly assigned to small (thirteen to seventeen students) and regular-size (twenty-two to twenty-eight students) classes; the teachers were also randomly assigned.

Being in a small class, economists Alan Krueger and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach found, made a notable difference in a student's academic performance. Math and reading scores improved; and more students took college-entrance exams, signaling their interest in continuing their education beyond high school.<sup>42</sup> The published studies didn't look at race-plus-gender differences, but those differences emerge in Schanzenbach's unpublished reanalysis of the data. More than any other group, African-American boys thrived during the time they were in small classes; their test scores improved by a statistically significant 7.2 percentile points, slightly more than the improvement in the scores of African-American girls.

However, while the African-American girls who had been in small classes enjoyed persistent academic gains through grade six, three years after they had returned to regular classes, and were more likely to take a college-entrance exams several years later, the gains for African-American boys tapered off dramatically in fourth grade, when they returned to regular classes. One plausible explanation is the girls had acquired habits of learning during the years they spent in small classes that they were able to maintain, but the boys continued to need the individualized attention that characterizes small classes. In that nurturing environment they did well, just as they did in the intimate enclave of the Child-Parent Centers or Abecedarian, but they lost that edge in the more impersonal world of the large classroom.

Experiments are one thing, widespread practice is something entirely different. As with any reform, the particulars of implementation are critical. California adopted a policy of reducing class size for grades K–3 in hopes of benefiting poor and minority youths, but those students actually fared worse. A badly designed plan was the culprit. “The burdens of implementation [in California] fell disproportionately on urban schools suffering from poverty, overcrowding, and language barriers, and the need to provide many special services,” wrote economists Christopher Jepsen and Steven Rifkin. “The possible positive effects attributable to smaller

classes were often mitigated in these schools because teacher quality was lower than in other schools, as more experienced teachers left to fill new openings in less troubled schools. Urban schools were left to fill not only the vacancies created by those who transferred out, but also the newly created slots. They did so by hiring inexperienced and uncertified teachers, with the result that one-quarter of the black students in high poverty schools had a first- or second-year teacher, and nearly 30 percent had a teacher who was not fully certified.<sup>43</sup> The lesson is a familiar one: if class-size reduction is to narrow the achievement gap, as it did in the Tennessee STAR Project, schools need to get the plan right or risk the possibility of perverse consequences.

### Desegregation

*Brown v. Board of Education* treats desegregation both as a means of ending discrimination, quite apart from the specific context of the schoolhouse, and as a way to secure equality of educational opportunity. Educators and civil rights activists have harbored the same hope ever since. The underlying assumption, economists Jacob Vigdor and Jens Ludwig have pointed out, is that segregation “affects both the motivation of the students and their perception of the larger opportunity structure they face in society and their exposure to high-quality school resources or even the academic climate in the school.”<sup>44</sup> African-American boys as well as girls are presumably made better off by attending desegregated schools, although the gender-specific effects have not been studied.<sup>45</sup>

Oceans of ink have been spilled in the attempt to show the link between segregation and student achievement. The histories run parallel: as public schools became more desegregated, beginning in the 1960s, the achievement gap narrowed; and as school segregation increased, beginning around 1990, progress in closing that gap ground to a halt. What’s more, blacks’ biggest gains were in the Southern states, where the impact of desegregation was greatest.<sup>46</sup> Economists have done much of the recent research in this field, searching for macro-effects of policy changes. One study concluded that court-ordered desegregation in the 1970s reduced black high school students’ dropout rates by 2 to 3 percent during the 1970s, explaining half of the decline during that period, while having no comparable effect on white students. Those effects were reversed when desegregation orders were terminated in the 1990s.<sup>47</sup>

The strongest case for linking desegregation and black achievement is made in a 2009 study of Texas public schools, carried out by economists



Eric Hanushek, John Kain, and Steven Rivkin, which compared test score variations among students who attended the same school at different times, when the racial composition varied. Equalizing the racial composition of the schools, the analysis concludes, would reduce the achievement gap by about 25 percent, a major impact for any reform strategy.<sup>48</sup>

For the foreseeable future, however, desegregation on such a sweeping scale is a remedy to be found only in the realm of wishful thinking. The trend has been for public schools to become more, not less, segregated, a process abetted by the judiciary. For the past generation, federal courts haven't monitored desegregation plans that school districts implemented because of earlier court orders; and in 2007 the U.S. Supreme Court went so far as to overturn voluntary desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville.<sup>49</sup> For those who remain committed to desegregation, the one hopeful sign is the long-term trend toward greater residential integration. African-American youngsters benefit when school desegregation occurs as a result of such changes in the racial composition of the neighborhood.<sup>50</sup>

### **Whole-School—and Whole-System—Reform**

Some school districts have done remarkably well in narrowing the achievement gap. Their strategy isn't a dose of "no excuses" tough love—as such critics as Washington, D.C., chancellor Michelle Rhee and New York City chancellor Joel Klein contend. Instead, we see top-to-bottom, systemic reform, and a well-articulated course of study that runs seamlessly from prekindergarten through high school. The best-documented example is in Montgomery County, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.<sup>51</sup> That school district encompasses two very different communities: one composed almost entirely of white and Asian professional families, which school authorities refer to as the "green zone," and the other composed of mainly poor and minority families, who live in what the school district labels the "red zone." Since the late 1990s, the county has put enormous energy into "greening" the red zone, and the statistics tell a story of considerable accomplishment.<sup>52</sup>

On each of a dozen metrics, from kindergarten reading to SAT scores, there has been improvement among all the racial and ethnic groups in Montgomery County's schools; and in almost all instances, black as well as Hispanic students have narrowed the achievement gap. For instance, 95 percent of third-graders in the county are scoring at the proficient or advanced level on the state reading test; so are 80 percent of black youngsters, a 100 percent improvement since 2003. Ninety-four percent of white

and 79 percent of black third-grade students scored at this level in math; in six years African-American children narrowed the math racial gap from 22 to 16 percentage points. In high school 74 percent of black students took the SAT in 2009, compared with 66 percent in 2006, again shrinking the gap with white students, whose participation rate rose from 82 percent to 84 percent. The number of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by African-American youngsters almost tripled between 2003 and 2009 (the number taken by whites increased 50 percent). Scores on a third of the AP exams taken by black youth were three or higher (on a scale of one to five; three is the minimum score accepted for credit by most colleges). That's twice as many such scores in six years, compared with an increase of 40 percent for whites during the same period.

Systemwide reform drives these results. The preschool–12 pipeline starts with a prekindergarten curriculum that emphasizes literacy and numeracy, and the district's evidence-based curriculum has been implemented through high school. Student evaluation is ongoing, with regular feedback and coaching for the teachers and tutoring for students who are falling behind. High school students are pushed to take Advanced Placement courses to increase the odds of being admitted to good colleges, as well as the SAT exam that most colleges require. Across the district many schools have been transformed from 9 a.m.–3 p.m., 180-day-a-year operations to community hubs that are now open on evenings, weekends, and throughout the summers.

Montgomery County is the sixteenth-largest school district in the country, and it's hard to maintain consistency across so many schools. Far more ambitious are models that aim at improving practice in many districts. Several comprehensive school reform strategies, which entail changing the curriculum as well as restructuring evaluation and teaching practice, have been implemented nationwide. Maintaining fidelity to the model on this scale poses a far more daunting a challenge than doing so in a community like Montgomery County. Interventions that record good results in one locale often flop when tried elsewhere.<sup>53</sup>

Success for All—a schoolwide, first- through fourth-grade strategy that emphasizes improvement in reading skills—has largely overcome these implementation problems. It has been used with more than a million students in some sixteen hundred schools, almost all of them located in high-poverty communities; about half the students have been black. Evidence of the program's overall effectiveness in boosting reading scores, not just while children are participating in the program but for several years afterward, has been confirmed in more than forty evaluations, including

a national randomized experiment. Success for All is one of only two kindergarten through twelfth-grade programs given top-tier ranking by the Coalition for Evidence Based Policy, the same ranking given to studies like Abecedarian and the Perry Preschool.<sup>54</sup>

The biggest gainers are low-achieving and minority students—the minority-white achievement gap is halved when the model is implemented with as much care as in the typical Success for All school district. But African-American boys and girls sometimes respond differently to a particular strategy. An unpublished analysis carried out by Robert Slavin, the lead author of the study and developer of Success for All, finds the average gain for black males to be between one month and four months on tests of reading, a level of improvement comparable to that of the girls.<sup>55</sup>

Why might Success for All work well for black male students? Paying close attention to the particular needs of each student is a central tenet of the model, and that, as we've seen, is especially important to black male youth. Unlike in most schools, where what happens in the classroom stays in the classroom, teachers regularly discuss with one another how each youngster is performing. The reading classes are grouped by achievement, not grade level, and are taught by someone other than the student's regular classroom teacher, so more than one teacher is intimately familiar with each student. Youngsters who are struggling academically receive extra tutoring. And each school has a parent coordinator whose job is to engage families, enlisting their support and helping them with pressing concerns like access to social services. These key elements of Success for All are closely attuned to the needs of African-American boys.

### **“Acting White,” Academic Confidence, and the Achievement Gap**

The strategies discussed thus far focus on changing the schools—but what about changing the mind-set of students themselves? Black youth who aspire to do well academically are often ostracized by their classmates, accused of “acting white.” Such punishment discourages potentially high-achieving students from investing in their own education. It may also prompt them to doubt their own intelligence.<sup>56</sup> Social psychologists have zeroed in on what Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson have labeled “stereotype threat”—a “social psychological predicament rooted in the prevailing American image of African Americans as intellectually inferior.”<sup>57</sup> Blacks are especially vulnerable. They bear a burden that white students don't have to overcome: “performance-disruptive apprehension, anxiety about

the possibility of confirming a deeply negative racial inferiority—in the eyes of others, in one’s own eyes, or both at the same time.” What’s more, write Steele and Aronson, “it is not necessary that a student believe the stereotype to feel this burden. He or she need only be aware of the stereotype and care enough about performing well . . . to want to disprove the stereotype’s unflattering implications.”<sup>58</sup>

The researchers have also shown that the implicit theory of intelligence that youngsters hold plays a powerful role in how students assess their own capacity for learning. If they believe that intelligence is fixed and outside their control, they pay “an emotional tax that is a form of intellectual emasculation,” becoming prone to give up and disengage from learning.<sup>59</sup> This destructive psychological dynamic can be reversed, however. When students appreciate the fact that intelligence is malleable and so within their control, they’re essentially inoculated against the threat. Inclined to work harder, they naturally do better. College students exposed to material on brain development that shows the plasticity of intelligence, Aronson and several colleagues have demonstrated, “reported greater enjoyment of the academic process, greater academic engagement, and obtained higher grade point averages than students in the control group. While white students benefited to some extent from this effort to change students’ mind-sets, the benefits to black males were far more substantial.” What’s remarkable is how little exposure to such material is required. Three sessions of advocating the malleability of intelligence “created an enduring and beneficial change.”<sup>60</sup>

What works for college students can also work for middle-school youngsters. Their beliefs about the nature of intelligence can be changed, with consequent effects on their performance in school. Teenagers who think that intelligence is fixed do worse academically than a matched sample of students who believe it is malleable. Psychologists Lisa Blackwell, Kali Trzesniewski, and Carol Dweck have reported that when youth who understand intelligence to be immutable are taught (in just four class sessions) about how learning changes the brain, they set higher learning goals, are more likely to think that making an effort can pay off, are more motivated to succeed—and do better in math. “Theories of intelligence can be manipulated in real world contexts,” they have written, “and have a positive impact on achievement outcomes.”<sup>61</sup>

Reducing “stereotype threat” doesn’t provide a quick-and-easy substitute for school reform—although these students had higher grades, their performance didn’t come close to erasing the achievement gap—but it should be nonetheless undertaken on a much bigger scale because it’s

effective and inexpensive. Middle school, the traditional rite of passage for adolescents, is a time when youngsters are especially susceptible to hearing the message that mental ability isn't immutable and that trying hard can make a difference.

### **Charter Schools and Character Development**

Several charter school systems succeed in narrowing the achievement gap for African-American boys; they do so in part by changing students' attitudes. These academies stress character education as a way of altering students' mind-sets, seeing it as a prerequisite to academic success, and the research appears to bear out this contention. A 2006 study of 164 mostly African-American eighth-graders, carried out by psychologists Angela Duckworth and Martin Seligman, examined the correlation between students' scores on an IQ test and a test that measures self-discipline on the one hand and their GPA. The self-discipline test proved *twice* as good a predictor of students' grades as IQ.<sup>62</sup>

Two good examples of charter schools that make the development of self-discipline, and character-building more generally, an important part of students' education are such systems as KIPP (the Knowledge Is Power Program), a national network of eighty-two schools, and Green Dot Public Schools, a charter system that runs nineteen inner-city high schools in Los Angeles and New York City. Both KIPP and Green Dot enroll poor, mainly minority, youngsters, and both have an enviable track record with black adolescent males. Their success has partly to do with the strategies used in Montgomery County and many of the Success for All schools—a tight link between evaluation and improving instruction, a culture of accountability, and ongoing self-evaluation.<sup>63</sup>

The explicit emphasis on character-building is what sets these programs apart. Although these schools are open to all, the fact that students must apply for admission, rather than being admitted automatically as is the case for most public schools, makes comparisons somewhat tricky. Yet even taking into account the possible differences in students' and parents' motivation, the differences between these charter schools and neighboring public schools are striking. At a Green Dot school in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Los Angeles, for instance, 68 percent of the African-American male students graduated in four years, matching the national average for all high school students. At one nearby high school, only 9 percent graduated on time, and at another only 3 percent did so.

At a KIPP Academy in the South Bronx, one of the worst-off sections of

New York City, 86 percent of eighth-grade students scored at grade level in math in 2006, compared with 16 percent of all eighth graders in the community. “I think we have to teach work ethic in the same way we have to teach adding fractions with unlike denominators,” said Dacia Toll, who started another very successful charter school called Amistad. “But once children have got the work ethic and the commitment to others and to education down, it’s actually pretty easy to teach them.”<sup>64</sup> It’s unlikely that charters like Green Dot and KIPP can be replicated on a scale big enough to “tip” public education. Still, said Toll, these schools change the public conversation from ‘you can’t educate these kids’ to ‘you can only educate these kids *if* . . .’<sup>65</sup>

### **BEYOND THE SCHOOLHOUSE: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND MENTORS**

Traditionally, students are in school for only six hours a day, 180 days a year, and what happens *outside* the schoolhouse can shape how they fare academically.<sup>66</sup> “Youth of all descriptions find insufficient supports in their communities to be able to move confidently and safely to adulthood,” political scientist Milbrey McLaughlin has written. “Many schools lock up tightly at 3 p.m., sending children and youth into empty houses, barren neighborhoods, street corners, or malls. Youth interpret a local landscape void of engaging things for them to do as adult indifference.”<sup>67</sup>

For students from poor families, many of whom have nowhere to go and nothing to do, the consequences can be dire. The amount of time that youngsters spend hanging out on street corners with their friends after school lets out is a better predictor of failing in school than family income or race.<sup>68</sup> Things are even grimmer for poor black students. They are disproportionately likely to live in neighborhoods of “concentrated disadvantage,” where crime, poverty, unemployment, and teen pregnancy rates are sky-high; streets and parks are sites of danger; and once-vibrant institutions have been shuttered. A 2008 study by sociologists Robert Sampson, Patrick Sharke, and Steven Raudenbush has concluded that coming of age in a neighborhood of concentrated disadvantage has the same effect on a five-year-old’s verbal ability as missing an entire year of school. This finding is particularly striking because Sampson’s research compared the consequences of being raised in Chicago’s best-off and worst-off African-American neighborhoods; no comparison was made with white neighborhoods because no white neighborhood was demographically remotely comparable.<sup>69</sup>

Transforming the classic school into a “community school”—open from dawn to dusk, on weekends and during the summer; offering a raft of medical, social, and psychological supports as well as academic help, sports, and activities—can help to offset these disadvantages. The data, although not parsed by race and gender, show that such schools have positive effects on an array of educational outcomes. Students who spend time on after-school and summer projects have higher math and reading scores than their gone-at-three p.m. classmates. Their attendance records are better and so is their behavior.<sup>70</sup>

Mentoring is another strategy that has been effective for combating the social isolation pervasive among black youth. “African-American males are less likely than females to feel capable academically,” social work professor Larry Davis has observed. “There is little social pressure to graduate from high school and they often don’t understand the economic returns from education.”<sup>71</sup> Introducing a stable and caring adult—a mentor—into these students’ lives can combat those attitudes, for mentors can help to make connections between school and life while fostering students’ self-confidence.

Experience Corps enrolls adults ages fifty-five and older to serve as reading tutors for kindergarteners through third graders. A 2009 evaluation that randomly assigned a thousand very poor readers to a treatment and a control group shows how meaningful this simple approach can be. Over the course of a single school year, the students who had been tutored by an Experience Corps volunteer made 60 percent more progress in reading comprehension than those who didn’t. An unpublished reanalysis of that data shows that the effects did not differ across gender or race.<sup>72</sup>

Friends of the Children, which was founded in 1993 in Portland, Oregon, and now has affiliates in five additional communities, is much more intensely involved with the youngsters it supports.<sup>73</sup> Staffers visit kindergarten classrooms to identify youth who, even at this young age, are seen by their teachers as likely candidates for prison or early pregnancy, both because they bring a great deal of family and social baggage and because they are extremely hard to manage in the classroom. Once selected by the nonprofit, those children are mentored until they graduate from high school. The program’s track record is remarkable. Of the more than two hundred graduates of Friends of the Children’s Portland affiliate, about half of whom are African American, 82 percent have earned their high school diplomas, 13 percent higher than the national average; 68 percent are the first members of their family to do so. Forty percent of these youngsters have gone to college, also better than the national average. Even though

60 percent have at least one parent who has been incarcerated, 92 percent have stayed out of the juvenile justice system. The single best predictor of teen pregnancy is being the child of a teen mother, but while 61 percent of these youths were born to an unmarried teenager, 98 percent of the girls avoided teen parenting.

In New York City almost all the youngsters in Friends of the Children are African American; and although that program hasn't graduated its first cohort yet, the record through the early years of high school is impressive. Not a single youth has dropped out. The promotion rate in school is 98 percent (the only exceptions are a youngster who transferred to a parochial school, where he was asked to repeat a grade, and a boy who lost a month because of family turmoil). The youngsters have done well in some of the city's top charter and private schools, as well as in selective public schools. In 2009, for the fifth straight year, their reading and math test scores were better than the average in their schools. All but one student has stayed out of the juvenile justice system (one boy brought a BB gun to school), and the only girl who had a child decided to put her baby up for adoption and remained in school. The boys in the program have done about as well in school as the girls.

The cost per child is high—about one hundred thousand dollars over twelve years—but a 2010 study found a better than six-to-one benefit-cost ratio. That puts it in the same league as Perry Preschool and Chicago Child-Parent Centers. The program may be too labor-intensive to be implemented on a wide scale. Rather, like the Green Dot and KIPP charter school systems, Friends of the Children shows that the doomsayers are wrong—the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage can be broken for black male youth.<sup>74</sup>

### **CONCLUSION: A SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS**

The bottom line is guardedly optimistic—a surprising number of strategies can potentially reduce the black male youth achievement gap. These include early education initiatives like the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, which prepare children for school; efforts to boost skills in elementary schools, like Success for All, class-size reduction, and Experience Corps; systemic reform, as in the Montgomery County public schools; and stereotype-threat interventions for high school and college students, which address youngsters' doubts about their innate academic ability. Other approaches—among them parenting-support models like the Nurse-Family Partnership; Head Start; intensive mentoring programs such as Friends



of the Children; and character-building, academically rigorous charter school systems like Green Dot Public Schools and KIPP—show considerable promise. Still other models, among them career academies, may well have the same kinds of effects, although the evidence is not yet in hand.

None of these interventions is the magic bullet that policymakers are perpetually seeking. For one thing, implementation is a make-or-break factor; and the more complicated the strategy, the more moving parts, the harder it is to replicate. It's relatively easy for a school to add tutors to supplement what its teachers do, as Experience Corps does, but far harder for a school to take on the challenge of transforming itself, as the Success for All program and the Montgomery County model demand. Unintended consequences are the bane of reformers, and these bedevil several of the initiatives canvassed in this essay. Class-size reduction generated substantial positive effects for black students in the Tennessee STAR program, but when the same strategy was put in place statewide in California, students who lived in poor school districts actually found themselves worse off.

What's more, the schools have little control over destiny-influencing economic and social forces.<sup>75</sup> Although this proposition might appear obvious, it's not the vogueish view. Joel Klein, the no-nonsense chancellor of New York City's public schools, insists that for educators to emphasize anything other than literacy and numeracy promotes the "culture of excuse"—the contention that "schools cannot really be held accountable for student achievement because disadvantaged students bear multiple burdens of poverty." The "no excuses" argument contends that skilled teachers are all it takes to ensure that all students graduate from high school and are ready for college. Merely to point out that racism and poverty can affect achievement lets the schools off the hook too easily, Klein believes: "No single impediment to closing the nation's achievement gap looms larger than the culture of excuse."<sup>76</sup>

Poverty and racism don't explain everything—schools can make a big difference in children's lives. Yet not even the most successful school models, like the Green Dot charter schools or the Montgomery County public schools, have 100 percent high school graduation rates; there, as everywhere else, black male youth still fare worst. Community schools bolster academics with an array of services especially beneficial to poor and minority children, including before- and after-school as well as summer programs, health clinics, social services, and parent support, but those initiatives aren't the elixir. What psychologists Craig Ramey and Sharon Ramey have called the "principle of environmental maintenance of development" maintains that because children's needs evolve over time, relying on one strategy or another

is misguided.<sup>77</sup> Bridging the achievement gap requires a well-planned series of approaches, beginning with help for parents and continuing through college—what Geoffrey Canada, founder of the much-touted Harlem Children’s Zone, has referred to as the “conveyor belt” approach.<sup>78</sup>

This conclusion ought to be self-evident. Can you imagine that your obligation to a child whom you love ends after two years at a high-quality preschool or a top-flight primary school, and that for the rest of the time he or she should be left to sink or swim? Why should things be different for other people’s children—especially for African-American boys, many of whom wear a doomed-to-fail label from the day they arrive at kindergarten? It is economically smart to invest in these youth, since those investments will repay society many times over; it’s also the right thing to do. The Golden Rule provides an apt policy yardstick: *all children deserve what you would want for a child you love*. Putting that principle into practice is the best way to bridge the achievement gap and extend to the next generation the opportunities they need and deserve.

## NOTES

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1. 347 US 483, 493.

2. Belfield and Levin, “Education Attainment Gap,” 1.

3. Magnuson and Waldfogel, “Introduction,” in Magnuson and Waldfogel, *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*, 2–3. See also Jencks and Phillips, *Black-White Test Score Gap*.

4. Fryer and Levitt, “Testing for Racial Differences in the Mental Ability of Young Children”; Magnuson and Waldfogel, *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*, 9; and Jencks and Phillips, *Black-White Test Score Gap*, 98.

5. Magnuson and Waldfogel, *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*, 7.

6. College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, *Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color*.

7. Edelman, Holzer, and Offner, *Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men*, 21.

8. Magnuson and Waldfogel, *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress*, 7.

9. Edelman, Holzer, and Offner, *Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men*, 3.

10. Tyre, *Trouble with Boys*; and Kleinfeld, “State of American Boyhood.”

11. This section is adapted from Kirp, *Sandbox Investment*, 116–34. Herrnstein and Murray, *Bell Curve*.

12. Capron and Duyme, “Assessment of Effects of Socio-economic Status on IQ in a Full Cross-fostering Study,” 552–53.

13. Turkheimer et al., “Socioeconomic Status Modifies Heritability of IQ in Young Children.”

14. Fryer and Levitt, “Testing for Racial Differences in the Mental Ability of Young Children.”

15. Levin et al., “Public Returns to Public Educational Investments in African American Males”; and Ramey and Ramey, “Early Intervention and Early Experience.”

16. Kirp, *Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise*.

17. Grissmer and Eiseman, “Can Gaps in the Quality of Early Environments and Noncognitive Skills Help Explain Persisting Black-White Achievement Gaps?”

141.

18. Brooks-Gunn and Markman, “Contribution of Parenting to Ethnic and Racial Gaps in School Readiness.”

19. Hart and Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*.

20. Olds et al., “Effects of Nurse Home Visiting on Maternal and Child Functioning.”

21. Other parenting programs, such as national Parents as Teachers organization, are offered to all parents.

22. Kirp, *Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise*. Economist Derek Neal has speculated that another dynamic may be at work. Black families, he suggests, view investing in individual skills as a “white strategy for success. The group expects that persons who invest in market skills are more likely to default on future obligations to the group. Black-white differences in norms concerning marriage may create differences in the mapping between parental human capital and investments in children that could support persistent black-white skill differences among adults across generations.” See Neal, “Why Has Black-White Skill Convergence Stopped?” in Eric Hanushek and Finis Welsh, *Handbook of the Economics of Education*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 549–68.

23. This discussion is adapted from Kirp, *Sandbox Investment*, 50–93.

24. Gormley, Phillips, and Gayer, “Preschool Programs Can Boost School Readiness,” 1,723–24.

25. Anderson, “Multiple Inference and Gender Differences in the Effects of Early Intervention.”

26. Reynolds et al., “Effects of a School-Based Early Childhood Intervention on Adult Health and Well-Being.”

27. See U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, “Head Start Research: Head Start Impact Study and Follow-up, 2000–2010.”

28. Currie and Thomas, “Does Head Start Make a Difference?”; and Garces, Thomas, and Currie, “Longer-term Effects of Head Start.”

29. Deming, “Early Childhood Intervention and Life-Cycle Skill Development.”

30. *Ibid.*, 115.

31. Cunha and Heckman, “Technology of Skill Formation,” 46. See also Currie and Neidell, “Getting Inside the ‘Black Box’ of Head Start Quality”; and Ludwig and Miller, “Does Head Start Improve Children’s Life Chances?”

32. Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush, “Durable Effects of Concentrated Disadvantage on Verbal Ability among African-American Children.”

33. Johnson, “School Quality and the Long-run Effects of Head Start.”

34. Neal, “Why Has Black-White Skill Convergence Stopped?” 566.

35. Fryer and Levitt, "Black-White Test Score Gap through Third Grade."
36. Ladd, "School Policies and the Test Score Gap."
37. Carter, *No Excuses*.
38. Rothstein, *Class and Schools*, 70.
39. Harris, "High Flying Schools, Student Disadvantage, and the Logic of NCLB."
40. Finn et al., "The 'Why's' of Class Size."
41. Compare Krueger and Whitmore, "What Have Researchers Learned from Project STAR?" with Hanushek, "Evidence, Politics, and the Class Size Debate."
42. Krueger and Schanzenbach, "Effect of Attending a Small Class in the Early Grades on College Test-Taking and Middle School Test Results"; and Krueger and Whitmore, "Would Smaller Classes Help Close the Black-White Achievement Gap?"
43. Jepsen and Rivkin, *Class Size Reduction, Teacher Quality, and Academic Achievement in California Public Elementary Schools*; and Stecher et al., "Class-size Reduction in California."
44. Vigdor and Ludwig, "Segregation and the Test Score Gap," 204.
45. But see Clampet-Lundquist et al., "Moving At-risk Kids to Better Neighborhoods."
46. Roger and Orfield, *School Resegregation*.
47. Guryan, "Desegregation and Black Dropout Rates"; and Lutz, "Post Brown vs. the Board of Education."
48. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin, "New Evidence about *Brown v. Board of Education*."
49. Roger and Orfield, *School Resegregation*; and Kirp, "Racists and Robber Barons."
50. Card and Rothstein, "Racial Segregation and the Black-White Test Score Gap"; and Sanbonmatsu et al., "Neighborhoods and Academic Achievement."
51. Childress, Doyle, and Thomas, *Leading for Equity*.
52. Montgomery County [Maryland] Public Schools, "The Results Book."
53. Quint et al., *Challenge of Scaling Up Education Reform*.
54. Borman et al., "Final Reading Outcomes of the National Randomized Field Trial of Success for All"; and Hurley et al., "Effects of Success for All on TAAS Reading."
55. Slavin and Madden, "Reducing the Gap," 393.
56. Austen-Smith and Fryer, "An Economic Analysis of 'Acting White'"; Fordham and Ogbu, "Black Students' School Success"; McWhorter, *Self-Sabotage*; and Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*
57. Aronson, Fried, and Good, "Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students by Shaping Theories of Intelligence," 114; and Steele, "Threat in the Air."
58. Steele and Aronson, "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African-Americans," 798.
59. Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht, "Improving Adolescents' Standardized Test Performance," 645.
60. Aronson, Fried, and Good, "Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students." See also Osborne, "Academics, Self-Esteem, and Race."

61. Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck, “Implicit Theories of Intelligence Predict Achievement across an Adolescent Transition,” 248.
62. Duckworth and Seligman, “Self-discipline Outdoes IQ in Predicting Academic Performance of Adolescents.” The sample size is too small, however, to specify the combined effects of race and gender.
63. Donaldson and Peske, *Supporting Effective Teaching through Teacher Evaluation*.
64. Dacia Toll, quoted in Tough, “What It Takes to Make a Student.”
65. Ibid. A 2010 study of black and Latino boys in single-sex schools points to similar characteristics as leading to academic success. “Academic engagement”—the “degree to which students know *how to do school*”—was the best predictor of achievement. To engage students in this way, the study notes, requires the kind of intense relationships with “supportive adults that, as we’ve seen, characterizes successful interventions from preschool onward.” From New York University Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, *Exploratory Achievement Model of Boys in Single-Sex Schools*.
66. Kirp, *Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise*; and Leventhal, Dupere, and Brooks-Gunn, “Neighborhood Influences on Adolescent Development.”
67. McLaughlin, *Community Counts*, 2.
68. Lauer et al., “Out-of-School-Time Programs.”
69. Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush, “Durable Effects of Concentrated Disadvantage on Verbal Ability among African American Children.”
70. Lauer et al., “Out-of-School-Time Programs”; Borman and Dowling, “Longitudinal Achievement Effects of Multiyear Summer School”; Heyns, “Schooling and Cognitive Development”; and Kirp, *Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise*.
71. Davis et al., “Predicting Positive Academic Intention among African American Males and Females,” 213.
72. Morrow-Howell et al., *Experience Corps*; and Rebok et al., “Short-term Impact of Experience Corps Participation on Children and Schools.”
73. Kirp, *Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise*.
74. A school-based mentoring program for elementary school African American boys reports encouraging early results. Lee, *Empowering Young Black Males—III*.
75. See, for example, Rothstein, *Class and Schools*; and Ravitch, *Death and Life of the Great American School System*.
76. Klein, “Urban Schools Need Better Teachers, Not Excuses, to Close the Education Gap.”
77. Ramey and Ramey, “Early Intervention and Early Experience”; and Tough, “What It Takes to Make a Student.”
78. Canada, as quoted in Tough, “What It Takes to Make a Student.”

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**FOUR****DOING WHAT IT TAKES TO PREPARE  
BLACK AND LATINO MALES FOR COLLEGE**

*What We Can Learn from Efforts  
to Improve New York City's Schools*

Edward Fergus and Pedro Noguera

**ABSTRACT**

Since the late 1990s, major education reform initiatives in America have focused on increasing the number of high school students who are socially, academically, and emotionally prepared for college. Research suggests that programmatic strategies that have proven effective for students in middle-class communities can be applied for students concentrated in under-resourced schools where the quality of teaching, safety, and support for students is limited. However, there needs to be a recognition of and specific policy addressing the inequitable access and opportunity facing Black and Latino students, particularly males. This chapter provides an empirical analysis of the 2007 cohort of Black and Latino males who entered the New York schools in fourth grade in 1998–99 school year. We explore how school and student factors for Black and Latino males in grades 4 through 12 affect their readiness for college. The analysis focuses on the factors that contribute to positive and negative academic outcomes at key transition points (sixth, eighth, ninth, and twelfth grades). The chapter provides a set of policy recommendations related to how schools might be restructured to ensure an increase in college readiness for Black and Latino males.

Focusing on college readiness as a policy and programmatic strategy poses a unique set of opportunities and challenges for schools and support organizations. To ensure that a significant number of Black and Latino males graduate from high school and are prepared for college, educators will have to build a support pipeline extending from elementary school to

high school for these students. We make the case that such a system must include an approach to addressing neighborhood factors beyond the school to ensure that students are truly “college ready.”

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## INTRODUCTION

Although the racial achievement gap has garnered considerable national attention in recent years, considerably less attention has been devoted to gender disparities in academic achievement and attainment within all groups and among racial minorities particularly. Given the long-term implication of these patterns for labor force participation, income, and social mobility generally, it is imperative that social scientists, policymakers, and educators recognize and begin to address these disparities. One recent focus of policymakers and educators is providing college-readiness opportunities for all students, especially underserved populations including Black and Latino males. Although creating more college readiness and improving the articulation between high school and colleges and universities is critical, there is little discussion as to whether schools are currently structured to provide such readiness, especially schools with persistently low academic performance. More important, what is the relationship between the achievement gap and college-readiness research? Can college-readiness schools address underserved populations like Black and Latino males? If so, how?

This chapter focuses on the factors that may be contributing to race and gender disparities that have to be addressed while creating college-readiness schools for underserved populations. We draw upon data on the academic performance of Black and Latino boys in New York City to analyze obstacles that may be contributing to lower levels of achievement, lower graduation rates, and higher dropout rates among this population.<sup>1</sup> This chapter includes two separate analyses: (1) an examination of the distribution of quality school contexts, and (2) an examination of the academic pathways and trajectories taken by the 2007 graduating cohort of Black and Latino males who entered the fourth grade in 1998–99. We focus on school quality because a growing body of research suggests that a broad set of indicators related to school quality—namely, teacher qualifications, school resources, and socioeconomic characteristics of students—have tremendous bearing on student and school performance (Noguera 2003). We focus on academic pathways and trajectories because previous studies have shown that patterns of academic achievement and attainment are manifest

early in student achievement data. Both analyses make it possible to situate the experience of Black and Latino males at the center of the discourse on college readiness.

Our contention is that by focusing directly on the educational experiences of Black and Latino males, educators, policymakers, and researchers will be better able to recognize the factors that contribute to their success and failure. They'll also be able to see more clearly the obstacles that prevent a greater number of students from being prepared for college. Such an analysis will make it possible to determine whether high schools are organized and adequately resourced to prepare low-income minority male students for college. If the federal government is serious about expanding the number of students who are truly prepared for college, we will have to consider the ways in which differences in achievement are fostered by disparities in learning opportunities that are in turn perpetuated by inequities in funding and support.

What will it take to expand college readiness for racial/ethnic minority males who are disproportionately from low-income backgrounds and who, more often than not, attend persistently low-performing schools? How can we create a greater number of schools that are safe, provide optimal learning conditions, and reduce the risks that beset Black and Latino males to a greater degree than any other segment of the population? These risks include the likelihood of being categorized as learning disabled, being excluded from honors and gifted programs, and being overrepresented among students who are suspended and expelled from school (Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2009). As researchers and educators we have concluded that if we are serious about increasing the number of Black and Latino males who are college ready, we need to significantly increase the availability of quality schools for this population and do a much better job of intervening when indications of academic difficulty and problematic behavior emerge. This is the only strategy that has any realistic potential to reverse current trends, which are nothing short of tragic.

### **BLACK AND LATINO MALES AND COLLEGE**

In recent years there has been growing concern among practitioners about the large number of high school graduates who are not academically prepared for college. Nationally, approximately 70 percent of high school students graduate within four years, yet only 32 percent of these students matriculate with the academic preparation required to enroll in college level courses (NCES 2005). At the City University of New York (CUNY), for example,

more than 50 percent of entering first-year students in 2008 were required to take remedial courses in their first year.<sup>2</sup> These students were required to take courses in subjects that they should have completed successfully in high school (typically algebra and freshman composition) before they could enter college. As states across the country consider adopting higher core academic standards as suggested by the U.S. Department of Education, the number of underprepared students is expected to rise significantly.<sup>3</sup>

The problem of college readiness is most acute among Black and Latino males, who have historically been underrepresented among college students. Between 1997 and 2007 the rate of college enrollment among female students increased by 29 percent, while male student enrollment increased at only 22 percent over the same period (NCES 2009).<sup>4</sup> Between 1974 and 2003 Black males experienced the smallest increase among all demographic groups (merely 4 percent), while Latino males experienced a 2 percent decrease (NCES 2005). Among those who successfully completed high school and went on to college, the number of students required to enroll in remedial courses in community colleges and four-year colleges and universities has also increased. In 2003 and 2004, 78 percent of students who enrolled in Florida's community college programs and 10 percent of those who enrolled in four-year college/university settings were required to take remedial courses (OPPAGA 2006b). A disproportionate number of those who were required to enroll in remedial courses were minority males (*ibid.*).

Indicators that college readiness has been a problem for large numbers of American students have been present for some time, as have variations by race, ethnicity, and gender. According to data collected by American College Testing Program (ACT) in 2009, only 35 percent of Blacks and 48 percent of Latinos met the college benchmarks on the ACT (ACT 2009) as compared to 77 percent of Whites. Performance on tests such as the ACT serve as a reliable indicator of college readiness, and the racial disparities evident in test results mirror patterns found in several states. In Florida, for example, 75 percent of Blacks, 61 percent of Latinos, and 48 percent of Whites participated in remedial classes in college (OPPAGA 2006b). In Massachusetts 59 percent of Blacks, 58 percent of Latinos, and 34 percent of Whites enrolled in at least one remedial course during their first semester of college in 2005 (Conaway 2009).

To a large degree, the rise in remedial course enrollment can be explained by the limited number of students who take and master the material in college preparatory courses before graduation. Given that minority males are underrepresented among those who enroll in honors, advanced placement, and college prep courses, it is not surprising that a greater number

would also be unprepared for college. For example, in New York City, Latino and Black males had the lowest graduation rates (only 46 percent) among all students in 2007. However, only a third of minority male graduates earned a regents diploma, the certification provided to students who earn at least 75 percent on state subject matter exams, a more rigorous graduation requirement (Metropolitan Center for Urban Education 2009). Furthermore, according to NCES estimates, only 20 percent of Black students and 16 percent of Latino students were college ready within a cohort of graduates in 2001 (NCES 2003).

### **College Readiness Defined and Calculated**

To increase the number of students who are truly prepared for college (particularly Black and Latino males, who have historically been under-represented), we need to know exactly what this preparation entails. Some researchers define “college readiness” by outcome markers, including graduation rates, proficiency on state high school exams, and literacy proficiency (Greene and Forster 2003). However, many researchers note that these definitional markers are difficult to measure. First, states have been allowed to define their own formulas for calculating graduation. For example, students in Texas who claim they will seek a GED are counted as graduates; in New Mexico the graduation formula is based on the enrollment of twelfth graders; and in Alabama the graduation rate is based on the number of graduates who eventually graduate, regardless of time frame.

Although the U.S. Department of Education has its own formula, it relies on information provided by state education agencies. The second complication in using this data as markers of college readiness is the variation across states in what is considered proficiency on state high school exams. Besides the fact that tests vary state-to-state, each state establishes different thresholds for proficiency, making it difficult to conduct cross-sectional analysis of college readiness. Another complication lies in the use of national exams, such as the ACT or SAT, to identify literacy proficiency and other college-readiness qualities. The problem lies in the distribution in participation across racial/ethnic minority groups and socioeconomic groups; the access to these exams and readiness for these exams varies.

Despite these complications, researchers have attempted to calculate college readiness across the country and have identified some stark patterns. In 2003 the researchers Jay Greene and Greg Forster calculated that Whites have a 72 percent graduation rate but a college-readiness rate of 38 percent, compared with a 52 percent graduation rate for Blacks and Latinos with a

**Table 4.1** Average ACT scores between 2005 and 2009 by race and ethnicity groups

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
White	21.9	22.0	22.1	22.1	22.2
Asian	22.2	22.3	22.6	22.9	23.2
Black	17.0	17.1	17.0	16.9	16.9
Latino	18.6	18.6	18.7	18.7	18.7

SOURCE: Belgarde, *Condition of College Readiness*.

20 percent and 16 percent college-readiness rate respectively. Reports from the ACT note increased participation of racial/ethnic minority populations taking this test, but the longitudinal trend demonstrates a great disparity between the average performance rates of Whites and Asians as compared with Latinos and Blacks (table 4.1).

The 2009 College Entrance Examination Board notes similar patterns among SAT-takers (table 4.2). The mean SAT scores for Black and Latino groups (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) are significantly lower than for White groups. Other researchers have used a definition of college readiness that focuses on what students need to be successful in college: certain cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, contextual skills, and performance (Conley 2007). David Conley (*ibid.*: 5) and others have defined “college readiness” based on “the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program.” Conley suggests that students demonstrate an understanding of the culture and structure of academic life, including help-seeking behaviors.

Many students graduate from high school with no idea that in college they will be expected to read eight to ten books simultaneously and write five to six research papers per term; but they also have no idea that they might go to a professor’s office hours for assistance. Low-performing and segregated high schools with racial/ethnic minority students rarely adopt curricular practices that explicitly provide such preparation. Over the years state education departments have attempted to improve graduation and college-going rates through the adoption of new graduation requirements, new standardized exams, the elimination of multiple diploma options, and increasing the passing threshold for teacher certification exams (ACT 2002 and 2005b; Callan et al. 2006). Districts have developed



**Table 4.2** Average SAT–critical reading scores between 2005 and 2009 by race and ethnicity groups

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
White	532	527	527	528	528
Asian	511	510	514	513	516
Black	433	434	433	430	429
Mexican	453	454	455	454	453
Puerto Rican	460	459	459	456	452

SOURCE: College Entrance Examination Board, College-bound Seniors: Total Group Profile [National] Report, selected years, 1986–87 through 2008–09, available online at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/sat/cb-seniors-2009>.

and adopted college-readiness frameworks for widespread application. The Montgomery County school district in Maryland adopted the “Seven Keys to College Readiness.” These seven keys focus on different transition points over the course of a student’s educational career:

1. Advanced reading levels in grades K through 2 (kindergarten: reading at text level 6 or higher; grade 2: TN/2 reading at seventieth national percentile or higher).
2. MSA Reading advanced in grades 3 through 8.
3. Successful completion of grade 6 math in grade 5.
4. Algebra 1 by grade 8 with a C or higher.
5. Algebra 2 by grade 11 with a C or higher.
6. AP exam score of 3 or higher, or IB exam score of 4 or higher by grade 12.
7. SAT combined score of 1650 or higher, or ACT composite score of 24 or higher by grade 12.

In 2008 the Texas State Department of Education adopted statewide standards for college readiness. The standards articulate within each content area the knowledge and tasks students should be able to accomplish in an entry-level college course. These changes at the state education policy level and district level have been fueled by policy and research conversations about college readiness. Although defining college readiness and improving the articulation between high school and colleges and universities is considered critical, there is little discussion about whether schools

are currently structured to provide such readiness, especially schools with persistently low-academic performance. More important, what's the relationship between the achievement gap and college-readiness research? Can college-readiness schools address underserved populations like Black and Latino males? If so, how?

### **Achievement Gap Issues to Be Addressed Alongside College Readiness**

The current disparity in the academic achievement of students by race, national origin, and gender demonstrates that Whites and Asians are outperforming all other racial/ethnic groups. According to the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), eighth-grade African American and Latino students were underrepresented in the top achievement categories. Only 13 percent of African American eighth graders and 15 percent of Latino eighth graders scored “proficient” or “advanced proficient,” compared with 40 percent of Whites and 41 percent of Asians (NCES 2007). When the scores of white, African American, and Latino students are compared for all levels (nine-, thirteen-, and seventeen-year-olds) in reading, mathematics, and science from a baseline in 1973 through 2004, it becomes clear that there has always been a substantial gap in achievement between Whites and African Americans, and between Whites and Latinos (NCES 2000; College Board 2004). These figures attest to a widening gap in achievement among Blacks, Latinos, and Whites.

Several factors are implicated in the maintenance of this gap, including socioeconomic status, access to quality instruction and rigorous curricula, teacher expectations, teacher qualifications, out-of-school context, parenting practices and home-school partnerships, and school policy and practice factors. These realities complicate how we approach creating college readiness for all students.

*Socioeconomic status.* African American and Latino families have higher rates of poverty, both of which correlate with lower achievement in children (U.S. Census 2003). When test scores are adjusted for both factors, the achievement gap shrinks by about one third but high levels of poverty within a school tend to depress achievement for all of the children in the school, whether or not they are poor (CEP 2004). Although poverty cannot, and should not, be disregarded as a causative factor, it is clear that much can be done to narrow the gap beyond social programs that specifically target the reduction of poverty.

*Access to quality instruction and rigorous curricula.* Numerous studies

on the achievement gap identify the rigor of the curriculum as closely related (Chubb and Moe 1990; Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993). Specifically, the academic rigor of middle and high school courses affects students' achievement (SAT and ACT scores) and is the single most important correlate to later success in college (graduation with a bachelor's degree). Examinations of course-taking patterns demonstrate differences across racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups (NCES 2001). African American and Latino students are underrepresented in the most rigorous courses of study in high schools and advanced placement examinations, and they are overrepresented in the least rigorous courses. Students who take algebra, geometry, trigonometry, chemistry, physics, higher-level English, and other challenging courses tend to have higher test scores in high school exit exams than their peers (NCES 2007; Frazier et al. 1995; Ford 1994). Access to rigorous curricula is a major equity issue that school districts must address to reduce the achievement gap.

*Teacher expectations.* The expectations teachers have for their students and the assumptions they make about their students' potential have a quantifiable effect on student achievement (Bamburg 1994; Croninger and Lee 2001; Rist 2000). Students internalize the beliefs teachers have about their ability (Gonder 1991; Zeichner 2003). The adherence to uniformly high expectations is a characteristic shared by the most effective teachers. Good teachers "refuse to alter their attitudes or expectations for their students, regardless of the students' race or ethnicity, life experiences and interests, and family wealth or stability" (Omotani and Omotani 1996).

Students who are perceived to be "low ability" may also be given fewer opportunities to learn new material, asked less stimulating questions, given briefer and less informative feedback, praised less frequently for success, called on less frequently, and given less time to respond than students who are considered "high ability." It is also important to note that much of this research identifies teacher expectations as framed by racial categorization. Black and Latino students behave differently when negative stereotypes are imposed upon them (Perry, Steele, and Hillard 2002; Steele 1997) and develop behaviors and dispositions not conducive to academic success (Fergus 2004; Mickelson 1990; O'Connor 1997; Ogbu 1991).

*Teacher qualifications.* Minority students are less likely than White students to be taught by experienced and highly qualified teachers. The Education Trust's 2002 report on out-of-field teaching demonstrated high numbers of unqualified teachers in high-poverty schools (34 percent) and high-minority schools (29 percent) (Craig 2002). This is one of the most critical variables underlying the achievement gap. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that all elementary and secondary teachers

who teach core academic subjects—English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history, and geography—be “highly qualified” by the end of the 2005–06 school year, meaning that they must maintain a certification in their subject matter. This legislation has forced high-poverty and high-minority schools to develop innovative strategies to attract and retain highly qualified teachers.

*Out-of-school context.* Numerous research studies point to school readiness, parent involvement, and summer learning loss as factors in the creation and perpetuation of the achievement gap. School-readiness research (Lee and Burkham 2002; Rouse, Brooks-Gunn, and McLanahan 2005) asserts that Black and Latino children score substantially lower than White children at the beginning of kindergarten on math and reading achievement. Much of this gap is maintained throughout elementary and secondary schooling.

*Parenting practices and home-school partnerships.* The research also implicates parenting practices and home-school partnerships as gap factors. Coauthors Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Lisa Markman (2005) have attributed half of the school-readiness gap to differences in parenting. Conversely, several studies have documented the effectiveness of having families, schools, and communities work together to bolster academic achievement (Epstein 1985; Rutherford, Anderson, and Billig 1997; Henderson and Berla 1994; Eccles and Harold 1993). Studies show that regardless of family background or income, students whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to “get better grades and test scores; pass their classes and not be held back in a grade; have good school attendance; adjust well to school, with better social skills and behavior; go on to higher education” (Warner 2002: 5).

Research in summer learning reports a loss occurring among most income and racial/ethnic groups, with more significant loss among poor and minority students. Several scholars have argued that the cumulative effect of summer learning loss among poor and minority children is one of the most significant factors related to the achievement gap (for example, see Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson, 2004; Entwisle and Alexander 1992; Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson 1997; Heyns 1987). Research shows that children from low-income families experience greater summer loss than middle-income children (Philips and Chin 2004). This research outlines out-of-school context factors as playing a role in the achievement gap.

*School policy and practice factors.* Research documents how school policies and practices—including special education referral and placement, tracking, and discipline—have a disproportionate affect on Blacks and Latinos, thus altering their learning outcomes. Inequities in the treatment of students based on differences in race, culture, language background, and

economic status continue to be the main factors in the labeling of children as “gifted” and placed in remedial or special education classes (Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera forthcoming; Handy 1999; Harry and Klingner 2004; Oswald et al. 1999; Poon-McBrayer, Fong, and Garcia 2000). Blacks and Latinos, especially males, are more likely to be overrepresented in special education classrooms, underrepresented in gifted and talented classrooms and less likely to be educated in full-inclusion classrooms. Black children are three times more likely to be labeled “mentally retarded” and twice as likely to be labeled “emotionally disturbed” compared with Whites (Losen and Orfield 2002).

Research reveals that African American and Latino students with the same test scores as their White and Asian counterparts are much less likely to be placed in higher (accelerated) tracks (Ford 1994). Such inequities are cited in the selection, referral, and screening of students for assignment to a track, as well as differences in the teacher’s choice of content and instructional strategies (for example, drill-and-rote memorization) in low tracks versus “higher-order” approaches in high tracks (Oakes 1986 and 2005). Students placed in remedial tracks are ultimately more likely to drop out of school (Maddox and Wheelock 1995; Metropolitan Center for Urban Education 2009; Oakes 2005). Research also identifies the prevalence of a “fourth-grade slump” in fluency and comprehension skills. In other words, students attaining low to moderate fluency levels experience reduced comprehension capacity because they lack sufficient fluency skills (Sancamore and Palumbo 2009). This problem is exacerbated by the fourth- to sixth-grade focus on reading comprehension and the shift from reading narrative to expository text, which places students struggling with fluency and decoding issues at not meeting grade level. Research indicates that gender and race are factors relating to school disciplinary action (Skiba, Michael, and Nardo 2000; Taylor and Foster 1986). Black males are referred to the guidance or principal’s office at higher rates than White students. Once referred, Black students are more likely to be suspended.

Although these school policies and practices do not directly explain or cause the achievement gap, they underscore the kinds of inequalities that detract from academic success among Black and Latino students. The systemic issues at the heart of achievement gap patterns must be considered in framing an approach to college readiness. For college readiness to be achieved in high school, elementary and middle schools must be engaged in systemic reform of these issues. Elementary schools with a disproportionate number of students performing below proficiency levels must provide targeted out-of-school opportunities that supplement the core instructional

program. Professional development that focuses on the capacity of teachers to teach and elicit higher-order analytical skills coupled with a core reading program that explicitly addresses the five reading areas (that is, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and decoding) needs to be present in elementary and middle school. Curricula must be restructured to allow students to move in and out of talented and gifted, honors, and other college prep courses. Unfortunately, the absence of attention to these issues for low-income and persistently low-performing schools means that the neediest populations may not be served.

### **A CASE ANALYSIS OF NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

This chapter provides a case analysis of New York City public schools in which we explore how two particular equity issues affect the construction of a college-readiness agenda: (1) the distribution of quality schools for Black and Latino males, and (2) the fourth- through twelfth-grade school transition points that need to be improved to increase the number of Black and Latino males who are ready for college. Our analysis reveals that strategic intervention in the form of a quality academic support system (at both the district and school levels) can buffer the effect of external factors (for example, limited mobility networks, discrimination and stigmatization, inadequate social service options) and increase the number of Black and Latino male students in college preparatory tracks. We focus on four research questions:

1. What is the distribution of quality schools Black and Latino males are experiencing in New York City?
2. What is the distribution of high school outcomes among the 2007 cohort of Black and Latino males?
3. Are there distinguishable differences in academic performance and demographic characteristics (that is, English language learner status, special education status, middle school mobility rate, high school mobility rate, and free/reduced lunch status) between fourth and twelfth grade among the 2007 cohort?
4. Do these differences account for high school graduation outcomes?

#### **School-level Analysis Procedure**

To perform our analysis, we used a school-level dataset that we created by merging New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) publicly

available datasets containing a number of school-level demographic and achievement indicators for multiple years. In the analysis we include only schools that operated in the 2006–07 or 2007–08 school year and received a 2007 or 2008 Progress Report grade.<sup>5</sup> We conducted an analysis of the school progress report grades A to F by the mean percentage of Black and Latino students in the school. In addition, we conducted correlations of the percentages of Black and Latino students and their grades to understand whether there is a significant interaction between race/ethnic composition and school grades.

### **Student-level Analysis Procedure**

We also conducted a statistical test of the relative influence of social demographics (English language learner [ELL] status, free/reduced lunch program [FRLP] status, and special education status), achievement predictors (eighth-grade English Language Arts [ELA] and math scores), and high school on-track predictors (transferring at least once in high school, course failure rates, and ninth-grade credit completion) on the attainment of a regents diploma.

### **School-level Dataset**

The school-level dataset on quality school rankings represents the performance ratings the NYCDOE developed, conducted, and published regarding each New York City school. Since 2006–07, New York City’s schools are assigned Progress Report grades ranging from A to F that indicate their progress toward serving all of their students well. Independent evaluators assess grades through interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and students focusing on the school environment (attendance plus parent, student, and teacher perceptions of the school), student progress (changes in ELA and math grades from year to year), and student performance (schoolwide ELA and math performance in a given year). In an effort to account for the fact that schools vary in terms of the academically vulnerable populations they serve, school demographics (that is race, poverty status, language) are considered in assigning grades to elementary schools. At the high school level, for example, schools receive extra credit toward their overall progress grade if the same vulnerable groups can demonstrate academic progress. Schools are assessed only in comparison to schools that serve similar populations.

### **Student-level Dataset**

We constructed a school-level dataset that merged NYCDOE publicly available datasets containing a number of school-level demographic indicators (percentage of Black and Latino students, free/reduced lunch students, English language learners, and special education students) and achievement indicators for multiple years. Students are assigned to the cohort when they first enter the ninth grade within New York City public schools or any other school system. Graduation and dropout status are determined up to August of 2007—after twelfth grade.

We begin by describing four-year outcomes for the Black and Latino males in the 2007 cohort. Our focus is to do a retrospective analysis of the 2007 cohort who were in the New York City public school system in 1998–99. The sample for the analysis includes only male students who are identified in the data as Black or Latino. The sample also excludes students in self-contained special education programs in the ninth grade (District 75 schools) and for whom we have no data on annual state or city standardized exams, grade levels, and course completion. The dataset includes 84 percent of all students identified as Black or Latino males. Table 4.3 compares outcomes of students in the sample and in the complete dataset. Our sample includes a slightly lower proportion of dropouts and higher proportion of graduates as students with disabilities are excluded from the analysis.

Graduating students are divided into two groups: local diploma and regents diploma earners. Both groups are required to pass New York State graduation tests, or regents exams, in English, mathematics, global history and geography, U.S. history and government, and one of the sciences. To earn a regents diploma, students in this cohort are required to score 65 or above. A local diploma requires that students score 65 or above on one of the exams and above 55 on the other four exams. A local diploma is held in lower regard than a regents diploma by many colleges. The percentage of Black and Latino male students in the sample graduating with either diploma is similar to that of the total population.

### **Opportunity Gap: The Availability of Quality Schools**

Over the past decade national concern over achievement differences between racial/ethnic minority groups and White students has focused on strengthening school accountability mechanisms. Accountability systems can, in theory, pressure schools to more effectively serve Black and Latino students and work to close rather than contribute to the achievement gap.



**Table 4.3** Comparison of graduation outcomes among Black and Latino Males in the sample and all Black and Latino males in the 2007 cohort

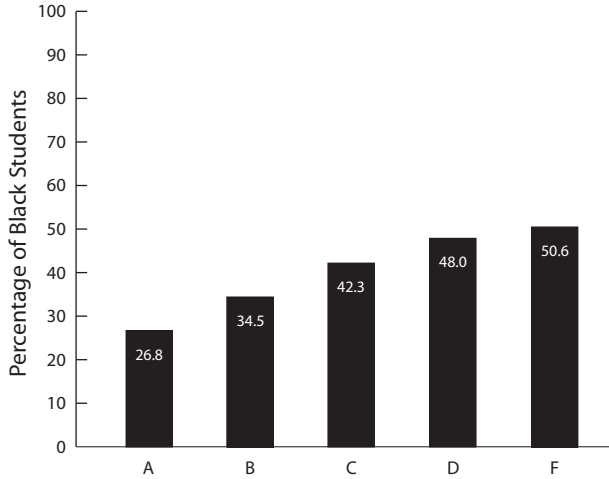
Status	Sample		All Black and Latino males in the 2007 cohort	
Dropout	3,311	16.6%	4,333	18.2%
Regents	5,704	28.6%	6,418	26.9%
Local	3,765	18.9%	4,461	18.7%
Other	7,196	36.0%	8,608	36.1%
Total	19,976	100.0%	23,820	100.0%

SOURCE: Data from New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE).

NOTE: “Other” includes students who were still enrolled after four years, were discharged to another education setting, reached the age of twenty-one without graduating, received their GED, or received a special education diploma.

In traditional accountability systems, schools are evaluated based on their compliance with core academic standards. In performance-based systems the basis of measurement is whether or not school performance is aligned with state and district goals and standards. Evidence shows that the implementation of performance-based accountability systems are associated with improved test scores among schools receiving low ratings, increased remediation, increased focus on the subjects that are tested, and a narrowing of the curriculum (Clotfelter and Ladd 1996; Ladd and Zelli 2002).

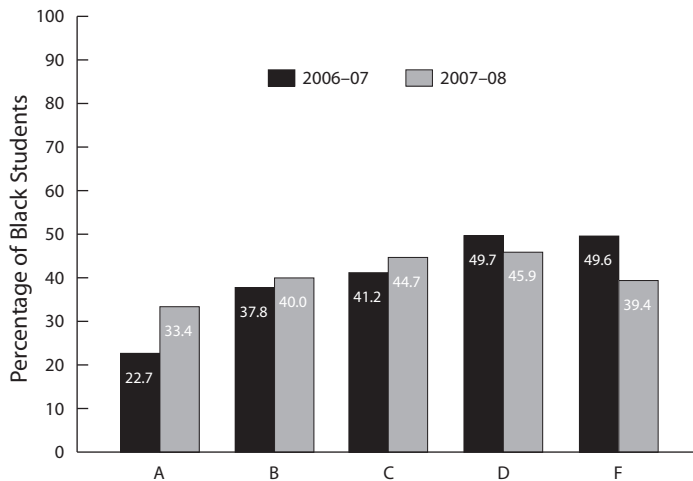
The challenge that lies in such performance-based accountability is the inequitable effect on achievement differences between Whites and racial/ethnic minority groups, including dropout patterns, disproportionate representation in special education and suspension, and underrepresentation in AP/honors tracks. In 2006–07 New York City, like many other large urban school districts, embarked on a program to develop and identify schools using a progress report grading system. Under the progress report grading system, schools are assigned grades ranging from A to F for both the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. The grades provide an indication of how well each school serves all of its students. Grades are determined by the students’ levels of academic performance and their progress over time, with an emphasis on progress. The grading system also includes student, parent, and teacher perceptions of the quality of the school environment. Schools are then compared to other schools serving similar populations in determining the grades.



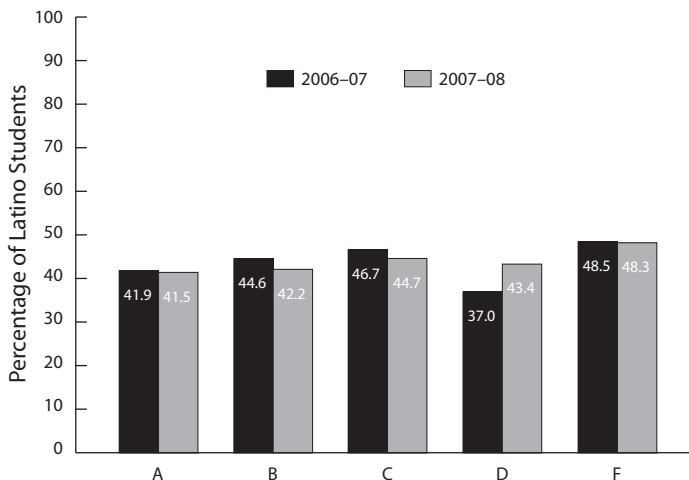
**Figure 4.1.** Average percentage of black students by progress report grade (elementary school, middle school, and K-8), 2007-08. *Source:* New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

In an effort to account for variation, schools receive extra credit toward their overall progress grade for contributing to the academic progress of vulnerable student populations including low-income, English language-learners, and special education students. Schools receiving low grades (a D or F, or a C for three years in a row) “face a four-year cycle of target setting, leadership change, and if performance does not improve, more target setting and finally school closure” (NYCDOE 2007). At the same time schools receiving an A or B are eligible to receive a monetary bonus. A school’s rating therefore has potentially profound implications for all students, depending on the grade their school receives.

When we examined the distribution of grades by the percentage of Black and Latino students in the schools, we found a distinct pattern in which the higher the percentage of Black and Latino students, the higher the likelihood that the schools would be rated poorly. As figure 4.1 demonstrates, in 2007–08 among elementary schools (ES), middle schools (MS), and K–8 schools, the average percentage of Black student enrollment increases as a schools’ progress report drops from A to F. Even though the progress report card grades take into account the distribution of social demographic factors like race/ethnicity and free/reduced lunch program, there is a clear pattern of schools with higher proportions of Black students with lower grades. This also held true at the high school level in 2006–07, with less of a difference in 2007–08 (figures 4.2 and 4.3).<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 4.2.** Average percentage of black students in high schools by progress report grades. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.



**Figure 4.3.** Average percentage of Latino students in high schools by progress report grades. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

A relationship between a school's percentage of Latino students and the grades on its progress report was also found at the high school level in 2006–07. Thus although there are many New York City public schools rated as quality schools (that is, B or higher), schools receiving lower grades tended to have higher percentages of Black and Latino students. This difference raises concerns as to whether Black and Latino students can attain college and workforce readiness (Conley 2007) if they are isolated in poor-quality schools.

Also playing a role in the relationship between race/ethnicity enrollment composition and progress report grades is the reality of high school sorting that occurs in New York City public schools. In New York City, high school students are offered a choice of schools, but high schools also have varying admissions criteria. The descriptions of the various levels of selectivity are as follows:

- *Testing.* These schools admit students solely based on their performance on the Specialized High School Exam.
- *Screened admissions.* These schools rank students for admissions based on their academic performance from the previous year.
- *Audition.* These schools select students based on their performance in a dance, theater, music, or visual arts audition.
- *Limited unscreened.* This method of selectivity is typically used for small high schools that focus on a particular theme (for example, art, music, history). These schools target students who show interest by attending an open house or high school fair. Administrators in schools with limited unscreened programs are not supposed to use student achievement as a selection factor.
- *Educational option.* In these schools 50 percent of the student body is selected by the school, while the other 50 percent is randomly selected. Both select from a distribution of students representing 16 percent of the high range of achievement on the seventh-grade New York State reading score, 68 percent of the average range, and 16 percent from the low range.
- *Unscreened.* Students are selected randomly by computer.
- *Zoned.* Students who live in the geographical zoned area of the high school have priority for admission.

Table 4.4 demonstrates the distribution of progress report grades for high schools with various selection criteria. About 50 percent of the least

**Table 4.4.** Number and percentage of high schools within selection criteria type and mean percentage Black and Latino by 2007 progress report grade

Selection Process	Percentage Black/Latino		A		B		C		D		F	
	Mean	SD*	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Testing	30.6	24.9	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Screened	75.0	24.9	21	40.4	17	32.7	13	25.0	0	0.0	1	1.9
Audition	79.4	21.2	3	23.1	7	53.9	2	15.4	1	7.7	0	0.0
Limited unscreened	90.9	10.6	12	36.4	16	48.5	4	12.1	1	3.0	0	0.0
Educational option	88.0	15.1	7	12.1	22	37.9	20	34.5	5	8.6	4	6.9
Unscreened	81.9	11.0	2	50.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
More than one	72.2	23.6	4	6.9	30	51.7	17	29.3	4	6.9	3	5.2

\* SD: Standard Deviation

SOURCE: Calculations by the authors using data from the NYCDOE 2008.

NOTES: Figures represent row percentages. "More than one" refers to schools with several programs in the same school that use different admission criteria for selecting students. Schools that give priority to continuing eighth graders in combination are included in the category they use for selecting new students.

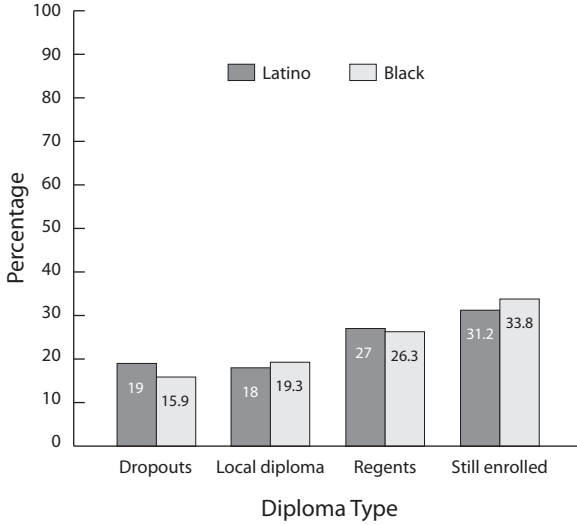
selective schools received A's and B's. However, nearly 75 percent of the more selective schools received A's and B's. The least selective schools enrolled the highest average percentage of Black and Latino students (88 percent). The more selective high schools maintained the lowest average percentage of Black and Latino students (30.6 percent), although the high standard deviation indicates that there is a great deal of variation within the students.

This analysis of the distribution of quality schools demonstrates that across K–12 schools in New York City, Black and Latino students are disproportionately represented in schools rated C or lower, reducing their chances for college readiness. Our assumption is that lower-rated schools maintain a “get to proficiency” agenda that focuses on basic drills for remediating skill development as opposed to acceleration and college preparation. Although this school-level analysis provides a landscape for which to examine the distribution of quality schools, there is still a need to understand at what points in their educational careers Black and Latino male students lose the opportunity to be college ready.

### **Pathway of 2007 Cohort of Black and Latino Boys**

Our analysis of the one-fourth of the Black and Latino boys who earned a regents diploma and appear college ready involved several assumptions. First, although much of the conversation regarding boys of color has focused on Black and Latino boys, aggregating them as having similar patterns, we opted to describe both groups separately, to demonstrate their uniqueness. Second, examining the distribution of several factors by diploma types provides guidance for selecting the right variables for inclusion in linear regressions that predict the earning of a regents diploma.

Figure 4.4 displays the percentages of Black and Latino male students in the cohort that graduated with regents or local diplomas, were still enrolled, and dropped out after four years. Nineteen percent of Latino males and 16 percent of Black males dropped out. It is important to note that this does not represent the total proportion of students who dropped out or failed to graduate in the cohort, as final figures are generally calculated six years after the cohort first entered high school. Fewer than 50 percent of Black and Latino males attained a regents or local diploma after four years. Nearly a third of Black and Latino male students were still enrolled after four years. These outcome patterns are alarming because they demonstrate that only about one in four Latino and Black males are “college ready” if we used the earning of a regents diploma as an indica-



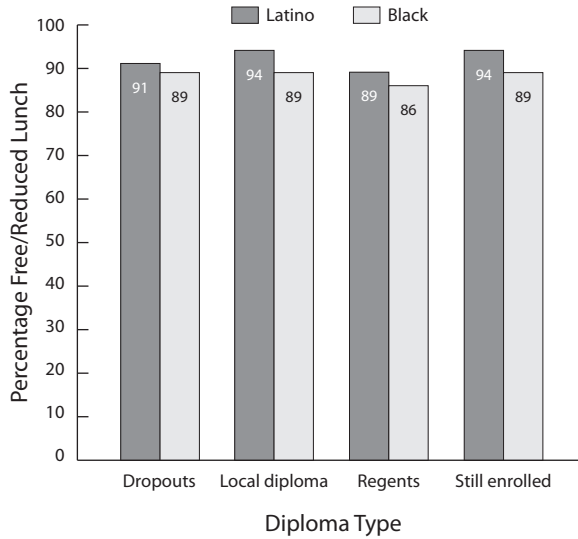
**Figure 4.4.** Percentages of Black and Latino male dropouts, still enrolled students, and graduates in 2006–2007 cohort after four years of high school. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

tor. What social demographic features distinguish regents diploma earners from their peers?

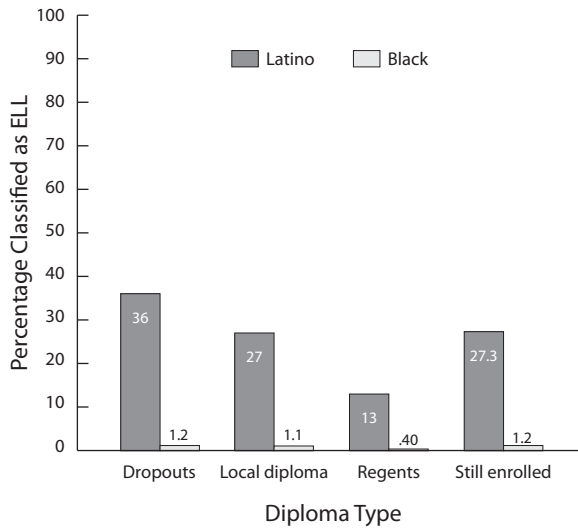
Using the social demographic factors available from New York City’s Department of Education administrative data, we conducted a descriptive examination of the following student-level demographics: free/reduced lunch, English language learner status, special education status, and transferring schools in middle and high school. Although these variables represent conditions unique to each student, they also represent the types of educational services students participate in as well as those schools need to provide. For example, a school with an English language learner *must* provide some type of language acquisition service.

Figure 4.5 shows the free/reduced lunch percentage of Black and Latino males by diploma types. Although the regents group had a lower percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch, the difference is not significant. Across all groups students qualifying for the free/reduced lunch program comprised a majority of the diploma groups. This is an important finding because it identifies low-income status as a common factor among the majority of all diploma groups.

Figure 4.6 provides the percentage of Black and Latino males by diploma

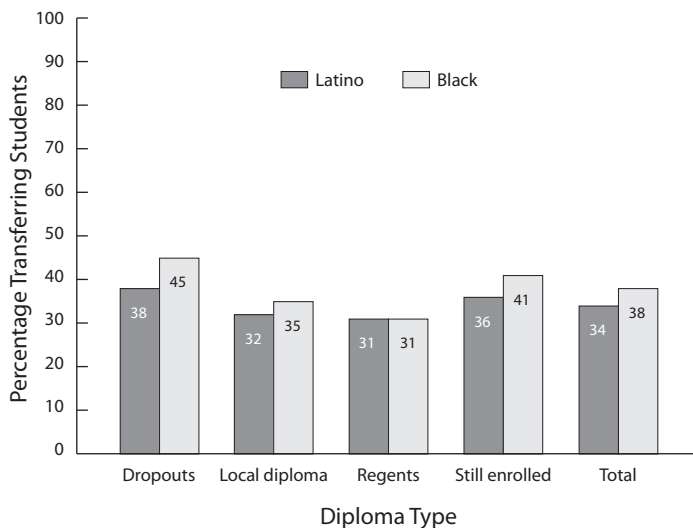


**Figure 4.5.** Percentage of free/reduced lunch by diploma types and race/ethnicity. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.



**Figure 4.6.** Percentage of students classified as ELL between grades 5 and 12 by diploma types and race/ethnicity. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

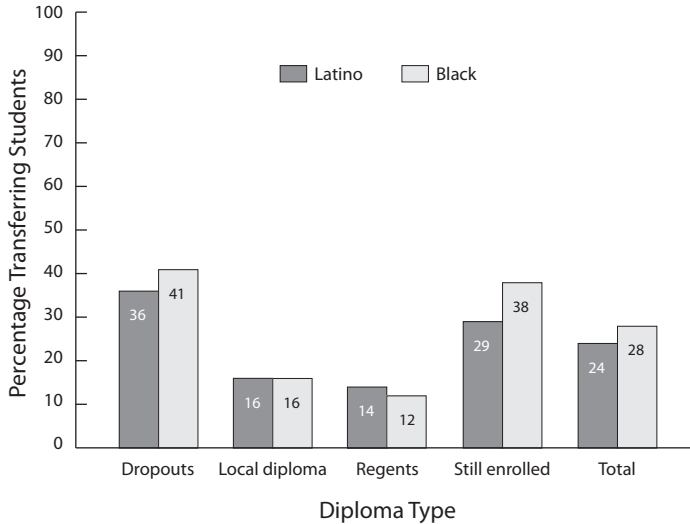




**Figure 4.7.** Percentage of students transferring from one public school to another between grades 6 and 8 within New York City by diploma type and race/ethnicity. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

types that were identified as English language learners (ELLs) at any point between fifth grade and twelfth grade. Although the population of Black males is ethnically diverse in New York City, many are not classified as ELL. Thus there is a very small percentage in each diploma group. The Latino male population, however, in which ELLs are 24.4 percent, maintained a distinct distribution across the diploma type groups. The regents group had the lowest percentage of ELLs, while more than a fourth of Latino males categorized as still enrolled (27 percent) and as local diploma (27 percent) earners were ELLs. The dropout population had the largest percentage of ELLs (36 percent). This disproportionate distribution of ELLs suggests the possibility that ELL status and services connected to this designation may be a factor in the high dropout rate for Latino males.

Another distinguishing pattern found among the diploma groups is their mobility rates. Figure 4.7 provides the percentage of Black and Latino males who transferred at least once during middle school (2000–03). Fully one-third of the Latino and Black male population transferred at least once during their middle school years. Although these rates appear proportional, the landscape of school accountability in New York in 2000 through



**Figure 4.8.** Percentage of students transferring from one public school to another between grades 9 and 12 within New York City by diploma type and race/ethnicity. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

2003 was such that we must question whether these diploma groups were transferring into “good standing” schools.

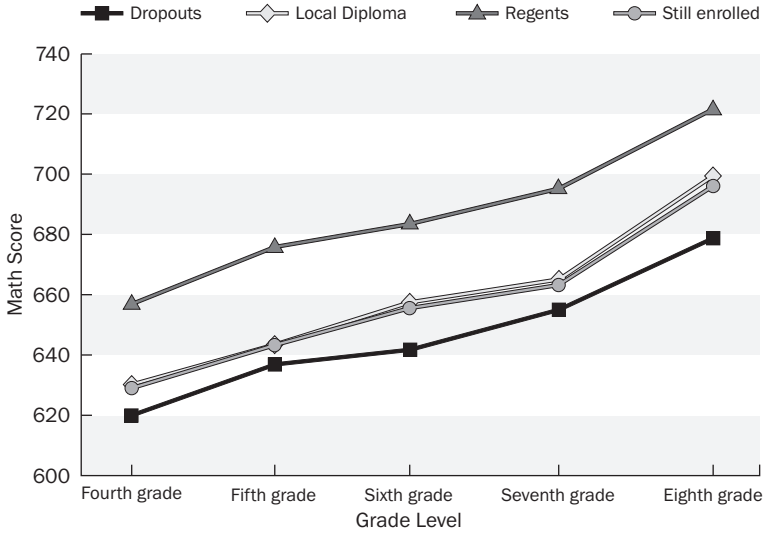
The transfer patterns of high school students by diploma groups were less proportional. Figure 4.8 shows the percentage of students who transferred at least once during their high school years (2003–07). Overall, nearly one in four Latino and Black males transferred to a different high school at least once during this period. The diploma types among Black and Latino males with the lowest rates of transfers were the regents (12 percent and 14 percent, respectively) and local (15.6 percent and 16.2 percent, respectively) diploma earners. More than a third of Black and Latino male dropouts and those still enrolled after four years changed schools at least once. Although we are unable to identify the various causes underlying these transfers, it does suggest a need for further examination to understand the predictability of mobility patterns. The Black and Latino males in this 2007 cohort demonstrate distinct demographic patterns that may play a predictive role in high school completion. Regents earners transfer less frequently in high school. This descriptive analysis of demographic variables paints a particular pattern among the various diploma types mirrored by achievement performance indicators.

### **Achievement Performance Indicators in Elementary and Middle Schools**

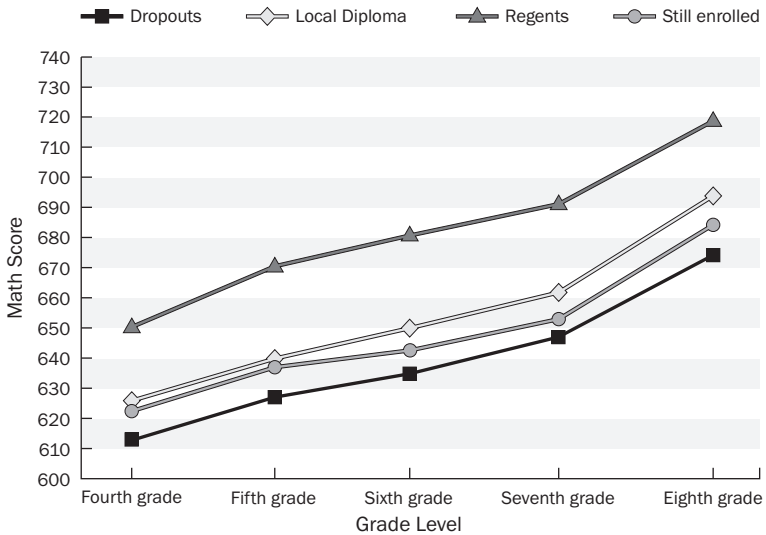
This 2007 cohort entered the New York City public school system in 1998–99 as fourth graders and middle schoolers in 2000–01. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 indicate that the mean math scale scores of Latino and Black males increased in each diploma group.<sup>7</sup> The cutoff for proficiency is 650 in each grade level. The Black and Latino males who earned a regents diploma constitute the only diploma group who maintained a mean above 650 each school year. The mean math scores of those categorized as dropouts, still enrolled, and local diploma earners did not reach 650 until seventh grade. Although this upward shift in math mean scale scores may suggest an increase in this populations' proficiency level, there was a shift in the number of students moving closer to proficiency and a slightly greater number of students on the positive side of normal distribution. This change demonstrates an increasing mean scale score among all groups.

The mean math scale scores demonstrate that gaps among the diploma groups emerge as early as fourth grade. Among Black and Latino males there is about a thirty-point difference in mean scores between regents earners and all other groups. This is consistent with prior research on the existence of an achievement gap in early elementary school years (NCES 2007).

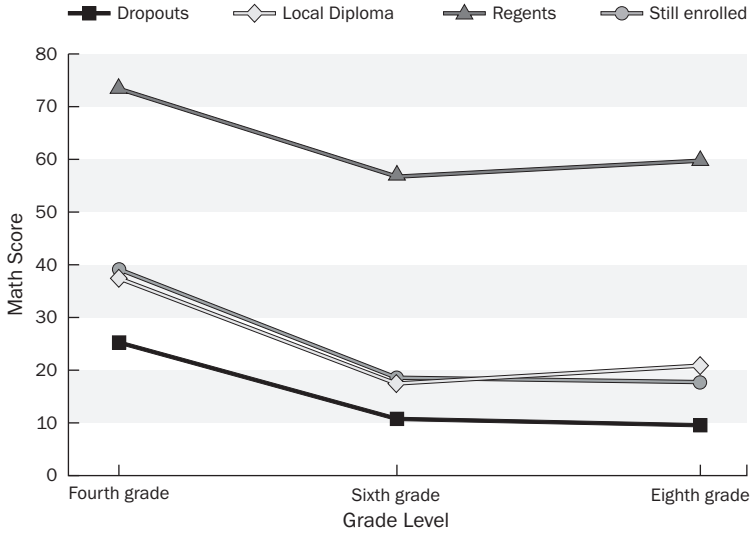
Shifts in the percentage of students by diploma groups attaining proficiency occurred at several key transition points in the educational trajectory of Black and Latino males. Figures 4.11 and 4.12 demonstrate the percentage of Black and Latino males attaining proficiency levels 1–4 in fourth, sixth, and eighth grade.<sup>8</sup> At each grade level the percentage of Black and Latino males who attained proficiency diminished for boys who eventually dropped out and were still enrolled after four years of high school. A difference emerged in the fourth grade between students who eventually obtained a regents diploma and all other students, particularly dropouts. Although each diploma group experienced a decrease in the number of students reaching proficiency, dropouts and those still enrolled had the steepest drop. The percentage of Black males proficient in each group decreased (see figure 4.12) in similar proportion to the percentages of Latino males. The regents group declined 20 percent, the steepest drop among all diploma groups. This suggests that between the elementary and middle school years, both Latino and Black male students move in and out of proficiency, even among regents earners. Such temporary skill acqui-



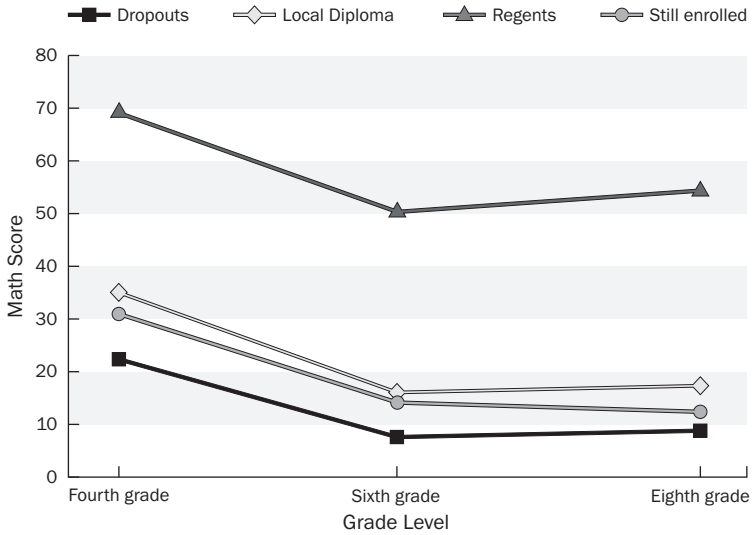
**Figure 4.9.** Latino males mean math scores by diploma type. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.



**Figure 4.10.** Black males mean math scores by diploma type. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.



**Figure 4.11.** Latino males proficient in math in fourth, sixth, and eighth grade by diploma type. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.



**Figure 4.12.** Black males proficient in math in fourth, sixth, and eighth grade by diploma type. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

sition is a typical outcome of remediation programs and/or instruction geared toward “getting students to proficiency” instead of mastery.

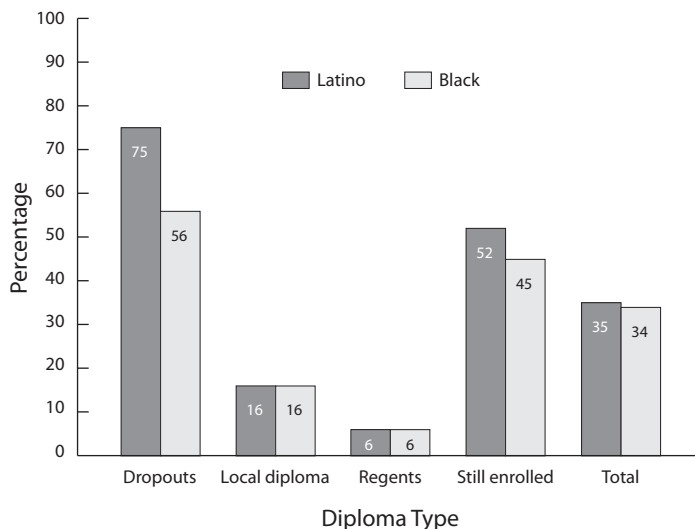
### **Achievement Performance Indicators in High Schools**

The research on high school completion reveals that factors including the repetition of ninth grade, credit accumulation (on track to graduate), and course failure rates (Allensworth and Easton 2007) are most predictive not only of whether students graduate but in determining college readiness. Figure 4.13 shows the percentage of Black and Latino males by diploma type who repeated ninth grade in 2004–05: 35 percent for the Latino male population in the 2007 cohort and 34 percent for the Black male population. Within diploma type groups the lowest percentage for the repetition of ninth grade was 6 percent for regents earners. More than half of the Black and Latino males who dropped out and were still enrolled after four years repeated ninth grade in 2004–05. Compared with Black males, Latino males who dropped out and were still enrolled maintained higher rates for repetition of ninth grade.

To graduate with a regents diploma, in New York State students must complete a total of forty-four credits and pass five regents exams with a score of at least 65 over the course of four years. A local diploma requires passing the regents exams with a minimum score of 55. As of 2010, the New York State Board of Regents is eliminating the local diploma option, which makes understanding the pathways of regents diploma earners important as compared with dropouts, local diploma earners, and those still enrolled.

To be on track to graduate in New York State, students must complete an average of eleven credits a year. Figures 4.14 and 4.15 show the mean credit completion rates among Black and Latino males in each year of high school. The credit completion rate among regents earners is above the expected eleven credits; local diploma earners’ mean credit completion rates are slightly below, not surprising given that regents earners take an extra math exam and more advanced math courses. Dropouts and boys still enrolled after four years maintained vastly different mean credit completion rates. Students who eventually dropped out had the lowest mean credit completion rate beginning in ninth grade.

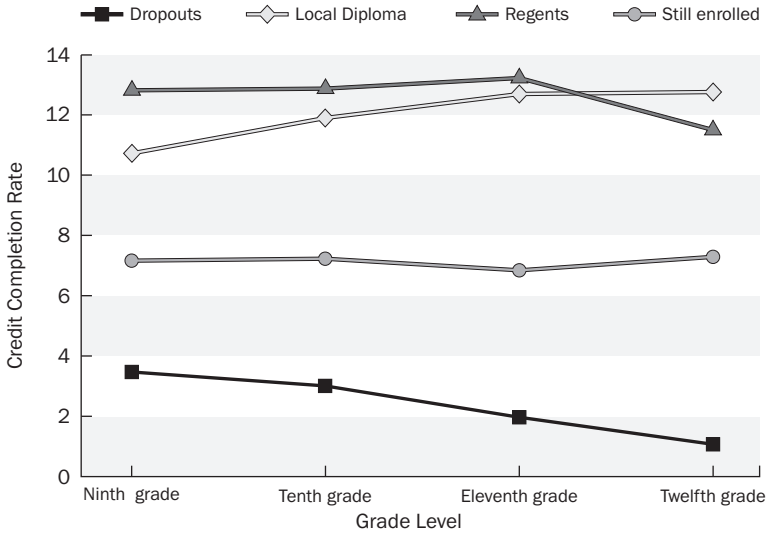
Credit completion rates provide an indication of how on track to graduate a student is in high school. Failing more than one course has major ramifications for on-time graduation. Figures 4.16 and 4.17 provide the mean course failure rates of Latino and Black male students in the 2007



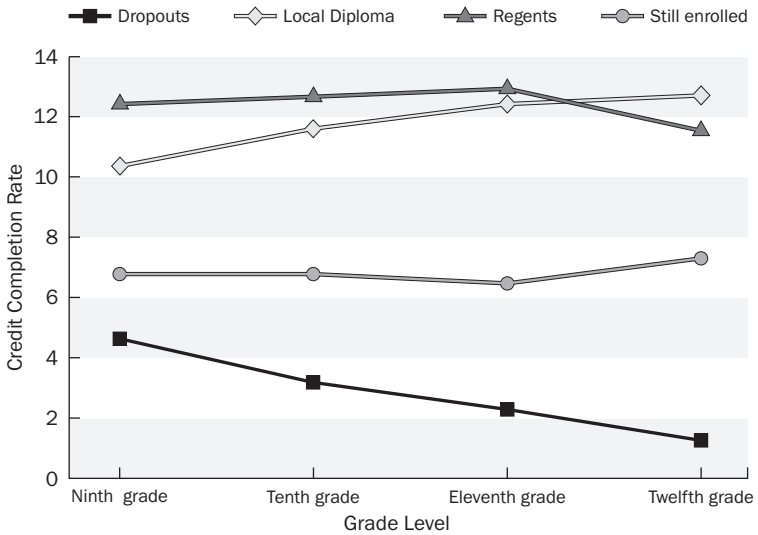
**Figure 4.13.** Repetition of ninth grade by race/ethnicity. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

cohort. At various points students who eventually dropped out were failing classes six times more frequently than regents earners. Students who remained still enrolled after four years of high school had failed more courses in tenth and eleventh grades than students on track; the fact that they were still enrolled may be attributable to this.

The patterns among diploma types of the 2007 cohort demonstrate that beginning in the fourth grade, there was a difference in pathway among students who eventually dropped out, those who stayed enrolled beyond four years of high school, and local diploma and regents earners. We conducted an examination to determine which student- and school-level variables are most predictive of academic performance and high school completion. Overall, our statistical analysis of predictability demonstrated a specific pattern: of the unique predictors of earning a regents diploma for Black and Latino male students, eighth-grade ELA scores along with eighth-grade math scores, and ninth-grade credit completion were positive predictors. Special education classification and transferring at least once during high school were negative predictors of earning a regents diploma. This finding is not surprising given the prior patterns in which being proficient in ELA and math in eighth grade and earning credits on time showed distinct patterns between the various diploma groups.

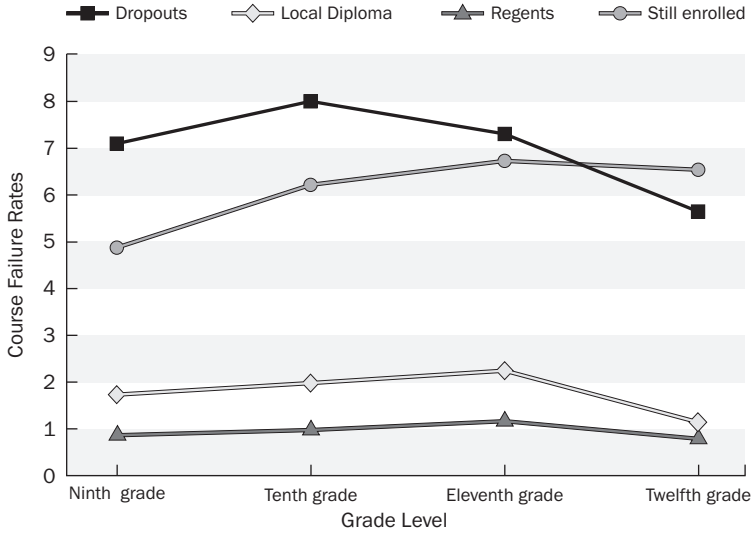


**Figure 4.14.** Latino male mean credit completion rates by diploma type. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

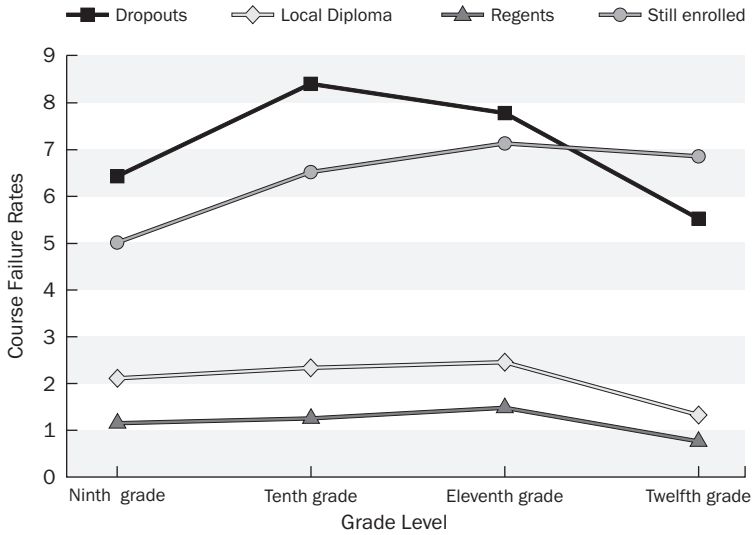


**Figure 4.15.** Black male mean credit completion rates by diploma type. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.





**Figure 4.16.** Latino male mean course failure rates. *Source:* New NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.



**Figure 4.17.** Black male mean course failure rates. *Source:* NYCDOE, Division of Assessment and Accountability, 2008.

## CONCLUSION

This analysis presents the complicated school- and student-level issues that must be addressed to ensure equitable access to college preparation for Black and Latino males. The analysis of the distribution of quality schools demonstrates that across K–12 schools in New York City, Black and Latino students are disproportionately represented in schools rated C or lower, reducing these students’ chances for college readiness. Our assumption is that lower-rated schools maintain a “get to proficiency” agenda that focuses on basic drills for remediating skill development as opposed to acceleration and college preparation.

The pathways for those who eventually become regents earners diverge in elementary school. The mean performance of regents earners from fourth to eighth grade is thirty points higher than all other diploma types. The percentage of regents earners at critical curricular transition points (fourth, sixth, and eighth grade) at or above proficiency remains higher than all other diploma types. The lower percentage of Black and Latino students reaching proficiency between fourth and eighth grade, even among regents diploma earners, suggests that between the elementary and middle school years, both Latino and Black male students move in and out of proficiency. Such temporary skill acquisition is a typical outcome of remediation programs and/or instruction geared toward “getting students to proficiency” instead of mastery.

The emergent patterns among varying types of high school diploma earners demonstrate a gap between regents earners and everyone else. The gap exists in credit completion rates, course failure rates, and school transfer patterns—key indicators of being on track to graduate regardless of diploma type. Our analysis finds that the distribution of quality schools among Black and Latino students is constructing limited access and opportunity to college-readiness instruction from elementary to high school. Among Black and Latino males who earned a regents diploma (signaling college readiness), the pathways diverged as early as fourth grade. These patterns suggest that current school structure creates an inferior pathway to college readiness for those who are not high achievers early in their educational career. Based on this analysis, we propose the following policy recommendations:

*Ensure that an early warning system is in place for identifying students at risk of dropping out as early as sixth grade.* What appears from this analysis is the emergence and growth of risk over time. There is a clear need to identify students experiencing academic risk early. Possible strategies of identifying these students include monitoring regular atten-

dance and students experiencing continuous nonresponse to interventions. Coauthors Elaine Allensworth and John Easton (2007), for example, recommend targeting students who miss more than 10 percent of instructional time. By examining absences regularly during the first months of the term, school administrators could flag students in potential need of intervention within the first few months of school. Coupled with these systems, there is need for training of school staff in interpreting the findings of risk data and assigning appropriate strategies of intervention and prevention.

*Intensive academic intervention services.* It is important to have supplementary elementary, middle, and high school programs and other interventions that target students for remediation and social supports when they are demonstrating difficulties. One option for identifying appropriate interventions is the development of a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework (see Cunha et al. 2005).<sup>9</sup>

*Development and implementation of a thinking curriculum.* The concerns about Black and Latino males' exposure to college-ready schools includes a thinking curriculum. Researchers L. B. Resnick and L. E. Klopfer (1989) have argued that the curriculum and teaching should not focus on students becoming an encyclopedia of information, but rather it should provide them with exposure to the analytical behaviors necessary to enact such knowledge in real-world conditions. These analytical behaviors are expected in college and university settings. Thus we recommend schools examine and adopt curriculum and teaching practices that stress demonstration of knowledge in applied formats and the teaching of concepts not by isolated tasks but rather whole concepts. This requires professional development for teachers on how to be analytical themselves and to teach analytical skills.

*Identifying strategies for students already off track.* Identifying students at risk of dropping out is one thing—less clear is how to target effective interventions to students already off track, especially given the difficulty in catching up once a student falls behind. Our analysis suggests a need for policy initiatives focused on academic skill remediation and acceleration (specifically language arts, math, and science), credit recuperation, alternative school time options (for example, night school), and post-high school planning.

## APPENDIX

### Methodology

We conducted a statistical test of the relative influence of social demographics (ELL status, FRLP status, and special education status), achieve-

ment predictors (eighth-grade ELA and math scores), and high school on-track predictors (transferring at least once in high school, course failure rates, and ninth-grade credit completion) on the attainment of a regents diploma. Initially we examined the correlations of all independent variables in the model. Correlations were between small, moderately strong, to strong in both the positive and negative direction. Multicollinearity exists when independent variables are correlated at an absolute value of 0.9 and above; correlations therefore indicated that the data were suitably correlated with the dependent variable for examination through hierarchical multiple regression to be reliably undertaken. Regression procedures and results are summarized for each outcome tested in detail in the context of specific hypotheses. The same respondent demographic indicators were entered as control variables—special education status, ELL status, and FRLP status—across all regression analyses.

We first report on the descriptive analysis of the following variables: free/reduced lunch program status, English language learner status, special education status, mobility rate in middle and high school, ninth-grade credit completion, course failure rates, and English language arts and math scores. The intention of this descriptive analysis is to provide a conceptual understanding of when and how the Black and Latino males who attained a regents diploma in 2007 diverged from their peers.

### Regression Analysis

To understand the significance of the analysis, we conducted a statistical analysis to determine how certain variables predict the variation in why some students graduate with a regents diploma and others do not. The process of our linear regression involved a three-block analysis. Student demographics were entered in the first block. Eighth-grade English language arts and math standardized scores were entered in the second block, and ninth-grade course completion total and mobility rate in high school years were entered in the third block. The results, including individual variables for each measure, are presented in tables 4.5 and 4.6.

In table 4.5 the baseline model of demographic indicators for Latino males was found to be a significant predictor of earning a regents diploma, predicting 3.4 percent of the variance ( $p < 0.001$ ). Of the control variables it is important to note that special education status was a unique negative predictor of earning a regents diploma. When achievement predictors were added to the second step, it predicted an additional 22.1 percent ( $p < 0.001$ )

**Table 4.5** Hierarchical multiple regression of regents diploma earning: Latino males

	Dependent Measure		
	R <sup>2</sup> change	F-Value	Standardized $\beta$
Step 1. Control Variables			
Qualify for FRLP			-.002
Qualify for special education			-.022**
Qualify as ELL status			.003
R <sup>2</sup> change (baseline)	3.4%***	81.15	
Step 2. Achievement Predictors			
Eighth-grade ELA			.210***
Eighth-grade math			.126***
R <sup>2</sup> change	22.1%***	1037.83	
Step 3. On-track Predictors			
Transferred high school			-.065***
Ninth-grade course completion			.359***
R <sup>2</sup> change	10.7%***	558.31	
R <sup>2</sup> Total	36.1%***		

\* Correlation is significant < 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*\*\* Correlation is significant < 0.001 level (2-tailed).

of the variance. The addition of high school on-track predictors in the third step added 10.7 percent ( $p < 0.001$ ). The three-step model was determined to be the best predictor of earning a regents diploma, accounting for a third of the total variance ( $R^2 = 36.1$  percent,  $p < 0.001$ ). Of the unique predictors of earning a regents diploma, eighth-grade ELA score was a positive predictor ( $r_{sp}^2 = .21$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) along with eighth-grade math score ( $r_{sp}^2 = .12$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and ninth-grade credit completion ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while special education classification ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.022$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and transferring at least once during high school ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.065$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) uniquely predicted the inability to earn a regents diploma.

In table 4.6 the baseline model of demographic indicators for Black males was found to be a significant predictor of earning a regents diploma, predicting 6.2 percent of the variance ( $p < 0.001$ ). Of the control variables

**Table 4.6.** Hierarchical multiple regression of regents diploma earning: Black males

	Dependent Measure		
	R <sup>2</sup> change	F-Value	Standardized $\beta$
Step 1: Control Variables			
Qualify for FRLP			-.062***
Qualify for special education			-.235***
Qualify as ELL status			-.129
R <sup>2</sup> change (baseline)	6.2%***	62.18	
Step 2: Achievement Predictors			
Eighth-grade ELA			.267***
Eighth-grade math			.353***
R <sup>2</sup> change	28.5%***	301.72	
Step 3: On-track Predictors			
Transferred high school			-.128***
Ninth-grade course completion			.599***
R <sup>2</sup> change	23.1%***	554.07	
R <sup>2</sup> Total	57.6%***		

\* Correlation is significant < 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*\*\* Correlation is significant < 0.001 level (2-tailed).

it is important to note that special education and FRLP status was a unique negative predictor for earning a regents diploma. When achievement predictors were added to the second step, it predicted an additional 28.5 percent ( $p < 0.001$ ) of the variance. The addition of high school on-track predictors in the third step added 23.1 percent ( $p < 0.001$ ). The three-step model was determined to be the best predictor for earning a regents diploma, accounting for just more than a third of the total variance ( $R^2 = 57.6$  percent,  $p < 0.001$ ). Of the unique predictors for earning a regents diploma, eighth-grade ELA score was a positive predictor ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) along with eighth-grade math score ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and ninth-grade credit completion ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.59$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while special education classification ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and transferring at least once during high school ( $r_{sp}^2 = 0.128$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) uniquely predicted earning a regents diploma in a negative direction.

## NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter we use the terms Black and African American interchangeably. In New York City a significant number of Black students are of immigrant origin and therefore are technically not African American. However, we occasionally use the term African American for the purpose of making reference to national databases that are largely comprised of U.S.-born Black students.

2. Although graduation rates have risen in New York City from 49 percent to 72 percent since 2002, so too have the number of students required to take remedial courses when they enroll at CUNY.

3. One of the new initiatives undertaken by the Obama administration is the call for states to adopt core academic standards. Following the compilation of the core standards by a national panel of experts, financial incentives are being used to compel states to adopt the new standards. For an analysis of the new standards and the implications for state governments, see Sean Cavanagh, *Education Week*, September 29, 2009.

4. Since 2001, there have been more female than male students enrolled in college in every state in the United States. See U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey (CPS)*, October Supplement, 1974–2003.

5. Schools that were in development and initially charter schools did not receive progress report grades. Although charter schools did receive grades eventually, we were unable to include the schools in our analysis, as they do not appear in the dataset. Schools in development that did not receive progress report grades are excluded from that portion of the analysis.

6. Although the high school pattern only approaches statistical significance in 2007–08, schools with higher percentages of Black students are still found among schools receiving progress report grades of C and D.

7. We opted to examine math scale scores because the sixth-grade ELA scores contained an inconsistency in availability.

8. In New York State proficiency levels are scaled into four levels, 1–4. Levels 1 and 2 represent “below proficiency” and “reaching proficiency,” respectively. Level 3 represents “proficiency,” and level 4 represents “advanced proficiency.”

9. For evidence supporting early interventions, see more on the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, available online at <http://www.rti4success.org>.

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## ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS IN CALIFORNIA

### *Academic On-ramps or Exit Ramps for Black, Latino, and Southeast Asian Boys?*

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco and Milbrey McLaughlin

#### ABSTRACT

Continuation high schools and the students they serve are largely invisible to most Californians. Yet more than 115,000 California high school students pass through one of the state's 519 continuation high schools each year—a number that approaches almost 10 percent of all high school students. The law creating continuation schools—intended to meet the educational needs of overage and undercredited youth at risk of dropping out of school—contemplates more intensive services and accelerated credit accrual strategies so that students might have a renewed opportunity to graduate from high school. Based on a statewide study of these schools, however, we conclude that these schools, as a whole, are failing to provide the academic and support services students need to succeed.

Continuation schools are more racially or ethnically concentrated than the state's comprehensive high schools. Latino students comprise 55 percent of all students in continuation schools, and although African American enrollments in continuation schools approximate those of comprehensive schools statewide, they tend to be overrepresented in many districts. Also, boys outnumber girls in these alternative schools. This chapter explores the role that the state, counties, and districts play in affecting school quality and student outcomes in continuation schools. Also examined are the roles of community nonprofit and county or municipal social services, law enforcement, or juvenile justice agencies that come to play important actors in the lives of adolescents in these alternative schools. Finally, the authors reflect on the implications of their study for young boys of color and assess the school-level factors, as reported by principals and teachers, that appear

to be associated with better student achievement for this academically vulnerable group.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2007 a group of researchers at Stanford University, California State University at San Diego, and WestEd, a nonprofit research and development agency, launched a multiyear, in-depth study of alternative schools in California. The intent was to showcase the state's approximately 980 basically invisible alternative schools as an option for stemming the tide of high school dropouts.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, we focused on California's 525 continuation high schools, institutions serving overage and undercredited students. Continuation schools comprise the largest part of California's alternative-school system, both in terms of number of schools and annual enrollment. At this writing, researchers at Berkeley and Stanford continue data collection for a second wave of studies. Our focus has been on systemic issues (including relationships within schools and among districts and county authorities) and institutional determinants of effective instruction (that is, how work and time are conceived and organized in schools). Along the way we have interviewed hundreds of teachers and principals, and an equal number of students, the single largest group of whom are Latino males.

In this chapter we reflect on what these schools can tell us about interventions, with particular relevance for young black, Latino, and Asian boys at risk of dropping out of school.<sup>2</sup> We tread cautiously here because for most students who are not on track to graduate because of poor grades and insufficient credits, alternative schools remain simply early exit ramps from school.<sup>3</sup> But we have seen enough successful schools and students to report with confidence that despite disappointing overall results, these schools *can* provide important opportunities and resources for a vulnerable population of youth. Many continuation high schools in California are in fact successful on-ramps for reengaging youth back into school and onto a path to a high school diploma. All schools, including most traditional high schools, can learn much from the experience of educators and students in these alternative schools.

## BACKGROUND

This chapter draws on survey results and state administrative data reviewed by staff at WestEd and described in a supporting technical report (see

Austin et al. 2008). We also draw on technical reports that describe results from field research undertaken during the winter and spring of 2007 in nine southern, central, and northern California counties (see McLaughlin, Atukpawu, and Williamson 2008; Ruiz de Velasco 2008; and Perez and Johnson 2008).<sup>4</sup> Within these counties researchers visited twenty-six school districts and forty schools (including thirty-seven continuation schools and three traditional high schools that refer students to continuation programs) that differed in focus, student outcomes, size, and metropolitan status. Researchers interviewed individuals associated with county and community youth-serving agencies, including juvenile justice, mental health, child protective services, and foster care. The size, scope, and legislative design of the continuation high school program make clear that these schools are a cornerstone of the state's dropout prevention strategy.

### **Attendance at California's Continuation High Schools**

Originally designed in the early twentieth century to provide a flexible schedule for working students, the modern continuation school now serves a diverse student population. The single common denominator is that most continuation students have reached age sixteen without sufficient academic credits to graduate with their age cohort; the data also reveal continuation students to be a highly vulnerable population characterized by multiple risk behaviors and other nonacademic school engagement barriers, such as unstable home settings or involvement with youth gangs or the juvenile justice system. It is important to note that enrollment in California's continuation high schools is voluntary, so it is safe to assume that most of these students, despite the academic and social challenges they face, are still seeking a regular high school diploma and are looking for ways to stay connected to school.

*Race and ethnicity.* If you are looking for young boys of color, you will find them in California's continuation schools. Latino students are especially overrepresented, comprising 55 percent of all students in continuation schools and 61.4 percent of enrollments in schools we visited, compared with 42.3 percent of the eleventh-grade enrollment in traditional comprehensive schools statewide.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, non-Hispanic white and Asian students are underrepresented relative to eleventh-grade enrollments in comprehensive high schools.

As shown in table 5.1, African American enrollments in continuation schools approximate those of comprehensive high schools statewide; however, African Americans were overrepresented in the urban and rural



**Table 5.1** Continuation student enrollment, by race and ethnicity, 2006–07

	Site visit schools (37)	Statewide continuation-school enrollment	Statewide eleventh-grade enrollment
Hispanic	61.4%	55%	42.3%
White	17.5	26	34.3
Asian	7.0	3	12.2
African American	14.1	11	8.0

SOURCE: California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), California Department of Education, 2006–07.

schools we visited. For example, we visited thirteen continuation schools situated in districts where African American students comprised 10 percent or more of total districtwide enrollment. We found that almost half of these continuation schools (six of thirteen) had African American student enrollments that exceeded districtwide averages by 50 percent or more. Black and Latino students make up about half of the eleventh-grade population in the state, but they make up a full two-thirds of enrollment in continuation high schools.

Some important regional differences are noteworthy: American Indian students were the single largest minority group (averaging 14.29 percent of enrollment) across the four Humboldt County schools we visited.<sup>6</sup> And, on average, although Asian students are notably underrepresented in these schools, they exceeded 10 percent of enrollment in the Central Valley schools. The Asian students we met at these schools were overwhelmingly drawn from Southeast Asian groups (principally youth of Hmong or Cambodian origin). Their teachers report that these students come from low-income families with low levels of parental formal education.

*Gender.* Boys, especially black and Latino, are overrepresented in continuation schools. Statewide, boys and girls are evenly enrolled (50 percent to 50 percent) in the eleventh grade. In continuation schools, however, boys outnumber girls 58 percent to 42 percent. Behavioral differences among boys (for example, greater rates of referral for chronic insubordination, aggressive behavior, suspected gang affiliation, and truancy) are the reasons most often cited by continuation-school staff for the gender imbalance. In interviews at some rural schools teachers and counselors mentioned what they perceive to be a considerable (but never counted) number of “sensitive” or “sexually confused” boys who are counseled into continuation schools or whose “perceived homosexuality” made them the target

of intimidation or bullying by peers in the sending schools. Remarkably, the schools' response in these cases was most often to separate the victimized boy from the traditional school and to make a "protective" referral to the continuation high school—a questionable practice given the starkly more limited academic options available in continuation schools. These unconfirmed reports indicate a need for more careful study of school referral practices generally, as well as of the specific experiences of gay, lesbian, and questioning youth—particularly in rural communities with few community resources to support them.

*English language learners.* Students classified as English language learners (ELL) are also overrepresented in continuation high schools. Enrollment of English learners in the eleventh grade is 14 percent statewide but is about 21.3 percent in continuation schools statewide. In the continuation schools we visited (which included a large number of high-growth Hispanic communities in Fresno, San Joaquin, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties), more than a quarter of the students (25.6 percent) were classified as ELL. Spanish was the home language of about 75 percent or more of the ELL students in our sample; some Central Valley schools also enrolled sizable numbers of Hmong- and Cambodian-origin ELL students.

### **Social Context and Behavioral Issues**

There are often other factors at play for students attending continuation schools, including living and family arrangements, student mobility, alcohol and other substance use, and violence and victimization issues.

*Living and family arrangements.* Continuation students surveyed on the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) are three times more likely than students surveyed in comprehensive high schools to be in foster care or living with a relative other than a parent (11 percent versus 4 percent for eleventh-graders in the statewide survey).<sup>7</sup> WestEd researchers found that all students in the CHKS sample who reported living in transitory arrangements (for example, in a shelter, on the street, in a car or van) were in a continuation school or in a community day school (for expelled students) (see Austin et al. 2008).

*Student mobility.* Compared with students in comprehensive schools, continuation students are more likely to move from school to school. As a result, they spend less time in any one school. Increased mobility is often the result of frequent family or guardian moves, or changes in a student's foster home placements. Between 2004 and 2006, 17 percent of continuation students surveyed on the CHKS reported changing where they lived

two or more times in the past year, compared with 7 percent of eleventh-graders (almost 2.5 times higher). Fewer than half (47 percent) of continuation students reported being enrolled in their continuation school more than ninety days. This lack of stability increases the academic disengagement of an already challenged student population and often hampers a school's ability to help these students (Austin et al. 2008). Our site visits further confirmed the link between family dislocation and student mobility. Students in economically fragile or otherwise socially unstable home environments tend to move frequently as their parents or guardians seek jobs and affordable housing. Teachers report that the undocumented status of many students' parents keeps their families moving as they seek seasonal work, often in informal job markets such as short-term domestic or itinerant labor.

*Alcohol and other substance use.* Our WestEd colleagues found that rates of regular and heavy alcohol and drug use (including use at school) are at least two times higher among continuation students than eleventh-grade students in comprehensive schools. For example, methamphetamine use and daily marijuana use are about five times higher among continuation students than eleventh-grade students in traditional schools. Continuation students also reported almost twice the rate of illegal drug use-related problems and dependency indicators (such as frequent and high levels of alcohol consumption) than eleventh graders overall. Especially disconcerting is the high rate of substance use at school. Almost one-fifth of continuation students had been drunk or high at school on seven or more occasions during the school year, more than three times the reported rate among eleventh graders surveyed on the CHKS statewide (24 percent versus 7 percent). They are at least three times more likely than eleventh graders in comprehensive schools to report that alcohol or other drug use causes them to get into trouble and that it interferes with such activities as studying. When the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) asked continuation-school staff to rate how severe a problem each of fourteen student behaviors was in their school, three of the four most-selected problems were drug use, tobacco use, and alcohol use, in that order (truancy was the fourth). These percentages were markedly higher than among students at traditional comprehensive high schools (Austin et al. 2008).

*Violence and victimization.* Continuation students are about three times more likely than eleventh graders statewide to have been in four or more physical fights at school in the course of a year, as well as to have carried a gun to school (13 percent for both versus 3 to 4 percent for eleventh graders in comprehensive schools), according to the CHKS. Similarly, 14

percent of continuation students report membership in youth gangs, twice the percentage of eleventh graders statewide (7 percent). Continuation students are also more likely to be physically victimized in and out of school. Nine percent report being threatened or injured with a weapon more than once, more than double the rate of eleventh graders statewide (4 percent). Rates of reported violent conflict with peers were also higher among continuation students. They are twice as likely as eleventh graders statewide to report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past twelve months (14 percent versus 7 percent) (*ibid.*).

These data illustrate the complexity of the challenges faced by continuation schools and their students. They are highly vulnerable youth with multiple risk factors and a great deal of turbulence in their lives. Educators in continuation schools struggle to provide alternative ways of helping them to remain in school, accelerate credit accumulation, and meet district and state performance standards for high school graduation. But schools' efforts to support academic advancement cannot be separated from the need to address the high level of nonacademic learning barriers that continuation students experience. The data underscore the need for highly skilled educators who can combine instructional content knowledge with a deep understanding of youth development and training to support their work with behaviorally and emotionally challenged adolescents—a profile we would want for all teachers but that is essential for teachers in alternative settings.

### **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN CONTINUATION SCHOOLS**

Statewide data on continuation students' academic performance is scant and limited to performance on state accountability examinations, administered by grade level, and to numbers of students passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which is first administered to students in the ninth grade. It is unsurprising that continuation students score substantially lower on nearly all measures of academic performance compared with their grade-equivalent cohorts in comprehensive high schools. First-time CAHSEE-takers in continuation schools also score significantly lower on the exit exam than their peers in traditional comprehensive high schools.

Among repeat CAHSEE test-takers in eleventh and twelfth grades, however, comprehensive high school pass rates are close to or identical to those of students at continuation schools.<sup>8</sup> This performance pattern

reflects the fact that a smaller, more academically deficient subgroup of comprehensive school students—a subgroup academically more like continuation students—is retaking the exam at grades 11 and 12. This observation suggests that when roughly comparable students are examined, continuation schools may be doing at least as well at helping students succeed on the high school exit exam as are comprehensive high schools. In fact, several continuation schools we visited boasted better CAHSEE pass rates and high school graduation rates than did their respective sending schools. Although closer examination and better data are needed, these findings suggest a measure of success given the greater documented behavioral and emotional challenges of students in these continuation settings.

So what makes the difference in a continuation school? State-level policy considerations as well as school-level practices are associated with higher-performing alternative schools. We examine these next.

### **State-level Policy Considerations**

In our previous reports we have emphasized state- and school-district level factors that affect schoolwide performance.<sup>9</sup> Interviews with school leaders and teachers provide two consistent and overarching concerns about state policy as it influences their work with overage, undercredited youth. First, school principals frequently reported that the 1999 application of universal state student performance and curriculum standards for all schools posed new challenges for continuation schools. This spurred them to think more creatively about how they staff their schools and how they approach instruction. However, school principals noted that the current accountability system focuses on increasing the percentage of students who meet or exceed specific performance levels on state assessments. This policy encourages educators to focus their attention on students who fall just below the cut-off score and so are most likely to make gains that would lift overall school academic performance indicators. This focus on students near the cut-off-score “bubble” provides little incentive for teachers to focus on students scoring in the lowest range—that is, most continuation-school students. Continuation high school educators would prefer an accountability system that focused more on student progress over time and that attends to the progress of all students across the performance continuum as well as to students in specific racial and language subgroups.<sup>10</sup>

Second, school staff report little recognition in state finance policy of the special challenges to effective instruction and academic engagement in continuation high schools. This constraint is particularly important in

California, where state- and federally controlled dollars account for more than 90 percent of local school finances (EdSource 2006). State rules also limit continuation schools to reimbursement for a maximum of fifteen instruction hours a week (about four periods per school day), regardless of actual additional programming or attendance rates (California Education Code section 46170). Principals and teachers in the continuation high schools we visited report that they are charged with doing more in less time with roughly the same resources per student as all other schools. They say that this aspect of state policy leaves them ill-equipped to meet student needs and is ultimately one of the most frustrating and unfair constraints with which they must contend.

Although educators and policymakers universally acknowledge the particular value of small classes and low student-teacher ratios in alternative settings, many continuation schools receive no additional funding to support the required staffing. More than a third of the continuation high schools we visited have class sizes that are only marginally better than the districtwide averages (class sizes equal to, or greater than, twenty to one) and no special counseling or vocational education support. Moreover, a third of the schools we visited had student-teacher ratios (based on full-time equivalent [FTE] staffing) that actually *exceeded* the average student-teacher ratio for comprehensive high schools in their districts.<sup>11</sup>

Continuation schools usually have enrollment sufficient to hire at least one part-time academic counselor, but most schools we visited did not have enough funding to support a librarian, nurse, or dedicated attendance officer. None reported hiring staff specializing in English language development instruction, despite the fact that almost half the schools we visited had enrollments of 25 percent or more ELL. Schools enrolling fewer than two hundred students generally are staffed with only a principal, one or two clerical aides, and a part-time counselor (who is often shared with another school or program). The only departure from traditional school staffing structure is the somewhat lower student-teacher ratio and even that depends on district support and commitment to alternative instruction.

### **Implications for State Policy**

To expand the number of “beating-the-odds” schools, the state needs to fund these schools according to a formula that realistically reflects the instructional and academic engagement challenges such schools face. Interviews with school and district officials who are finding the resources to supplement the state formulas at continuation schools suggest that the

cost differential might not be great (and might be less) relative to the return on investment in terms of reduced dropout rates and successful transitions to postsecondary education and employment. Additional cost savings would be realized through reductions in youth incarceration rates or other contact with the juvenile justice system.

The key unfunded items are generally a full day of instruction (continuation high schools are funded only for a half-day of instruction) and supplemental funds for support staff and services related to the vulnerable status of enrolled students.<sup>12</sup> Most pressing is the need for staff trained in social work or psychological services, full-time academic/vocational counselors, and dedicated attendance officers who can work with youth and their families to address absenteeism or tardiness issues. The current staffing system reflects the “horizontal equity” of a per-pupil funding system that assumes all students ought to be funded equally. However, students placed in continuation schools usually present great academic and behavioral challenges to school staff. Students in these settings are also more likely than peers in comprehensive schools to be pregnant, parenting small children, or working part time. Keeping these students engaged in school and supporting their academic needs while enabling them to shoulder family responsibilities also requires special support. We observed that unless a school principal makes a concerted effort to acquire these additional resources from sources outside his or her district, student needs often go unmet by alternative programs with limited staff.

### **School-level Practices Associated with Higher-performing Alternative Schools**

The importance of key leaders’ and teachers’ beliefs and values is vital at higher-performing alternative schools. Principals in schools with evidence of exemplary student outcomes (particularly CAHSEE pass rates and credit-accumulation rates) were often emphatically positive about what they believed their students could accomplish and about the school’s role in facilitating those outcomes. When experienced principals were clear and proactive about their beliefs, the faculty and students echoed their sentiments. Teachers whose principals articulated clear expectations about standards and student outcomes felt empowered and played a significant role in encouraging less-motivated colleagues to try new strategies to engage and support their students.

Our WestEd colleagues reviewed data from the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) indicating that continuation-school staff are more

likely than comprehensive-school staff to describe their schools as positive, caring, and safe learning environments that promote—and have high expectations for—students’ academic success. CSCS data associated higher scores on standardized tests with staff reports of student behaviors that facilitate learning (such as being healthy, alert, ready to learn, and well-behaved) and low levels of substance use as a problem at the school. This observation highlights how closely connected academic and nonacademic factors are in these schools. Prevention and health practitioners surveyed by the CSCS also tended to report that continuation schools have higher levels of support and services than do staff at comprehensive schools to address the nonacademic needs of students. These survey data suggest a strong commitment among high school continuation staff to meeting both the academic and nonacademic needs of their students.

Attention to student academic and social engagement is also a necessary factor in effective instruction. Students are affected by the attitudes and beliefs of their teachers and school leaders. In focus groups students were unequivocal about the effect that teachers’ positive attitudes and high expectations had on their motivation to engage and learn. Some of the black and Latino youth expressed genuine surprise at their own apparent transformation into “good students,” since they had previously experienced only failure. Most students underscored the importance of the extra help and time they received to accomplish work in these settings. Most also emphasized that their teachers and the principal regarded them as “teachable” and having a positive future—and this belief in their potential and value made all the difference to students. These communicated beliefs about student “teachability” and promise take on heightened importance where accountability systems are not in place to ensure a basic minimum level of quality in critical aspects of school operations and instruction.

Likewise, WestEd’s review of data from the CHKS and CSCS identified additional key factors that might account for better performance in some continuation schools. These include student perceptions about how connected they felt to the school, school safety, the presence of caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation in their schools (Austin et al. 2008).

### **Implications for Local Practice**

Social supports for vulnerable students are critical to student success. Schools we visited that had strong school-completion outcomes tended to move beyond core academic supports (for example, individual tutoring, which



is at least formally a common feature of alternative schools) to social and emotional supports through psychological counseling and to adult-student interactions that communicated caring. Principals in these schools hired at least a part-time social worker as well as staff with vocational-education experience or credentials; principals also focused their office clerks on attendance issues and parent contact. Providing these additional supports is difficult for smaller schools because of their lean staffing structure, so they depend on developing relationships with agencies and individual volunteers outside the system. These schools were also the most likely to obtain school volunteers with professional backgrounds in social services or to partner with social services agencies to offer on-site support to students.

School-discipline policies in the high-performing alternative schools we visited were generally nonauthoritarian. Principals often described themselves as coaches (and many actually held coaching jobs previously). Consequently, these school leaders encourage faculty and students to conceive of themselves as members of a “team.” In some schools leaders’ efforts to have students and faculty conceive of themselves as part of a “family” with shared responsibility for maintaining academic focus and order in the school reflected a similar philosophy. In such settings students are encouraged to monitor their own behavior by understanding the implications of individual behavior to both group and individual success. In fact, many students and teachers in these schools commented that the school “felt like a family,” where care and personal concern are modeled by the staff and where students are encouraged to care for and celebrate each other’s social and academic development. More than one teacher commented that “these students don’t get much support at home” and the school furnished the family-like encouragement and “tough love” fundamental to their success.

The continuation high schools we visited generally took a “restorative” rather than punitive stance toward disciplinary issues—they sought to understand and respond to the reasons underlying students’ behaviors. These schools focus on direct instruction in positive behaviors, including self-discipline, problem-solving skills, and the development of nurturing relationships. Because many students tell teachers that they have experienced discipline in other schools (or in the hands of the police) as arbitrary and unjust, teachers and principals in these schools are explicit about establishing positive norms and clear expectations for behavior. Teachers enforce consistent disciplinary actions tied to the nature of any infraction. Some teachers offer students skills and strategies for appealing the school’s disciplinary rules and decisions in constructive and socially appropriate ways.

Many schools we visited are in communities where youth gang activi-

ties compete with families and schools to provide students with a sense of belonging. Teachers in high-performing schools did not describe formal “antigang” initiatives, but instead insisted that their own personal effort to gain the trust of students was their most effective strategy for reorienting gang-involved students. They made a point of asking students about what was going on in their home and personal lives, and tried to help them reflect on their context and challenges in ways that engender trust in their teachers and school professionals. High-performing continuation schools report that young black and Latino boys who formed positive relationships with their peers or with the adults in the school are less likely to engage in aggressive behavior in school or to maintain affiliations with gangs. Teachers and principals in high-performing schools note that developing student trust requires that students be given concrete opportunities to contribute in some positive way to the life of the school, their communities, or their peers. Many schools are therefore intentional about engaging students as peer counselors, creating peer discipline “courts,” or by arranging for volunteer opportunities in the school and community, and recognizing them for their prosocial behaviors and contributions.

While some students come to school goal-oriented and ready to learn, others need educators to step in and build the trusting relationships and links to their lives that may engage them in school. Teachers at continuation high schools say that this is a central task for every teacher with every student. Indeed, some report that it may take weeks or months of intensive intervention by school staff before new students “buy in” and begin to really engage with the work. As one teacher reported: “I think the number one thing that’s really important is developing relationships with these kids and . . . [developing] trust. Because I think that when that happens, there’s a lot of acceptance . . . they’re willing to buy in with you about where you’re trying to take them.”

Building college and career knowledge among boys of color from low-income families is also key. It’s important to create intentional partnerships and pathways beyond the school. Black and Latino boys have the lowest college-going rates among all racial and gender subgroups. We found that leaders of particularly effective continuation high schools are purposeful about forming partnerships with external institutions including community colleges, regional occupational programs, and local employers. These partnerships provide students with postsecondary pathways to academic growth and self-sufficiency, along with the resources to help them get there. Interviews with teachers and counselors indicate that even boys who are motivated to stay in school are woefully misinformed about the academic

and social preparation needed to navigate the transition to college and to succeed there.

Where we found strong continuation programs, we usually also found well-designed partnerships with local community colleges. Teachers and counselors in continuation schools worked with area community colleges to develop programs of study as well as opportunities for their students to visit the campus and sit in on classes. Advisers from community colleges visit the continuation high school to tell students about the local program and to explain opportunities for financial aid, admissions procedures, and academic prerequisites.

Several continuation-school administrators actively cultivate relationships with local businesses to provide jobs for students as well as opportunities for credit-bearing internships. Others develop relationships with a number of community agencies that provide youth services and multiple opportunities for community service. Several continuation schools rely on relationships with county mental-health agencies or community-based mental-health programs to provide drug and alcohol treatment, and on partnerships with probation agencies to offer informational talks and collaborate on internships or job placements for students on probation.

In the schools we visited, these partnerships were of a distinctly local flavor, differed in form and intensity, and always added critical resources to support teachers and their students. Schools that were intentional about building these connections helped students to see the relationship among their education, opportunities in their local communities, and positive pathways. These connections helped students to reimagine themselves, their potential, and their futures. Teachers and principals also reported that these connections helped to build public support and understanding in their communities about alternative schools and the students they serve. The benefits are especially important for black and Latino boys in communities with high gang-activity rates, as contact with academically motivated students helps local merchants and businessmen see young men and boys of color in a positive light. Schools lacking these partnerships and connections are, by comparison, at a significant disadvantage in their efforts to meet students' needs.

### **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

In describing the process of developing a supportive, quality program at their schools, almost all high-performing continuation high school principals emphasized that there was no road map or professional training

to inform their efforts. Nearly all described a process of experimental implementation over a long period of time, guided and driven by their own instincts and positive goals for their students. An important take-away for us has been that many principals saw themselves as pioneers at their schools, with few external models to guide critical aspects of their school design and reform. Despite these principals' often-lonely efforts, the policy goal of a "continuum of care" remains particularly elusive for young men and boys of color and other at-risk students in alternative programs. Instead, for too many youth, opportunities to connect with school, to imagine hopeful futures, and to set out on a positive pathway are lost when schools do not or cannot respond to their needs—and do not offer them a genuine alternative. Educators working in alternative programs suffer as well when county, municipal, or community-based youth services fail to support their efforts, when the resources offered to them are limited or of poor quality, and when they are afforded little professional respect.

Many vulnerable youth are caught in the middle, wanting a different course for themselves, but not finding the support or hand holding that would enable them to change direction. Although we observed alternative programs across the state that do provide effective opportunities for this population, they were unfortunately the exception. The exceptions remind us that we can do better.

## NOTES

1. The California Department of Education reported 974 alternative schools in the 2008–09 school year, of which 525 are continuation high schools, and 449 are community schools or district or county community day schools. In addition, 71 are juvenile court schools under the jurisdictions of the Department of Corrections' Division of Juvenile Justice. Currently, California's high school graduation rate hovers at about 80 percent. See information from the California Dropout Research Project for a full discussion of dropout rates and consequences in California, available online at <http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/>.

2. "Asian students" includes students who self-describe as Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander.

3. See Susan Rotermund, "Alternative Education Enrollment and Dropouts in California High Schools," University of California, Santa Barbara, October 2007, revised December 2007; available online at [http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs\\_statbriefs.htm](http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs_statbriefs.htm). Rotermund has estimated that about one-third of all California high school dropouts in the 2005–06 school year were last enrolled in an alternative school. Continuation schools enroll the greatest number of students among alternative school options examined in her study.

4. Counties in the study include Humboldt, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Joaquin, Fresno, San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

5. We chose the eleventh grade (2006–07) from the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) for comparison as representing the most comparable age cohort to students in continuation schools. This is also the comparison grade when using survey data from the California Health Kids Survey (CHKS).

6. Humboldt County is a largely rural region on the northern coast of California, near the border with Oregon. Humboldt County has eight Native Indian reservations lying within its borders.

7. The CHKS 2004–06 was administered to students in more than nine hundred California school districts. It includes data on 364 continuation high schools (70 percent of the total) and was completed by about twenty-three thousand continuation students.

8. English language arts pass rates on the CAHSEE are identical for continuation and comprehensive schools in the eleventh (31 percent) and twelfth (24 percent) grades. Continuation-school pass rates for math are only slightly lower: 25 percent versus 31 percent in grade 11, and 22 percent versus 26 percent in grade 12.

9. See the references for our publications.

10. This change to federal school accountability measures recently supported by the Obama administration bears watching. See “Blueprint for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,” available online at <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03152010.html>.

11. The California Department of Education and the California Continuing Education Association recommend student-teacher ratios be no more than one to fifteen in continuation schools. Only about a quarter of the thirty-six schools in our sample meet this target.

12. Continuation schools are funded for only a partial day, on the outdated assumption that most students in continuation schools work part time. The schools in fact collect no data on whether students work, and our informal interviews with students and teachers indicate that only a handful of students in these schools hold jobs.

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## **BEYOND ZERO TOLERANCE**

*Creating More Inclusive Schools by Improving Neighborhood Conditions, Attacking Racial Bias, and Reducing Inequality*

Susan Eaton

### **ABSTRACT**

Policy makers, education experts, and advocates will likely have more opportunity in the coming years to advance alternatives to harsh, exclusionary school discipline policies. These policies and practices, created in the context of increasingly punitive crime policies for adults, have resulted in the suspension and expulsion of students at record rates—and of males of color at highly disproportionate rates. Effective remedies would respond directly to the social conditions outside of schools, such as neighborhood violence and concentrated poverty, that give rise to disruptive behavior and chaotic environments which engender policies that seek to control and exclude students. Eliminating racial disparities in school discipline also requires helping educators recognize and actively respond to the racial bias they may unconsciously be acting upon as they make discipline-related decisions.

Any lasting remedy to what is commonly termed “zero tolerance” requires application of knowledge from a range of diverse fields. This includes epidemiology, child development, health, and social psychology. Harsh discipline is only one variable among many that deprive boys and young men of color of opportunities to learn, to finish school, and to fulfill their potentials. Reducing suspension and expulsion rates will not solve the multidimensional crisis facing so many young men and boys of color, especially those who live in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage. Still, drawing attention to the causes of and potential cures for exclusionary discipline brings to light the larger structures of inequality. Rethinking school discipline policy is a concrete, manageable way for educators and

the communities they serve to untangle and begin to dismantle complex opportunity-limiting structures. “Zero tolerance” is both a symptom of those larger forces and an independent generator of inequality.

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## INTRODUCTION

A century and a half ago, the nation’s founder of public education, Horace Mann, articulated a grand, moral purpose for our nation’s schools. “Education,” he said, “beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of social machinery.”<sup>1</sup> Mann was perhaps overly optimistic about the degree of influence public schools, let alone any institution, could wield in a society as complex as the United States. That being said, a look inside schools in the country’s most distressed communities reveals an embarrassingly vast distance between Mann’s hopes and contemporary reality. The racially segregated, high-poverty schools that the majority of students of color in the United States attend do not equalize chances for social mobility and for fulfilling one’s potential. Quite often, such schools intensify inequality.<sup>2</sup> The best example of this phenomenon is probably not that widely lamented test-score gap, whose convergences and divergences hinge on limitless variables apart from schools. Rather, it is the less well-known though increasingly notorious “zero-tolerance” discipline policies and practices that are the most conspicuous school-based engines of inequality. For the purposes of this chapter, the term “zero tolerance” is shorthand for mandatory, uniform punishments that suspend and expel or push out rule-breaking students of all races at now-record rates and students of color at highly disproportionate rates.

Harsh discipline is merely one negative force among many that deprive boys and young men of color of opportunities to learn and stay in school. Harsh discipline therefore leads to poor life chances. Reducing suspension and expulsion rates will not solve the multidimensional crisis facing so many young men and boys of color. However, drawing attention to the causes of and potential cures for exclusionary discipline offers a concrete, manageable way for educators and the communities they serve to begin to untangle—and perhaps dismantle—the more complex, often obscured opportunity-limiting structures of which school discipline is but one small part. Developing new discipline practices and policies that are explicitly designed to “equalize” and “educate” and “develop members and citizens” is essential to reversing the negative effects of exclusionary policies.

Teachers and principals, parents and students must articulate what those virtues look like, not merely in school discipline codes but in inter-related areas—including public safety, after-school activities, health, and economics. School discipline may prove a particularly promising way to enter those discussions, if only because educators and advocates across the nation have in recent years demonstrated that they can reduce suspension and expulsion rates and, in turn, create healthier school climates. Because of a research consensus about how harmful zero-tolerance policies are, as well as an abundance of proven commonsense alternatives, eliminating zero tolerance and replacing it with practices and policies that are congruous with the goal of education is at least one practical way for schools—and by extension, their larger communities—to shine a light on inequalities both in and outside of classrooms and become healthier, more opportunity-rich places.

### **Zero Tolerance in Context: Where We Are and How We Got Here**

About 7 percent of all public school children were suspended from school in 2006, more than double the rate suspended in the 1970s. Fifteen percent of all black children, 7 percent of Latino children, and 5 percent of white children were suspended in 2006. Smaller shares of students were expelled that year: 0.5 percent of all black students, 0.2 percent of Latino students, and 0.1 percent of white students.<sup>3</sup>

Since the late 1990s, public tax dollars have paid for more and more surveillance apparatus in classrooms, corridors, and lunchrooms and on playgrounds. This includes metal detectors, Tasers, surveillance cameras, canine units, and biometric hand readers.<sup>4</sup> Today, police roam the halls of many of our public schools and routinely arrest students there for offenses that range from disturbing the peace (shouting during a school assembly) to malicious destruction of property (doodling on a desk) to assault and battery (a schoolyard fight).<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles, New York, and many other cities have their own school police departments.<sup>6</sup> According to the National Association of School Resource Officers (SRO is the acronym given to police who work in schools), school-based policing is the “fastest growing area of law enforcement.”<sup>7</sup>

In the last decade, educators, civil rights lawyers, civil libertarians, parents, and students have moved “zero tolerance” to the center of educational policy discussions. This effort was helped by widespread media coverage. News reports chronicled absurdities perpetrated by overzealous bureau-



crats. In Florida teachers called in police who handcuffed a five-year-old black girl who had reportedly been disruptive in class. (A video of the girl wailing while handcuffed, made the rounds on YouTube).<sup>8</sup> Administrators in Colorado expelled a ten-year-old girl whose mother had packed a kitchen knife in her lunch box so that her daughter could cut up an apple.<sup>9</sup> (The girl was expelled even though she had turned in the “weapon” to her teacher.) A kindergartener in Virginia brought in a beeper from home, showed it to a classmate during a field trip, and was suspended. In February 2010 educators in Queens, New York, hauled a twelve-year-old girl from her grade classroom for doodling on a desk with erasable pen.<sup>10</sup> Beyond the anecdotes, though, the sharpest and most consistent criticism, and one borne out by research, is that suspension and expulsion trigger a vicious cycle by further alienating the most vulnerable children from school, pushing disillusioned youngsters into the streets and then onto a track leading to jail.<sup>11</sup> Hence the evocative “school-to-prison pipeline” metaphor.

Not only do suspension and expulsion rob students of instructional time and endanger their academic performance in the short term, but a strong association between being suspended or expelled and dropping out of school has been documented by well-controlled research studies.<sup>12</sup> Dropping out, it is well established, is strongly associated with involvement in the criminal justice system and incarceration. Some studies suggest a direct association between suspension/expulsion and incarceration.<sup>13</sup> But the direct link between suspension/expulsion and dropping out is better established. One study in Texas, for example, found that students with a history of school-rule infractions were 23 percent more likely than students without such history to get caught up in the criminal justice system. Suspension and expulsion were the strongest predictors of future involvement in the criminal justice system.<sup>14</sup>

In the past several years something rare in social policy has emerged: a consensus. Even the notably neutral American Psychological Association (APA) has weighed in on harms of zero-tolerance policies. In 2006 a task force of APA-appointed researchers published a review of school-discipline research and concluded that so-called zero-tolerance punishments such as expulsion and suspension achieve the opposite of their intent. “School suspension in general,” the APA study reads, “appears to predict higher future rates of misbehavior and suspension among those students who are suspended” and that “zero tolerance has not been shown to improve school climate or school safety.”<sup>15</sup> Although it might seem logical that more police and security gadgetry will make a building more secure and make students feel safer, research indicates that the opposite is true. Researchers

found that a school's reliance on metal detectors, surveillance cameras, and locker searches actually increases the risk of disorder by contributing to a climate in which students and adults do not trust each other.<sup>16</sup>

The APA task force concluded that the mere existence of zero-tolerance policies contributes to incarceration by encouraging educators to turn to the juvenile justice system to settle minor disciplinary matters. African American males are most likely to be ensnared in the zero-tolerance net, just as African American men are most likely to populate U.S. prisons. The APA study notes racial disparities but also stresses the inclination of educators to punish students of color, particularly African American males, more harshly than whites for similar offenses.<sup>17</sup>

### **PUBLIC POLICY PROGRESS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCATES**

Three research findings about the futility and negative effects of zero tolerance, coupled with the work of a wide range of advocates who coordinate action with community-based organizations, seem to be changing public policy and school practices that rely on suspension and expulsion. The Obama administration's competitive education grant program, *Race to the Top*, includes money for programs that improve school climate. This explicitly includes new approaches to school discipline. In its guidelines the administration endorses a popular alternative to zero tolerance, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which actively guides a student body toward behaviors that lead to conducive, supporting learning environments. One of PBIS's goals is to reduce reliance on suspensions and expulsions.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, advocates point to the many local districts where educators have established alternatives to zero tolerance, often after students, parents, or lawyers have brought the harms of harsh disciplinary practice to light.<sup>19</sup>

Policymakers, educational experts, and a range of advocates will likely have increasing opportunities to construct and advance alternatives to harsh, exclusionary school discipline policies. But the next step will require that zero-tolerance critics not get trapped inside a simplistic punishment frame. The growing disenchantment with zero tolerance is attributable at least in part to a sensational media culture that embraces simplistic narratives about "bad guys" (in this case, overzealous educators) and "good guys" (wailing handcuffed kindergarteners). In many instances lawyers and litigation have uncovered the proliferation and attendant harms of zero-tolerance policies. Populist media coverage and litigation have proven

to be useful tools and useful threats for school officials who don't respond to moral arguments or to research findings about the harm of zero tolerance. Undoubtedly, many teachers, principals, and school superintendents deserve the harsh legal spotlight and growing disdain among experts and advocates about zero-tolerance policies. But fashioning a lasting remedy to zero tolerance that educators can embrace will require educating and assisting school personnel rather than punishing them. This is particularly true of teachers and administrators who work in schools where school climates are inimical to learning.

Creating alternatives would incorporate knowledge from diverse fields *outside* of education, including epidemiology, child development, public health, and psychology. Any remedy would respond directly to the social conditions outside of schools that tend to give rise to disruptive behavior and chaotic environments and that contribute to construction of prison-like schools that aspire to control student behavior through deterrents and threats. Raising awareness about racial disproportions in school discipline is a way to open educators' eyes to recognize and actively respond to racial biases that might contribute to the construction of the school-to-prison pipeline.

### **HOW HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS ARE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SCHOOLS**

This chapter focuses on the daunting discipline-related challenges found in high-poverty schools, where 64 percent of African American and 63 percent of Latino students in the United States were enrolled in 2007.<sup>20</sup> Because both residential and school segregation are on the rise in the United States, focusing on these schools is vital to improving life chances for boys and young men of color.<sup>21</sup> Without policies and actions to reverse this segregation trend, the share of students of color in such schools will likely increase. Meanwhile, the decline in concentrated poverty documented in the 1990s, when the U.S. economy was booming, has reversed; growing numbers of people are now living in high-poverty neighborhoods.<sup>22</sup> Conditions such as neighborhood violence and family instability also weigh on schools and potentially contribute to behavior challenges.

Teachers in high-poverty schools that enroll mostly students of color are more likely than teachers in middle-class schools to report a school climate inimical to learning and to report challenges related to discipline.<sup>23</sup> Teacher turnover rates are exceedingly high in schools with large populations of students of color.<sup>24</sup> A mix of factors contributes to the difficulty

of attracting and retaining teachers in high-poverty, predominantly black and Latino schools. However, a 2008 U. S. Department of Education study found that 23 percent of high-poverty schools reported “acts of teacher disrespect” (that is, talking back, swearing) at least once a week, whereas the rate for low-poverty schools was only 9 percent.<sup>25</sup>

Survey research has focused less on predominantly Latino schools, but the most recent and thorough studies show that teachers in predominantly black schools are far more likely to report behavioral problems. Professor Sean Kelly at the University of Notre Dame reviewed several teacher surveys looking at student “tardiness, absenteeism, disrespect, lack of control in the classroom and threatening behavior.” He found that in predominantly black schools, three times as many teachers as in more diverse schools “strongly agree” that the level of misbehavior interferes with their teaching.

There is no evidence that behavior-related challenges are inherently related to race, however. Research from fields outside of education strongly suggests that disruptive behaviors likely stem, at least in part, from conditions more typically experienced by black and Latino families, who are more likely to be living with economic instability in impoverished neighborhoods with many other stressors, including violence, lack of safe recreational space, lack of commercial services, and job scarcity. Ongoing residential and school segregation—created in part by a history of discrimination—concentrates students with risk factors for problem behavior in particular schools, often overwhelming the adults and young people who are trying to teach and learn there.

One study found that teachers did not consider suspension to be an effective strategy for changing student behavior. Yet they reluctantly continued to support and use the practice because they needed immediate relief from disruptive behavior in their classrooms and did not feel equipped to tackle their students’ emotional and psychological needs that may have been at the root of such behavior.<sup>26</sup> In distressed and poor communities, teachers, guidance counselors, and principals have quite often been left alone to respond to the host of social ills and inequities that undermine efforts to educate students. Schools tend to be disconnected from organizations that could assist children in getting the support they need outside of school to succeed academically.<sup>27</sup> Resource-starved, burdened, chaotic high-poverty communities are often unable to provide the social services, enrichment activities, or connection to opportunity that families need so that children can concentrate in school and develop their potential.<sup>28</sup>

Research by scientists, doctors, educators, and other experts identifies

a constellation of conditions that contribute to the deeper emotional and psychological needs that concerned teachers. These conditions include (but are not limited to) exposure to community violence and crime, stress, family economic instability, lack of recreational opportunities, lack of healthy food outlets, and overexposure to fast food and alcohol. Research demonstrates that in particular combinations, these conditions determine whether schools can function smoothly and whether young people will have the opportunity to fulfill their hopes and dreams in the classroom and beyond.<sup>29</sup>

Black and Latino children have far less access to schools that record high levels of academic achievement, and less access to after-school programs, recreational opportunities, and spaces that provide physical safety.<sup>30</sup> Even poor white children are less likely than poor children of color to experience conditions that contribute to the vast inequalities often referred to as the “opportunity gap.”<sup>31</sup> The typical poor white child lives in a neighborhood in which 13 percent of his neighbors are poor. The typical poor African American and the typical poor Latino child live in neighborhoods in which 30 percent of their neighbors are poor.<sup>32</sup> More and more people are living in high-poverty neighborhoods, the vast majority of them African American or Latino.<sup>33</sup>

A growing body of public-health research strongly suggests that to markedly improve life chances for people of color, we must not just ameliorate the symptoms of segregation and concentrated poverty, but we must reduce segregation itself.<sup>34</sup> Residential racial segregation and its attendant concentrated poverty are the foundation on which black and white health-outcome disparities and diminished life chances rest. This segregation engenders other sources of inequality, such as ill-equipped schools, family fragility, reduced job opportunity, diminished academic achievement, and poor life chances.<sup>35</sup>

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia and her colleagues at Northeastern University have built a considerable body of evidence linking residential segregation more directly to racial inequalities in health. Their findings suggest that segregation gives rise to racially segregated health-care facilities with lower-quality care, constrains possibilities for socioeconomic advancement among African Americans and Latinos by limiting job opportunities and decreasing the value of home ownership, and by increasing exposure to crime and violence, unhealthy fast food, and inferior public services.<sup>36</sup> “Residential segregation,” according to a 2008 study, “is at the root of racial and ethnic disparities in access” to neighborhoods that provide opportunities for healthy development and quality schooling.<sup>37</sup>

For more than three decades researchers have painstakingly documented

the harmful effects of concentrated poverty and racial segregation on a school's learning climate, academic success rates, and graduation rates and on its ability to serve as an opportunity "equalizer."<sup>38</sup> High concentrations of poverty and racial segregation have been found to be associated with poor student performance and poor school quality, even when controlling for a host of other influential factors and variables.<sup>39</sup>

### DEVICES OF HUMAN ORIGIN: BEYOND THE SCHOOL

It is not the intention of this chapter to offer a detailed explanation of the numerous factors outside of school that may affect children's performance, behavior, and chances of success in classrooms and likelihood of traveling the pipeline from school to jail. However, child-development research, most notably from Jack Shonkoff and his colleagues, in a National Academy of Sciences report, *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, has demonstrated that it is an accretion of toxic stress and environmental risks and not simply one factor (such as, for example, asthma or poor prenatal care) that impedes learning and can lead to disruptive behavior—ultimately leading to adult incarceration and diminished life chances.<sup>40</sup>

As Shonkoff and his colleagues note, there are generally four major theoretical frames through which neighborhood and community effects are measured. One is "stress theory," which emphasizes the importance of exposures to toxins such as lead paint or stress or community violence. Another frame, "social organization theory," considers the importance of role models and what the neighborhood consensus is about prevailing values. A third is "institutional theory," which analyzes the quality of police, government, and schools and recreation services for their impact on residents. A final frame is "epidemic theory," which is concerned mostly with the effects of peer influence that might "spread" behaviors that undermine success.<sup>41</sup>

The report concludes: "Children's early development depends on the health and wellbeing [*sic*] of their parents. Yet the daily experiences of a significant number of young children are burdened by untreated mental health problems in their families, recurrent exposure to family violence, and the psychological fallout from living in a demoralized and violent neighborhood. Circumstances characterized by multiple, interrelated, and cumulative risk factors impose particularly heavy developmental burdens during early childhood and are the most likely to incur substantial costs to both the individual and society in the future."<sup>42</sup> Poor physical health is strongly associated with poor cognitive functioning and low levels of

school performance that in turn diminish life opportunities. Linked to fast-food consumption, obesity in particular is associated with poor performance in school.<sup>43</sup>

Several longitudinal studies have demonstrated a close relationship between a student's exposure to community violence and his or her own aggressive behavior. Researcher Mary Schwab-Stone and her colleagues from the Yale Child Study Center found that among sixth, eighth, and tenth graders in an urban public school system, witnessing violence or being the victim of community violence was associated with a willingness to fight if insulted. Another study found that for African American and Latino boys in the fifth and seventh grades, exposure to community violence was associated with increases in aggressive behavior, even after researchers controlled for earlier aggressive episodes and aggression. Laurie Miller and her colleagues from Columbia University reported similar results among early-elementary school-age children living in New York City. For the six- to ten-year-old boys they studied in an urban public school, witnessing community violence was associated with parental reports of antisocial behavior.<sup>44</sup>

The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods—an interdisciplinary study of how families, schools, and neighborhoods affect child and adolescent development—found that children who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods had significantly worse mental health than children raised in more advantaged neighborhoods, even after controlling for child and family background and income.<sup>45</sup> Cornell University professor Gary Evans's work on the relationship between the physical environment and mental health points to several environmental characteristics that negatively affect mental health and are more prominent in high-poverty neighborhoods. These include crowding, noise, indoor air quality, and lack of light. Higher residential density interferes with the development of socially supportive relationships, which can decrease psychological stress, Evans concludes. High-rise buildings for low-income families often lack sufficient space for the development and maintenance of social networks. The dearth of safe outdoor space often forces parents to keep children inside. This, in turn, heightens interfamilial conflict, which increases stress. Evans also explores the psychosocial processes that help us understand how the built environment influences mental health (for more on this, see chapter 16 on the built environment and place-making strategies in this volume). The forces at work in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage include a lack of personal control over one's surroundings, impeded social support, and lack of exposure to natural elements.<sup>46</sup>

Accumulated toxic stress and exposure to violence of the sort common in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage seem to produce many of the same symptoms in children as the effects of family violence. Bessel van der Kolk of Boston University School of Medicine has proposed a new diagnosis that he calls “developmental trauma disorder” that accounts for the broad array of neurobiological, developmental, emotional, and behavioral consequences of childhood trauma.<sup>47</sup> Trauma can include persistent economic instability, community and/or family violence, and chronic stress caused by unpredictability about family stability and living arrangements and the threat of danger. Children react to trauma in a variety of ways, according to researchers. A traumatized child’s view of the world as a potentially dangerous, unpredictable place will undermine the child’s ability to form positive relationships with teachers and peers, engage in academic work, process information, and be attentive. Research shows that children who have been or who are continually suffering from forms of trauma often appear to be ambivalent, aggressive, demanding, and disruptive. Experts point to a range of typical behaviors of traumatized children. These include impulsivity, hyper vigilance, verbal and physical aggression, defiance, and withdrawal.<sup>48</sup>

In his book *On Playing a Poor Hand Well*, clinical psychologist Mark Katz has looked at the behavior of a traumatized child from an adult’s point of view. He suggests that understanding the source of a child’s behavior may indeed lead adults to more effective responses: “Not realizing that children exposed to inescapable, overwhelming stress may act out their pain, that they may misbehave, not listen to us, or seek our attention in all the wrong ways, can lead us to punish these children for their misbehavior. The behavior is so willful, so intentional. She controlled herself yesterday, she can control herself today. If we only knew what happened last night, or this morning before she got to school, we would be shielding the same child we’re now reprimanding.”<sup>49</sup> This suggests that educators must be sensitive to the particular environments from which children come and craft educational policies and practices that incorporate understanding of stress, environment, and trauma. An inclusive, nurturing school-discipline policy would be one part of such a strategy and a sensible place to start to help young people do their best in the classroom.

### UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN DISCIPLINE DECISIONS

We have established that discipline problems are more pronounced in high-poverty schools where a majority of students of color are enrolled, and that



many of the underlying causes for such problems—such as neighborhood stressors—do not originate with schools and obviously cannot be reversed by educators alone. However, it is also true that individual decisions by educators play powerful roles in determining which students get punished and how severely students are punished for behaviors. For example, white teachers are more likely than African American teachers to perceive significant behavior problems in predominantly black schools.<sup>50</sup> (However, in recent research the racial composition of a school was a far more powerful predictor of school-discipline problems than was the race of the teacher.) Meanwhile, in the past several years, psychological research has increased our understanding about the powerful role that unconscious racial bias (also referred to interchangeably as “implicit bias”) plays in decisions about punishment.

It is possible that high-poverty schools *are* experiencing more discipline challenges that engender harsher discipline *and* that, simultaneously, racial bias is affecting educators’ decisions, thereby explaining some of the racial disparity in the number of suspensions and expulsions. It is ironic that zero-tolerance policies were originally touted as “fairer” policies than discipline codes that relied on educators to provide punishment on a case-by-case basis. The theory was that zero tolerance offered set, blanket, non-negotiable punishments for a given infraction, so that racial bias and other subjective factors would be less likely to come into play. As the American Psychological Association found, however, the opposite happened, with students of color more apt to be suspended and expelled for lesser offenses than white students.<sup>51</sup>

The basic idea of unconscious bias is that human beings live in a social and historical context where a person’s “race”—the crude markers here being skin tone, eye shape, and so on—has long been associated with certain characteristics and stereotypes.<sup>52</sup> To put it bluntly: People, notably Americans who are the subject of most studies of implicit bias, tend to associate darker-skinned people with danger or lower intelligence. Even the most educated and seemingly enlightened are vulnerable to this bias and the tendency to make associations based on “racial” characteristics, albeit in varying forms and strengths, experts say. The associations will have emerged from a variety of sources over a lifetime.<sup>53</sup>

As John Powell, an expert on unconscious bias, has noted, possessing these biases does not make a person “racist”; it means he or she is simply “human” and vulnerable to messages that associate race—more precisely, the markers that we tend to label as racial—with particular positive or negative characteristics.<sup>54</sup> One of the most commonly used tools for dis-

cerning such bias is the Implicit Association Test (IAT), created by a team of research scientists based at Harvard.<sup>55</sup> The IAT is designed to measure “implicit” or “unconscious” attitudes by discerning the strength of a person’s automatic association between things or attributes and race—for example, a gun and a dark-skinned male. People who take the test are prompted to quickly place faces into particular categories signifying bad and good. Over and over again, researchers find that people have a particularly difficult time putting dark-skinned faces in the “good” categories and a particularly easy time associating darker complexions with, say, a weapon or the word “bad.”<sup>56</sup>

Social psychologists offer a simple underlying theory. We human beings draw on our unconscious notions about race as we make decisions about, for example, whom to hire, whom to select as a tenant, whom to punish, and how severely to punish them. The work in this area that has perhaps the greatest possibilities for application is related to the role of unconscious bias in decisions that people in the criminal justice arena make about guilt and punishment. It makes sense, then, to apply the knowledge in the context of school discipline, precisely because many schools have adopted a criminal justice model.

The research on implicit bias suggests that educators may truly believe that they are not racially biased and they may take conscious actions—such as choosing to work in a predominantly black school—that reflect this belief. At the same time, though, unconscious, previously imprinted racial associations are powerful and, as research suggests, can lead to unintended harms, such as making assumptions about students’ abilities or incorrectly assessing the “danger” of their behaviors.<sup>57</sup> (Previous research, though it is somewhat old, has shown that a student’s race, in addition to perceptions of attractiveness and past behavior, does influence whether teachers have high or low expectations for a student’s academic performance.)<sup>58</sup>

Studies from other fields, including criminal justice, have made similar findings. For example, one study from Florida showed that judges were far less likely to “withhold adjudication” for Latino and black males than they were for white males. The “withholding adjudication” ruling applies to people who have pled or have been found guilty of a felony and will be sentenced to probation. It allows the person on probation to retain his civil rights and to legally assert that he has never been convicted of a felony. Judges showed the strongest racial bias against blacks with drug offenses.<sup>59</sup>

In 2004 researchers Sandra Graham and Brian Lowery considered the extent to which racial associations affect decisions made by police officers and probation officers. The researchers simulated a variety of conditions

within particular cases and offered subjects cues about a person's race. They determined that once people knew or thought they knew the race of a person, they were more apt to make judgments about a young person's culpability and "deserved punishment" and judged African Americans harshly. The authors concluded that "racial disparity in the juvenile justice system can partly be understood as the outcome of a complex causal process that begins with unconscious stereotype activation and ends with more punishment of African American offenders."<sup>60</sup> The authors suggest that similar racial disparities in rates of school suspensions and expulsions may be partly an outgrowth of educators' racial associations.

In a 2006 study Professor Jennifer Eberhardt of Stanford University examined death-penalty sentences and found that "defendants whose appearance was perceived as more stereotypically Black were more likely to receive a death sentence than defendants whose appearance was perceived as less stereotypically Black." Even in cases where the defendant was not subject to the death penalty, the darker-skinned the defendant was, the more likely he would receive a longer sentence.<sup>61</sup>

### **TWIN PIPELINES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE APPARATUS, RACE, SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETY**

If we are to develop permanent solutions to zero tolerance and advance alternatives on a wide scale—while avoiding past mistakes—we must understand the school-based punishment phenomenon as an outgrowth of the nation's deliberate shift away from the aspiration of rehabilitation toward retribution and punishment.<sup>62</sup> Zero tolerance took hold in U.S. schools in the context of this progressive drive to be more punitive. It is crucial, too, that we explore the role that racial bias played in construction of the retributive mass incarceration system and, by extension, the school-to-prison pipeline.

In February 2008 the Pew Center on the States reported that "three decades of growth in America's prison population has quietly nudged the nation across a sobering threshold: for the first time, more than one in every 100 adults is now confined in an American jail or prison."<sup>63</sup> The report showed that one in thirty men between the ages of twenty and thirty-four are incarcerated. For black males, however, that figure is one in nine. The per-capita incarceration rate in the United States is seven hundred per hundred thousand citizens, which is the world's highest rate and seven times the world average. African Americans make up only 13 percent of the overall population of the United States, and Latinos 15 percent. Yet 40 percent of

the prison population is African American and 20 percent is Latino. One in every eight black males in their twenties is in prison or jail as compared with one in twenty-six Latino males and one in fifty-nine white males. Black males have a one-in-three chance of serving time in prison, and Latinos one in five, as compared with three in fifty for white males.<sup>64</sup>

Like school suspension and expulsion, which are not driven by increases in school violence, growth in incarceration has not been driven by either an equal increase in crime or by general population growth. The Pew report concludes that increased use of incarceration “flows principally from a wave of policy choices that are sending more lawbreakers to prison, and . . . keeping them there longer.”<sup>65</sup> Education officials adopted this punishment-as-deterrent paradigm from the criminal justice playbook and applied it to children and teenagers in public schools.

In 2004, Professor Ted Chiricos of Florida State University and colleagues examined the extent to which people associate crime with African Americans. The “racism” he and his colleagues noted in this study “eschews overt expressions of racial superiority and hostility but instead sponsors a broad anti-African American effect that equates African Americans with a variety of negative traits of which crime is certainly one. This study demonstrates that the equation of race and crime is a significant sponsor of the punitive attitudes that are given material substance in the extraordinary rates of incarceration now found in the United States.”<sup>66</sup>

Understanding the long-term effects of racial disparities in incarceration offers insight into the potential longer-term effects of racial disparities in school-based punishment. Researchers are increasingly finding—and advocates are increasingly arguing—that incarceration is not just an “outcome” of social inequality and lack of economic opportunity. Rather, mass incarceration has exacted an enormous toll on families and neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage that send large shares of people—usually men and boys of color—to prison. In other words, high incarceration rates aren’t just a reflection of a distressed, low-income neighborhood. Mass incarceration itself creates new inequalities by removing potential income generators from a family and neighborhood, making men unemployable, and making high-poverty communities worse off and more dangerous.<sup>67</sup> It has particularly dramatic, negative effects on children whose parents are incarcerated.<sup>68</sup>

In his 2006 book *Punishment and Inequality in America*, Harvard sociologist Bruce Western demonstrates that punitive policies that increase incarceration backfire and end up hurting the communities they are ostensibly designed to protect. Western documents the strong link between mass

incarceration and inequality, particularly among African American men. Incarceration, he argues, is not merely a symptom of social inequality, but it itself *creates* and exacerbates inequality by undermining families and further separating poor communities of color from American mainstream opportunities for education and training and social networks that often lead to employment. For example, according to Western's study, a history of incarceration reduces a man's annual earnings by 40 percent. The risk of divorce is also heightened by incarceration. Because steady work and a stable emotional relationship are two variables strongly linked with a crime-free life, incarceration generates inequality. "Imprisonment undermines economic opportunity and, by weakening family bonds," Western writes, "strips poor communities of social capital. Mass imprisonment is thus a key component in a system of inequality."<sup>69</sup>

Western's quantitative analysis demonstrates that incarceration was not merely an outgrowth of problems such as urban poverty. Incarceration was the major policy response from elected leaders to an illusion of increasing violence and danger. Western argues such policies not only fail to protect communities from crime, but widen the inequality gap and the psychological distance between people of color who live in distressed communities and everyone else. "It is now time to reconsider . . . imprisonment," Western writes. "By cleaving off poor black communities from the mainstream of American life, the prison boom has left us more divided as a nation. Incarceration rates are now so high that the stigma of criminality brands not only individuals, but a whole generation of young black men with little schooling. While our prisons and jails expanded to preserve public safety, they now risk undermining the civic consensus on which public safety is ultimately based."<sup>70</sup>

A similar analysis could be applied to harsh, exclusionary school discipline. It is both a symptom of social inequality and an engine of that inequality. Just like incarceration, a mix of variables—including isolated school shootings and "get tough" educational rhetoric—led to the rise in zero-tolerance policies. The populist demonizing of youth of color, though, likely played a role. One example of the hype is the 1996 book *Body Count: Moral Poverty and How to Win America's War against Crime and Drugs*. The book took center stage in the popular discourse of the time, due not only to its sensationalist message but its well-credentialed authors: John P. Walters was the former director of the Council on Crime in America; John Dilulio was a professor at Princeton University; and William J. Bennett had been U.S. Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan.<sup>71</sup>

In the book, in op-ed pieces, and on talk shows, the authors forecasted the imminent emergence of “remorseless and morally impoverished” young people who would drastically increase the crime rate by the turn of the century. Race was not always explicitly mentioned, although the book’s focus on urban environments implied racial minorities. In reality, though, violence would decline during this period.<sup>72</sup> The *Body Count* authors wrote: “Here is what we believe: America is now home to thickening ranks of juvenile ‘superpredators’—radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters, including ever more preteenage boys, who murder, assault, rape, rob, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, join gun-toting gangs and create serious communal disorders.” The trio continued: “At core . . . the problem is that most inner-city children grow up surrounded by teenagers and adults who are themselves deviant, delinquent or criminal.”<sup>73</sup>

This central idea captured America’s popular imagination and held sway in the nation’s ostensibly better-informed policy world, too. The “superpredator” theory provided intellectual grist for harsh laws against juveniles enacted by nearly every state legislature across the nation by the late 1990s, even though youth crime on the streets and in the schools was already waning. Dilulio would later repudiate his warning that “a new generation of street criminals is upon us—the youngest, biggest and baddest generation any society has ever known.” After working with disadvantaged teenagers in Philadelphia, he announced a new conclusion, one well-supported by nonpartisan research: “If I knew then what I know now, I would have shouted for prevention of crimes.”<sup>74</sup>

Dilulio’s enlightenment came in 2001—years too late. Before he spoke out, however, America’s adult criminal justice model—its methods of exclusion and punishment and its roots in racial bias—had come to roost in the nation’s public schools. The good news is that in recent years, educators, community leaders, parents, and experts from many fields have put in place a variety of alternatives to policies and practices that merely exclude and punish. These more “inclusive” policies and practices are designed to create more supportive schools and communities and to reduce concentrated poverty and racial segregation, which have led to vast inequalities within regions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS: BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES, AND REGIONS**

These recommendations are not exhaustive. However, they attempt to break from the traditional school policy “silo” and envision healthier,

opportunity-enhancing schools that embrace fair discipline as a complement or outgrowth of more inclusive communities and regions. Our recommendations touch on building inclusive schools, communities, and regions. We also comment on innovative school and community-based practices and policies. Changing school-discipline policies may prove an effective first step in creating more equitable, opportunity-rich communities for boys and young men of color and their families. These recommendations begin at the school level, branch out to the community, and then extend to the metropolitan region.

### **School-based Practice and Policy**

This section addresses both school practice and policy. An enlightened school-discipline practice would ideally exist along with a network of coordinated, integrated support services aimed at creating healthy environments for children and their families. Such policies and practices would explicitly reject the exclusion model reflected in harsh discipline and include, instead, paradigm mental-health services, recreational opportunities, and other services to assist unstable families. Broader regional policies would help ensure that schools are not unfairly overwhelmed with social problems related to negative neighborhood conditions.

1. *Put in place alternatives to suspension and expulsion that create a more caring and positive school climate.* Tested alternatives to suspension and expulsion include restorative justice in which the offender, the victim, and the larger community discuss the crime and determine what type of retribution should be paid. The American Psychological Association suggests this as an alternative to zero tolerance.<sup>75</sup> Trauma-sensitive schools focus on addressing the mental-health needs of students and creating caring, safe environments for children.<sup>76</sup> The most widely used alternative to suspension and expulsion is schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS).<sup>77</sup> This program treats appropriate school behavior as a skill to be learned, much like an academic skill. Under this model expectations are clearly communicated to students, and misbehaviors trigger responses intended to teach students the underlying reasons for the expectation and to internalize that understanding. The Minneapolis-based Search Institute's Developmental Assets program brings together a range of people and organizations within a community to intentionally assess and build a particular set of resources associated with healthy child development.<sup>78</sup>

2. *States and local school districts should require more and better training for the increasing numbers of police (SROs) assigned to public schools.*

*This training should be geared to preventing unnecessary arrests, expulsions, and suspensions. Local communities should monitor SROs.* As researchers Johanna Wald and Lisa Thureau, of the Harvard Law School–based Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, have written: “A major weakness that we identified in most SRO programs is the lack of oversight of the use of police in school generally and officers’ actions specifically. Many SROs are dedicated and compassionate professionals who have defined their job so as to both keep schools safe and provide help and resources to students. Nonetheless, it is clear that too much discretion has been built into their jobs, which raises the very real risk that some SROs will over-arrest students, will target certain students for harsher penalties than others, and will insist upon a law enforcement solution to what should be a therapeutic response. Without appropriate oversight, the same applies for school officials, who may choose to use SROs inappropriately, to call officers to respond to what should be school disciplinary issues, and to use law enforcement intervention to ‘push out’ certain students.”<sup>79</sup>

3. *Advocate for, establish, and support high-quality preschool and after-school programs that keep children safe and connect them to opportunities to learn, stay in school, and experience life beyond their neighborhoods.* Such programs should not merely provide safe haven or academic remediation; they should deliberately connect children to life in the larger society, through mentoring, field trips, and involvement with higher-education institutions. The Harvard Family Research Project introduced the idea and practice of “complementary learning,” which assesses and coordinates assets and then creates programs that fill gaps and provide students and their families access to enrichment programs and other activities demonstrated to support success in school.<sup>80</sup>

4. *As it did in its 2010 grant program, Race to the Top, the federal government should promote fairer school discipline and in turn healthier school climates through other competitive grant programs.* The experience with Race to the Top demonstrates that federal dollars can provide powerful incentives for states to make sweeping changes in their education policies. The federal government’s Safe Schools/Healthy Schools Initiative offers another avenue through which to support more inclusive school discipline policy and practice.<sup>81</sup> Planning and implementation grants should be made available to local school officials who wish to study and plan for changes in their school-discipline practice.

5. *Local or state governments should employ the Implicit Association Test (IAT) as an element in professional development programs for public-school teachers and administrators.* Helping educators understand



their biases is the first step in helping them overcome them. More research is needed to determine the best ways to counteract unconscious bias.<sup>82</sup> Project Implicit, an outgrowth of scientific work on implicit bias, offers educators and others tailor-made materials for courses. Through its program Teaching Tolerance, the Southern Poverty Law Center incorporates the use of the IAT in its professional development materials.<sup>83</sup> States and the federal government could offer incentives for local districts to pilot such programs in their schools.

### **Community-based Practice and Policy**

1. *Educators, social service agencies, and youth advocates should coordinate social services and actively partner so that families and children can more easily receive appropriate assistance in overcoming the mental and physical health challenges associated with high-poverty neighborhoods that often manifest themselves as school behavior problems.* The research on environmental stressors provides even more justification for schools and community-based centers to provide a host of interlocking, comprehensive services to children and families under one roof.

2. *Craft and support local, state, and federal legislation to engage communities and children in constructive activities, including community-improvement projects.* An excellent example of legislation on the federal level is the Youth Promise Act, introduced by Congressman Bobby Scott from Virginia.<sup>84</sup> The Youth Promise Act, which as of April 2010 was pending in Congress, would provide funding for communities that have high rates of violence and youth gang activity to form a council that would develop a comprehensive plan for implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies. Such interventions could include well-tested, effective programs like YouthBuild in which young people work toward their GED or diploma, develop leadership skills, and build low-income housing in their communities.<sup>85</sup> The explicit purpose of the Youth Promise Act is to reduce incarceration rates through intervention, support, and education. An inclusive school-discipline practice should be a part of efforts that seek to reduce incarceration through prevention.<sup>86</sup>

### **Regional Policy and Equity**

1. *Through federal and state policy and incentives, increase access to so-called “high-opportunity” neighborhoods that have well-functioning, high-performing schools and that are physically and environmentally*

*safe and economically stable and have access to public transportation, healthy food, and recreation space. Concomitantly, reduce the share of people who live in high-poverty neighborhoods through increased funding and availability of “mobility” programs and fair-housing enforcement.* “Mobility” and “deconcentration” are shorthand for housing programs and policies that attempt to break up pockets of extreme neighborhood poverty by dispersing the very poor more evenly throughout a metro area. Historically, such policies have found champions among both Republicans and Democrats. Providing people more access to communities with lower poverty rates and to better-functioning, less overwhelmed school systems remains a crucial strategy.<sup>87</sup>

2. *Allow poor children in high-poverty neighborhoods more choices to attend low-poverty schools that are less likely to be overwhelmed with social problems manifest in high-poverty neighborhoods and schools.* Several communities have successfully implemented long-running cross-district transfer plans in which children from urban areas can attend predominantly middle-class suburban schools.<sup>88</sup> A coalition of civil rights advocates has long lobbied for changes to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that would make it easier for more children to transfer from challenged urban schools to schools in higher-opportunity communities. Educators in several districts, most notably Berkeley, California, consider neighborhood-based demographic data in drawing their school attendance zones and assigning students to schools. In March 2009 this method was approved by the California Appellate Court, following a legal challenge.<sup>89</sup>

3. *Better coordinate housing and school policy to reduce concentrated poverty in neighborhoods and schools.* The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of the Treasury, through their extensive low-income housing programs, exert significant control over where low-income families are permitted to live. However, despite a clear mandate to promote integration, these agencies have generally not considered the educational impacts of their policies, which often steer children of low-income families and children of color into high-poverty, segregated schools.<sup>90</sup> The U.S. Department of Education should work collaboratively with HUD and Treasury to better link federal housing and school policy, including strong affirmative marketing of all federally funded housing assets in high-performing school districts and expansion of mobility counseling in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which would allow families with young children to move into lower-poverty, less burdened, higher-performing schools.<sup>91</sup>

Since the early 2000s, civil rights lawyers, advocates, and education

researchers have successfully raised awareness about the prevalence and harm of zero-tolerance policies that expel and suspend students at record rates. Replacing zero-tolerance policies will not overcome all the challenges facing boys and young men of color. However, it is a potentially productive place to start making concrete change immediately. School discipline is a place where a variety of social conditions converge, including poverty, poor public health, overwhelmed schools, and a prevailing “punishment” norm. It is also a subject on which people from a variety of fields and perspectives—parents, students, educators, psychologists, and experts in child development, neuroscience, criminal justice, public health, and public policy—can combine efforts. The collective wisdom and commitment would ideally lead not merely to better school-based policy, but to an interlocking set of practices and policies that enhance opportunity, reduce regional inequality, and provide young people support rather than merely meting out punishment. Because boys and young men of color are the population most vulnerable to falling into the school-to-prison pipeline, in the short term they may be the biggest beneficiaries of efforts to dismantle it. Over the long term, however, it will become clear that returning schools to their original mission as America’s “balance wheels” as first articulated by Horace Mann, will benefit us all.

## NOTES

1. “Twelfth Annual Report of Horace Mann as Secretary of Massachusetts State Board of Education.”

2. For example, Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform*.

3. National Center for Education Statistics, “Contexts of Elementary and Secondary Education: School Characteristics and Climate.” For a summary and discussion of racial disproportions in school discipline, see Fenning and Rose, “Overrepresentation of African American Students in Exclusionary Discipline.”

4. Berger, “Expansion of Police Power in Public Schools,” 122.

5. For a detailed discussion of the role of police in schools, see Wald and Thureau, *First, Do No Harm*. As the coauthors have noted, data on school-based arrests are difficult to find. Several advocates and researchers, in recent years, have documented increases in school-based arrests in specific schools and districts. In 2005 the Advancement Project’s report, *Education on Lockdown*, examined the role of school police in Denver, Chicago, and Palm Beach County. The report concluded that “schools are overreaching by inappropriately adopting law enforcement strategies that are leading students unnecessarily into the juvenile or criminal justice system.”

6. Advancement Project, *Education on Lockdown*. Also see New York Civil

Liberties Union, *Criminalizing the Classroom*; and National Center for Schools and Communities, "Policing as Education Policy."

7. NASRO, "Introduction to National Association of School Resource Officers."
8. WFTV.com, "Kindergarten Girl Handcuffed."
9. Cauchon, "Zero-Tolerance Policies Lack Flexibility."
10. Monahan, "Queens Girl Alexa Gonzalez Hauled out of School."
11. Advancement Project, *Education on Lockdown*.
12. Tobin, Sugai, and Colvin, "Patterns in Middle School Discipline Records."
13. Skiba et al., "Consistent Removal."
14. Carmichael, Whitten, and Voloudakis. "Study of Minority Over-representation in the Texas Juvenile Justice System"; and Ekstrom et al., "Who Drops Out of High School and Why?"
15. American Psychological Association (APA) Zero Tolerance Task Force, "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?"
16. Johnson, Boyden, and Pittz, *Racial Profiling and Punishment in U.S. Public Schools*; Beger, "Worst of Both Worlds."
17. APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?" 854.
18. See, for example, National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, at [http://www.pbis.org/about\\_us/default.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/about_us/default.aspx).
19. The collaborative work between Advancement Project, a national advocacy group, and a parent and student group in Colorado is particularly instructive. See "Understanding the Issue: The Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track," available online at <http://www.stopschoolstojails.org/node/1#local-campaigns>.
20. "High-poverty schools" are defined here as those in which more than half the students come from families with incomes so low that they qualify for the government-sponsored free and reduced lunch program. Planty, *Condition of Education 2009*, 196, Table A-25-1.
21. Orfield, *Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society*. Regarding residential segregation, see Cashin, *Failure of Integration*.
22. Kneebone and Berube, "Reversal of Fortune." See specifically: "The number of tax filers living in areas with high rates of working poverty increased by 40 percent or 1.6 million filers, between tax years 1999 and 2005" (ibid.:1). And "By 2005, 12.3 percent of low-income working families lived in high-working-poverty communities—ZIP codes where more than 40 percent of taxpayers claimed the EITC (earned income tax credit)—up from 10.4 percent in 1999" (ibid.: 1).
23. Hanushek and Rivkin, "Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality," 82; Kelly, "Crisis of Authority in Predominantly Black Schools?"
24. Jacob, "Challenge of Staffing Urban Schools with Effective Teachers"; Hanushek and Rivkin, "Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality"; Jackson, "Student Demographics, Teacher Sorting, and Teacher Quality."
25. Dinkes, Cataldi, and Lin-Kelly, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, 99, Table 7.2 (teacher disrespect).
26. Wald and Casella, "Battle Every Day."
27. See, for example, McKoy, Vincent, and Bierbaum, "Mechanics of City-School Initiatives."
28. Gordon, Bidgall, and Meroe, *Supplementary Education*; Center for

Prevention Research and Development, *Assessing the Current Status of After-school Programs in Illinois*; and Okeke, "Attrition in Adolescent After-school Programs."

29. Shonkoff and Phillips, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*. Also see Grant-Thomas and Powell, "Toward a Structural Racism Framework."

30. Acevedo-Garcia et al., *Children Left Behind*.

31. For example, see the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School, "Childhood Opportunity Gap."

32. Acevedo-Garcia et al., "Toward a Policy-relevant Analysis of Geographic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities."

33. Kneebone and Berube, "Reversal of Fortune."

34. Acevedo-Garcia and Lochner, "Residential Segregation and Health"; Carr and Kuty, *Segregation*. Gregory Squires and Charis Kubrin, *Privileged Places: Race, Residence, and the Structure of Opportunity*; Tilly et al., "Space as a Signal."

35. Williams and Jackson, "Social Sources of Racial Disparities in Health"; and Williams and Collins, "Racial Residential Segregation."

36. Acevedo-Garcia and Osypuk, "Impacts of Housing and Neighborhoods on Health"; Williams and Collins, "Racial Residential Segregation"; Acevedo-Garcia, et al., "Future Directions in Residential Segregation and Health Research"; and Acevedo-Garcia and Lochner, "Residential Segregation and Health."

37. Acevedo-Garcia et al., "Toward a Policy-relevant Analysis of Geographic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities."

38. For example, see the NAE, *Race-Conscious Policies for Assigning Students to Schools*. Also see Saatcioglu, "Disentangling School- and Student-level Effects of Desegregation and Resegregation."

39. Ibid.

40. Shonkoff and Phillips, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*.

41. Ibid.: 330.

42. Ibid.

43. Schwimmer, Burwinkle, and Varni, "Health-Related Quality of Life of Severely Obese Children and Adolescents."

44. Miller and Wasserman et al., "Witnessed Community Violence and Anti-social Behavior in High-Risk, Urban Boys." By "community violence," we refer to witnessing arrest(s), seeing assaults/battery, shootings, stabbings, homicides, or dead bodies as a result of violence.

45. Xue, Leventhal, and Brooks-Gunn, "Neighborhood Residence and Mental Health Problems of Five to Eleven Year Olds."

46. Evans, "Environment of Childhood Poverty"; and Evans, "Built Environment and Mental Health."

47. Van der Kolk, *Childhood Trauma*.

48. APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?"

49. Katz, *On Playing a Poor Hand Well*.

50. Kelly, "Crisis of Authority in Predominantly Black Schools?"

51. APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?" Also see Skiba, Michael, and Nardo, "Color of Discipline."

52. For a cogent explanation, see Americans for American Values, “What Is Implicit Bias?” Also see Project Implicit at <http://www.projectimplicit.net>.

53. Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, and Monteith, “Implicit Associations as the Seeds of Intergroup Bias.”

54. powell, “Reading between the Lines.”

55. The scientists who developed the test are Mahzarin Banaji, Brian Nosek, and Tony Greenwald. For additional information, see the Project Implicit Web site at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/background/thescientists.html>.

56. See <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>.

57. Dusek and Joseph, “Bases of Teacher Expectancies”; and Oates, “Teacher-Student Racial Congruence, Teacher Perceptions, and Test Performance.”

58. *Ibid.*

59. Bontrager, Bales, and Chiricos, “Race, Ethnicity, Treatment and the Labeling of Convicted Felons.”

60. Graham and Lower, “Priming Unconscious Racial Stereotypes about Adolescent Offenders.”

61. Eberhardt et al., “Looking Deathworthy,” 386.

62. The nation’s shift away from the concept of rehabilitation and toward punishment is well documented. See, for example, Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate*; and Green and Pranis, “Gang Wars.”

63. Pew Center on the States, *One in 100*.

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ibid.*, 4.

66. Chiricos, Welch, and Gertz, “Racial Typification of Crime and Support for Punitive Measures.”

67. Western and Pettit, “Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course”; Western and Pettit, “Black-White Earnings, Inequality, Employment Rates, and Incarceration”; and Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*.

68. “Focus on Children with Incarcerated Parents.”

69. Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*, 196.

70. *Ibid.*, 7.

71. Dilulio, Bennett, and Walters, *Body Count*.

72. FBI Uniform Crime Reports, “Arrest statistics from the annual FBI Uniform Crime Reports.” A downward trend in school violence is part of a larger downward trend in violent juvenile crime during the 1990s. Also see “Youth Violence Myths and Realities.”

73. Dilulio, Bennett, and Walters, *Body Count*, 56.

74. Becker, “As Ex-Theorist on Young ‘Superpredators,’ Bush Aide Has Regrets.”

75. On restorative justice, see Bargen, “Safe Schools”; “Researching Prospects for Restorative Justice Practice in Schools”; and APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, “Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools?”

76. On trauma-sensitive schools, see Massachusetts Advocates for Children, *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*.

77. Maryland and Illinois are leaders in implementing PBIS statewide and received funding from national- and state-level health and human services agencies. See, for example, PBIS Maryland, at <http://www.pbismaryland.org>. By 2011,

Illinois PBIS Network hopes to have the program implemented in twelve hundred schools; see <http://www.pbisillinois.org/>.

78. See the Search Institute at <http://www.search-institute.org/>.

79. Wald and Thureau, *First, Do No Harm*.

80. For more information on complementary learning, see “Complementary Learning,” Harvard Family Research Project, available online at <http://www.hfrp.org/complementary-learning>.

81. This competitive grant program is administered through the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools and is a collaboration of the U.S. Department of Education, Health and Human Services Department, and the Department of Justice; see more at the Web site of the Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative, available online at <http://www.sshs.samhsa.gov/>.

82. For example, Aberson, Shoemaker, and Tomolilo, “Implicit Bias and Contact”; Dasgupta and Greenwald, “On the Malleability of Automatic Attitudes”; and Lowery, Hardin, and Sinclair, “Social Influence Effects on Automatic Racial Prejudice.”

83. For more on Project Implicit and to access the program’s materials, see <http://www.projectimplicit.net/services.php>. For more on the Teaching Tolerance program and to access professional development materials, see <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/test-yourself-hidden-bias>.

84. Known as the Youth Promise Act, the formal name of the resolution is Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education. (HR 3846).

85. For more on YouthBuild, see Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship, “Growth of Youthbuild.”

86. See, for example, the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School, “No More Children Behind Bars.”

87. National Fair Housing Alliance, *Future of Fair Housing*.

88. Wells et al., “Boundary Crossing for Diversity, Equity, and Achievement.”

89. “Appellate Court Upholds Berkeley Unified School District’s Voluntary Desegregation Plan,” ACLU of Northern California, 2009, available online at [http://www.aclunc.org/news/press\\_releases/appellate\\_court\\_upholds\\_berkeley\\_unified\\_school\\_districts\\_voluntary\\_desegregation\\_plan.shtml](http://www.aclunc.org/news/press_releases/appellate_court_upholds_berkeley_unified_school_districts_voluntary_desegregation_plan.shtml).

90. The Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. sec. 3608, requires both agencies to “affirmatively further fair housing” in all their housing and urban development activities—including an obligation to avoid segregation and promote residential integration.

91. “Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet,” Public and Indian Housing, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, available online at [http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/about/fact\\_sheet.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet.cfm).

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## STOPPING GANGS WITH A BALANCED STRATEGY

*Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression*

James Diego Vigil and Gilberto Q. Conchas

### ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines a balanced approach to stopping gangs through a combination of prevention, intervention, and law-enforcement strategies. We employ a multiple-marginality framework in describing how poverty leads to “street socialization” among boys and men of color. We then elaborate on the ways in which street socialization undermines and transforms the otherwise normal course of human development to institutionalize a street subculture. We must look to these gang roots to help develop prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies that take into consideration the facets of time, place, and people.

- *Time.* We need to change the ways in which urban youth most susceptible to street socialization choose to spend their time through programs and activities targeted at the three most important social-control institutions of our society: homes and families, schools and teachers, and law enforcement and police.
- *Place.* To address “hot spots” and/or areas of poverty prone to gangs, we must set up situations (such as social and personal outlets) and conditions (for example, buildings and safe houses) that reestablish the character and identity of the neighborhood.
- *People.* Once young people’s time is better-directed and focused, and their environments safer and enriched, people—those caring adults most involved with youth—become the essence of the equation.

This thorough approach will inform the formulation and implementation of new policies to support urban street youth. We end the chapter with examples of promising programs that embrace a balanced approach.

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Three tracks should be pursued vigorously and simultaneously if we are to make significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap. First is school improvement efforts that raise the quality of instruction in elementary and secondary schools. Second is expanding the definition of schooling to include crucial out-of-school hours in which families and communities now are the sole influences. This means implementing comprehensive early childhood, after-school, and summer programs. And third are social and economic policies that enable children to attend school more equally ready to learn. These policies include health services for lower class children and their families, stable housing for working families with children, and the narrowing of growing income inequalities in American society.

Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools*, 2004

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes how poverty and social marginalization among boys and men of color lead to “street socialization” and to the emergence of street gangs and gang membership. Street socialization, in turn, undermines and transforms the otherwise normal course of human development for marginalized youth in ways that institutionalize a street subculture. Before policy-makers, educators, and social service providers can develop effective strategies for gang prevention, intervention, and suppression, they must first examine the historical and cultural root causes of street socialization among youth. Establishing how street-socialized youth experience time, place, and people informs the formulation and implementation of a balanced antigang strategy that is aligned with Richard Rothstein’s 2004 call to eliminate inequality in U.S. society through in-school and out-of-school policies and practices.

## THE GANG ISSUE

The gang issue throughout the United States has worsened in the past few years, as more street children are generated during times of economic

crisis. Regrettably, most gang-control efforts since the 1980s have been conducted by law-enforcement agencies too late—that is, after youths have joined a gang. All too often, debate over the correct response to youth gangs has devolved into an either-or response in which gang members are expected to shape up or go to jail. Police threaten youths hanging out on street corners with arrest unless they disperse. Youths who commit crimes are arrested, prosecuted, and jailed without any attempt by authorities to understand the root causes of the crime. Jails are filled with youths who have been prosecuted based on suppression tactics that are ineffective at stopping gangs.

A better strategy to address the gang problem is through an open and balanced approach that offers positive activities, outlets, and role models—one that addresses the complex problems facing urban youth (although there are youth gangs in rural and suburban areas as well) whose ecological, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopsychological situations make them vulnerable to gang membership. For a large segment of youth in the United States, “punishments” are far more common than “rewards.” This imbalance stems not only from law-enforcement policies and strained police relations but also from stressed families, overburdened schools, low self-esteem, and the lack of positive role models (Noguera 2001; Palacios 2008). We must right this imbalance. We must create a climate in which fear of gangs does not consume us in order to provide strategies of reason and balance.

It is a false belief, as conservative pundits like Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich have often suggested, that there are no consequential inequities and inequalities in our society, that everyone begins life from the same starting point. If that were true, neighborhoods, homes, schools, the routines and rhythms of social life, and the goals and means to reach those goals would be the same for everyone. Instead, tremendous gaps exist between the fortunate and less-fortunate members of U.S. society (Rothstein 2004). It is the less fortunate in societies, the poorest of the poor, and the most culturally conflicted individuals and groups who must command our attention. It is these street-socialized youth who are most prone to being subjected to disconnection and becoming gang members. To inform a balanced strategy as a way forward, we must first understand how gangs are formed.

### **A BALANCED STRATEGY AS THE WAY FORWARD**

Contemporary policy and practice ought to address gang involvement and the disengagement of boys and men of color with a balanced strategy of



prevention, intervention, and law enforcement. We must adopt a carrot-and-stick approach—that is, one that provides appropriate rewards and punishments—to give millions of parents the tools that will help their children lead a life that is free of gang violence and rich with opportunities for growth and development. Looking at two examples in Southern California, and in Los Angeles in particular, illustrates why a balanced strategy should be implemented. Los Angeles currently embraces two anti-gang legal channels: STEP (Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act) and the Gang Injunction. STEP is a special law that enhances the penalties for any gang member who is charged with a crime. Under this law the definition of “gang member” has been cobbled together by public lawyers, not by researchers who have studied gangs. Even in this latter group, opinions vary tremendously regarding what constitutes a gang and a gang member. Thus the application of STEP to gang members has been inconsistent and widely misapplied by police officials and prosecutors, such as charging petty gang contacts and minor crimes (Vigil 2003).

In contrast, the Gang Injunction attempts to break up gangs through a legal path. Under this approach a judge files an injunction that bars gang members who live in a named gang neighborhood from congregating in public places. Each of the known members of the gang is also named and is served a court document that informs him or her of this ruling and the legal consequences of defying it. Besides major problems in determining who is served with injunctions, whether they are still active gang members, and how they might avoid this designation, there is a far more glaring problem associated with this draconian legal statute. According to its rationale, this law is supposed to target gangs that are the most violent and troublesome, constituting a public nuisance. However, research shows that the injunction focuses on gangs that are close to middle-class neighborhoods or areas that are being gentrified (Alonso 1999). Not surprisingly, the Gang Injunction and STEP approaches fail to address the situations and conditions that create the gang and gang members in the first place. Let’s look at the concepts of multiple marginality and street socialization among boys and men of color to explain the roots of gang involvement.

### **MULTIPLE MARGINALITY AND STREET SOCIALIZATION**

Multiple marginality is a conceptual tool that explains street socialization among boys and men of color. Street gangs are the result of marginalization—that is, the relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness

(Hazlehurst and Hazlehurst 1998; Szanton Blanc et al. 1995; Vigil 1987). An individual's connections, or social bonds, with significant others ordinarily begin with the family and gradually extend to others outside kinship networks, starting mainly at school. However, multiple marginalization erodes social bonds and contributes to the breakdown of family life and schooling routines, resulting in a generally untethered existence for a youth, which leads to more time spent on the streets. Outside the purview and supervision of adult caretakers in the home and school, the youth undergoes a socialization influenced and guided by a street-based peer group: the resident gang. This street-based socialization becomes a key factor in developing social bonds that may be at odds with aspirations for achievement and levels and intensities of healthy patterns of participation.

Moreover, macrohistorical and macrostructural forces—such as changing demographics due to immigration, persistent poverty, and racism—also often undermine the normal attachment processes of many youths who end up in gangs; these forces can generate shocks that detach family members from each other. For example, such socioeconomic factors as poverty, economic dislocation, divorce, single-parent households, and the experience of racism place severe stresses on many families, so that home life is regularly unstable (Conchas 2006; Vigil 2007). Unable to provide adequate sustenance for their children, many parents lose their coping skills and fail to supervise and guide their offspring in the development of their social bonds. When this unstable situation persists for years, an attitude of resignation and defeat gradually develops among the adults and children in economically depressed communities.

The processes and situations of immigration can serve as the starting point for understanding the initial stage of marginalization. America's long gang history began in the mid-nineteenth century, when ethnically distinct populations, including Irish and Italians, came to the United States. At that time children of immigrant parents were particularly affected as they struggled to adapt to a new culture and set of norms, thus distancing themselves from their parents' ways of life. Meanwhile, their parents had to find jobs for themselves and a way to raise their families in an urban setting; this was an unsettling situation, because for the most part they had come from small, rural environments with sharply contrasting social conditions. Many contemporary immigrants come from the southern section of the Western Hemisphere and experience the same challenges past immigrants faced (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995).

The process of adaptation, experienced by both past and current immigrants, affects family structure and stability, school readiness in the

context of language and cultural differences, and points of contact with police and the criminal justice system. This process unfolds on many levels and is subject to pressures and external forces that accumulate over a long period. The phrase “multiple marginality” reflects the complexities and persistence of these forces. As a theory-building framework, multiple marginality encompasses ecological, economic, sociocultural, and psychological factors that affect adaptation and that underlie street gangs and youths’ participation in them (Covey, Menard, and Franzese 1992; Vigil 1988a, 1988b, and 2002). The cumulative social-control effects of multiple marginality also inform gang formation.

Poverty and marginalization lead to a cohort of youth being raised principally in the streets. This phenomenon, known as “street socialization,” helps to explain the emergence of street gangs and gang members. Street socialization continues as social controls break down and human-development processes are undermined by stressful situations and conditions that seem hopeless. Specific examples of new ways to address these destructive and detrimental events and episodes are offered below to give readers a better idea of how a successful strategy can integrate prevention, intervention, and suppression. This approach centers on time, place, and people: it focuses on encouraging urban youth to spend their time in more constructive ways, using age-appropriate interventions; changing the pressures and demands of place (the home and street); and introducing a new supporting cast of people to guide and supervise the urban children most prone to the negative effects of street socialization.

### **Defining Street Socialization**

Street socialization is a principal characteristic of established gangs and occurs, to a considerable degree, away from home, school, and other traditional institutions (Vigil 1988b). Socialization is the process by which a person learns the behaviors and norms of a given social group and is molded into an effective participant. The most disadvantaged youth are often the most unsupervised and reside in crowded housing conditions where private space is limited (Vigil 2007). These youngsters are driven into the public space of the streets, where peers and adolescent males, with whom they must contend, dominate. These peers and older males provide a new social network and models for new normative behavior, values, and attitudes. Gang membership makes youngsters feel protected from competing gangs that pose a possible threat.

Why do boys and men of color join street gangs? We argue that physi-

cal situations (for example, inferior, crowded housing and exposure only to run-down and spatially separate enclaves) and social conditions (such as low or inadequate income; lack of or limited identity with dominant institutions; and social and cultural conflicts between first- and second-generation family members) compel many urban youths to seek the peer bonding and social support that street gangs provide. Often, boys and men of color in impoverished circumstances perceive that they have very few alternatives to gangs.

Once in the streets, the young person must determine where he fits within the hierarchy of dominance and aggression required for survival. Being from a family that has gang members—a brother, an uncle, or another relative—helps in gaining entrance into a gang and offers generational continuity for the gang itself. Otherwise, a young male will only get protection by seeking out associates who are streetwise, experienced, and willing to be friends: namely, gang members (Vigil 1988a and 1988b). This in turn prompts the new gang member to return the favor by demonstrating willingness to think and act in ways approved by his friends. The newly established social bonds are reinforced, a sense of protection is gained, and new behavior patterns and values are learned. Let us be clear that all street-raised youths do not join gangs, but those who *do* join gangs come to terms with the often violent and antisocial peer norms that characterize the street gang.

In the absence of positive adult supervision, youths also look to the streets for adventure and for the freedom to undertake those adventures. A boy can wander where he wants and return when he wishes, answering to no one or at worst face a verbal or physical reprimand from his often-absent parents when he returns home. In this atmosphere of freedom, other children become his reference group, and the values and guidelines encourage activities outside the limits of adult approval. Experimentation with alcohol and drugs occurs, weapons are accepted as a power equalizer when needed, deviant actions are taken on a dare, and bonds with similarly street-active peers who are also school classmates are intensified.

This preadolescent interaction provides the fertile ground for later adolescent bonding, when more serious gang matters are introduced. Many of the incidents exhibiting protection, daringness, managing fear, and conducting mischievous acts are seared into the memories of preadolescent youth. The remembrance of a shared past is often a basis for instilling loyalty and comrade-in-arms friendships that make later gang affiliations more bonding. Street socialization thus becomes the basis for entrance into the gang and for the perpetuation of gang lore and traditions. It is the first

phase of the integration into the gang subculture that for some individuals evolves into steady and uninterrupted development.

### **Gang Subcultures and the Breakdown in Social Control**

Social-control institutions, both formal and informal (for example, the family, schools, peer groups, and law-enforcement agencies), strive to ensure that individuals behave in acceptable ways and define the proper action to take when people veer from commonly accepted norms. As social scientists have long noted, social control is an important function of all cultures, one in which the family traditionally plays a key role (Vigil 2007). When family or other normative social forces and influences do not function as they should, street subcultures often arise to fill the void. The structure and form of the family and other institutions of social control vary from society to society, and more so in the case of immigrant families. These families are greatly affected by the disruptions and marginalization they face in moving from one society to another. The new place, in large part, determines how successfully the family can function as an agent of social control.

To understand gangs, one must comprehend the ramifications of social control as well as how this concept can be integrated into the multiple-marginality perspective. Some social controls are internalized by individuals; others, including formal and informal social sanctions, are externalized mechanisms that encourage or enforce conformity. In so doing, the times in a person's life when these street processes occur, and the places and people with whom they unfold, are important because they almost predict that a gang member is in the making. In other words, early street socialization and the bonds between street youths make for a solid foundation that when established create a formidable social unit.

In so doing, family strains and schooling problems erupt in the early childhood years, and street socialization gradually takes over at least by later childhood. Adolescence processes also become more complicated. During this stage of development, associations with a multiaged peer group of the streets lead to the acquisition and retention of values and norms that contrast markedly with those accepted by the dominant society. Thus the social control of gang life completely transforms and undermines the human development of involved youths and affects their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs and desires.

Gang members become isolated and marginalized in distinct ethnic enclaves. This isolation and detachment from other communities—which

make gang members wary of outsiders—are integral to the breakdown of social control. For instance, the entire gang takes threats and challenges directed at one gang member seriously; an infraction against one member is an affront to all. Defense of turf is a *raison d'être* for a gang and a subcultural solution to feeling marked as fair game by rival gangs. The bonds of mutual trust based on friendships encourage gang membership for protection.

Within certain areas of Southern California, there exist numerous low-income enclaves—some classically defined by geography, others more loosely defined—that for decades have been “at war” with one another (Vigil 2007). This tradition of conflict is passed on through the generations. Within these areas most youths who join a gang, and even most who do not, know who the enemies are and how to fight them. An awareness of and identification with the gang is facilitated by the customary way that past events and incidents are remembered and recalled; this type of oral history builds up the image and reputation of the gang. Lore, legend, and even myths involving specially “embossed” stories are the vehicles with which the spoken word helps the subculture survive. For instance, the nickname “Geronimo” was given to the leader of the Apaches Gang because he was fearless and he later rose to become the welterweight boxing champion of the world, a truly Paul Bunyanesque story. A complex value system of the streets is thus created through the street socialization process.

Our research suggests that socialization experiences offer important information that should inform antigang policies and practices. Through an analysis of the street-socialization process, we can gather facts, describe transformations, and offer interpretations of at what point family life and its structures unravel, how schools fail, why law enforcement remains disconnected from low-income communities, and when a multiage peer group and street socialization begin to dominate a youth's life. Only when we have command of this information can new prevention, intervention, and suppression approaches be generated and potential fixes debated and contemplated. A cross-cultural examination of the interplay between the microframework of social control and the macroframework of multiple marginality can better inform policy and practice.

### **Informing a Balanced Strategy through Root Causes of Gangs**

Our research argues that gang-abatement interventions ought to be informed by the roots and traditions of the gang street lifestyle. In particular, the elements of time, place, and people can serve as a basis for a balanced strategy. A balanced strategy posits that when time management and the

power of place is reconfigured (or reformed and restructured) for gang members and at-risk youth in general, people become the essence of the equation of what constitutes balance. This concerted effort would fill a major void by supplementing punishments with rewards. Taking this broader, more inclusive approach to improving community health by focusing on youths whose circumstances place them at risk would also address human developmental processes. Society must address the problems associated with gang families and re-equip parents with coping strategies to guide their children (Rodriguez and Conchas 2009). We must undertake a serious effort to remediate the educational problems of all street children.

### PROMISING PRACTICES FOR STREET-SOCIALIZED YOUTH IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

This section discusses initiatives that attempt to provide a balanced strategy to improve the lives of street-socialized youth. In our own studies of youth subcultures and education, qualitative data and insights are contextualized within a quantitative research strategy. Applied social scientists evaluating the effectiveness of social- and cultural-change programs have found it useful, even necessary, to rely heavily on their ethnographic skills to acquire relevant information and insights about those programs and their impact. Combining information obtained, for example, by participant observation and intensive interviewing of key informants with more readily quantifiable data from other sources ensures a balanced *emic* and *etic* understanding. An *emic* understanding is based on viewing phenomena through the cultural lens of the people whom the program was intended to serve; it roughly corresponds to what we refer to as an *insider* point of view. An *etic* understanding is framed in terms of cross-culturally valid social-scientific paradigms and terminology; it is objective and referred to as an *outsider* point of view. We attempt to combine both perspectives and data sources.

The following programs present a balanced strategy embracing the factors of time, place, and people. Our research highlights examples that revolve around prevention, intervention, and suppression. Although many more programs exist, our research emphasizes a number that we have evaluated and others that research has shown to have promising potential.

#### Prevention

CASASTART, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University in New York City launched the prevention program Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows.<sup>1</sup> Its primary focus

is on outcomes for children ages eleven to thirteen who live in highly distressed neighborhoods; are in transition from childhood to adolescence; and are subject to delinquency, criminal behavior, drugs, and patterns of illegal activities. Counseling and social-work strategies are emphasized in the interventions for these social problems. Caseworkers consider the intersection of community, family, school, peers, and individual habits. CASASTART delivers integrated services to identified youths and all members of their households. Case managers collaborate closely with staff from criminal justice agencies, schools, and other community organizations to provide comprehensive services that target individual, peer group, family, and neighborhood risk factors. In addition, programs are locally planned and directed to fit the values and cultural background of the diverse neighborhoods that CASASTART serves.

*Families First.* Another prevention program, Families First, focuses on supporting and educating parents.<sup>2</sup> This program recognizes that first-generation Americans have trouble adapting to U.S. norms and communicating with their often English-language-dominant children. A strength of Families First is that it takes into account the parents' cultural backgrounds when teaching them to be better parents. The program also includes teachers who speak multiple languages. Parents enrolled in Families First report that practicing the lessons they learned at Families First leads to increases in their knowledge of and confidence in raising their own children. The program focuses on three areas of child development—discipline, self-esteem, and communication—that are crucial to rearing healthy children.

*Light of the Cambodian Family.* The Southeast Asian Health Project of Long Beach, California, launched the Light of the Cambodian Family Initiative in the early 1990s. The program focused on early elementary school children of the Khmer community, an ethnic enclave that was experiencing a serious gang problem with adolescent youths. It was a prevention effort precisely because the target populations were six-year-olds—first graders—and their adult caretakers or parents. The program took into account several human-development factors, such as how the children released their energy, how they were cared for at home, and their self-esteem. In earlier work we report how the Long Beach public school teachers who had these children in their first- and second-grade classes provided supportive evidence of the initiative's relative success (Vigil 2007). Teachers reported that the children enrolled in the program increasingly used nonaggressive problem solving in settling problems that bubbled up in the schoolyard. The children also significantly increased their average performance on both the Cambodian cultural awareness test and the



health-and-safety test after the first year of participation. Both the teachers of the Cambodian culture classes and the children's parents who were interviewed by the program's parent liaison worker indicated that most children have continued to show increased knowledge of and interest in Khmer culture. Regrettably, as with so many other promising early prevention programs, government funding was cut and the supportive services eliminated (Vigil 2007).

### Intervention

*Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).* The AVID program's goal is to put "students who are capable of completing rigorous curriculum but are falling short of their potential" into college-track classes.<sup>3</sup> Researcher Hugh Mehan and colleagues (1996) have demonstrated how social scaffolding mediates student agency and positive academic outcomes. This program helps entire neighborhoods by helping kids stay in school and away from gangs—making them realize that higher education is an attainable goal. Teens with college attendance as a goal are motivated to stay focused in school and to stay away from the pressure to join a gang or to become involved in any activity that might hamper their future success. AVID is only the first step in increasing graduation rates and college enrollment, however. The program reports that since 1990, more than 65,300 AVID students have graduated from high school planning to attend college. Of the 2009 AVID graduates, 92 percent planned to attend college; 60 percent plan to attend a four-year college and 32 percent a two-year college.

*Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.* Big Brothers Big Sisters of America addresses poor self-esteem and limited hope for the future.<sup>4</sup> Big Brothers Big Sisters is focused largely on mentoring, but an integral aspect of the program involves a responsible adult volunteer taking his or her little brother or sister to enriching and interesting places for exposure to a world outside the neighborhood. This program has benefited many children and helped to take them off the streets.

*Homeboy Industries.* Homeboy Industries is a nonprofit organization based in East Los Angeles whose primary objective is to provide services that give gang youths better opportunities to successfully reintegrate into a society that has rejected them.<sup>5</sup> The goal of Homeboy Industries is to divert gang members away from deviant behavior and give them a chance to live a productive and fulfilling life. The company's executive director and founder, Father Gregory J. Boyle, started Homeboy Industries in 1992

in response to the civil unrest initiated by the Rodney King riots that took place in his church's neighborhood in Los Angeles. The program is located in Boyle Heights, a neighborhood that is believed to have the highest concentration of gang activity in all of Los Angeles (Vigil 2007). For eighteen years Homeboy Industries has worked to significantly reduce gang activity.

*Inner-City Games (ICG)*. Founded in 1991 in East Los Angeles at the Hollenbeck Youth Center, the ICG program has since expanded to fifteen cities across the United States.<sup>6</sup> The goal of the program is to provide athletic, recreational, social, cultural, and educational outlets for children ages eight to fourteen years on weekdays and Saturdays from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. during March through September. The program uses "spiritually based" constructs to frame its specific goals, which are to connect youths to the larger world, to operate within a coordinated network of other agencies, and to help youths say no to gangs and drugs.

*Boston Urban Youth Foundation (BUYF)*. The BUYF is a community-based truancy-prevention program working to reduce absenteeism, truancy, dropping out, and joining gangs in the Metro Boston area.<sup>7</sup> The BUYF seeks to prepare socially and academically disadvantaged Black and Latina/Latino youth for college and successful futures. The program's central mission is to help young people develop spiritually, emotionally, academically, and economically. The organizational structure and programs revolve around key social and educational processes that empower low-income disadvantaged urban young people to adopt promising educational practices. Over time BUYF participants once considered truant in gangs or on the verge of joining gangs attend school and develop a pro-academic orientation toward success. Currently, BUYF seeks to expand to the Harlem community of New York City.

### Suppression

*Community-oriented policing services*. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Regional Community Policing Institute (RCPI) was established in 1997 to conduct law-enforcement training sessions and workshops throughout the Southern California area.<sup>8</sup> The program delivers exceptional collaborative training dedicated to advancing the practices of law enforcement through real-life world application and the institutionalization of community policing to create safe environments. The training program is a partnership and collaboration with other law-enforcement

and service organizations in the greater Los Angeles service area. The mission of COPS (community-oriented policing services) focuses on establishing a regional information, training, and research facility with three overarching purposes: (1) to conduct training programs on community policing for law-enforcement agencies and community partners; (2) to coordinate community policing resources, community forums, and exchanges; (3) to develop materials, provide technical assistance, and disseminate information to community members and agencies, police, and/or other government officials; and (4) to conduct research on the implementation and effects of community policing and collaboration between law enforcement and community agencies.

*Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST)*. This organization focuses on the upbringing as well as the education of youths in Los Angeles County, where "lack of parental supervision is one of the main causes of delinquency."<sup>9</sup> The mission of LA's BEST is to keep young children off the street after school. It was created in 1988 by the late former Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley to address the lack of adult supervision for elementary school children ages five to twelve during the critical hours between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. The program provides safe and supervised after-school education, enrichment, and recreation, free of charge, in elementary schools. It serves more than twenty-eight thousand children who have access to few resources, and many youth whose circumstances place them vulnerable to gangs, drugs, and crime. The program is offered at schools with the lowest test scores. Nearly 81 percent of the students who participate in this program are Latino, predominantly of Mexican descent, and 11 percent are African American.

*Youth Activity League (YAL)*. The City of Industry Sheriff's Station Youth Activities League (YAL) began in 1991 specifically to promote the health and well-being of youth in their communities as a means to deter them from drugs and gangs.<sup>10</sup> The program recognizes the importance of early intervention and provides a much-needed partnership between law enforcement, parents, business, education, government, and community service groups. The YAL strengthens the relationship between the deputies and the volunteers as they work in concert to benefit all youth. The YAL offers after-school programs to more than three thousand children a year and provides a wide variety of opportunities through public parks, community businesses, and dedicated Sheriff's Department locations. YAL programs have offered (1) sports, such as flag football, baseball, basketball, judo, tennis, golf, and more; (2) summer camp (Camp COURAGE and

scuba diving); and, (3) the Law Enforcement Academy (LEA) for middle and high schools students.

### CONCLUSION

Regardless of how many jails we build or how many cells are set aside for each new gang cohort, existing antigang strategies have failed. They have had limited success because they are not based on facts, on science, on human development, or on common sense. Society needs to be honest in recognizing this fact and must institute bold new policies to chart a healthier course for vulnerable youth. A focus on the roots of the problem will generate logical solutions that aim not merely to stem the worst violence, but to begin the long, hard effort to regain social control within gang-prone impoverished communities. Although punishment may play a role, programmatic emphasis must shift to introducing rewards early in a person's life. This balanced approach will expand the current formula to include prevention and intervention strategies.

Let those in practice and policy break out of the box of what is meant by suppression and begin to brainstorm innovative ways to solve the gang situation in many poor communities. With respect to suppression, this chapter outlined various strategies that show promising results. Although not formally evaluated, innovative programs run by the Police Activities League (PAL) in Ventura, California, are creating strong bonds among youth, the police department, and the larger community. The Ventura PAL encourages street-socialized youth to stay in school and helps fund mentoring, tutoring, recreation, and educational after-school activities. The teamwork of the Ventura PAL, the City of Ventura, and the Ventura Unified School District helps low-income youth grow into productive citizens and enhances a positive and proactive approach to crime prevention. The Ventura PAL model serves as a prevention, intervention, and law-enforcement strategy that can inform other communities throughout the nation on how to bring vulnerable youth from the margin to the mainstream. This balanced approach ought to be the norm—not the exception.

### NOTES

1. For more on CASASTART, see <http://www.dontletminorsdrink.com/downloads/CASA.pdf>.
2. The Families First Parenting Programs is at <http://www.families-first.org>.
3. For more on the Advancement Via Individual Determination program, see <http://www.avid.org>.

4. See <http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.diJKKYPLJvH/b.1539751/k.BDB6/Home.htm> for information on the national Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization.
5. Learn about Homeboy Industries at <http://www.homeboy-industries.org>.
6. The Hollenbeck Youth Center runs the ICG program; see <http://www.hollenbeckpb.org>.
7. The Boston Urban Youth Foundation is at <http://www.buyf.org>.
8. See <http://www.lasdhq.org/divisions/leadership-training-div/bureaus/ebd/assets/rcpi-training-that-is-too-good-to-be-true.pdf>.
9. For more on Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's BEST), see <http://www.lasbest.org>.
10. For more on City of Industry Sheriff's Station Youth Activities League, see <http://www.industryal.org>.

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■  
**EIGHT**

**A RADICAL-HEALING APPROACH  
FOR BLACK YOUNG MEN**

*A Framework for Policy and Practice*

Shawn Ginwright

**ABSTRACT**

This chapter argues for a shift to an asset-based approach in creating policies to improve the lives of black men and boys—assets often overlooked by policymakers and researchers. This approach, called radical healing, can help build more effective strategies and public policy for the most troubled black youth populations. I explore the ways in which young black men (ages fifteen to twenty) discuss their fathers, manhood, racism, violence, and rage with love, compassion, and care in a community support group. Building from legal scholar Athena Mutua's (2006) notion of progressive black masculinities, this chapter illustrates how support groups can change beliefs about black masculinity. I conclude with policy and practice recommendations based on the radical-healing framework.

■  
How does it feel to be a problem?

W.E.B DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

**BACKGROUND**

As I drove with my seven-year-old daughter, Nyah, to our home in East Oakland, she noticed a group of African American teens hanging out on

a corner near our neighborhood. Cool fall weather had settled in the Bay Area, and all the young men were wearing large gray or black jackets with hoods. As we turned the corner and passed them, my daughter asked, “Daddy, are they dangerous?” I restrained myself from being shocked at her question and pretended that I didn’t know whom she was talking about. As she wiped the ice cream from her face, Nyah pointed toward the group of five young men. “Those men right there, are they dangerous?”

“Why do you think they are dangerous, honey?” I replied. “They don’t seem to be bothering anyone.” Her question deeply concerned me. How could my own daughter simply look at a group of black youth and conclude that they might be dangerous? Had I somehow contributed to her stereotype of black youth in Oakland? She knew numerous black youth from my work in the community and from attending Saturday-morning activities at Leadership Excellence, an Oakland-based community organization.

“Because I always see the police take them away,” she said. Despite the fact that my wife and I teach our children to be proud of being black through positive black images throughout our home, Nyah’s perceptions of black youth had been influenced by television and observations of police interactions. The fact of the matter was that images from the news and seeing police interact with youth outweighed her own positive personal interactions with black youth.

Unfortunately, negative images that portray black youth as a “menace to society” also influence public policy. Nightly news stories of shootings involving young black men, films that depict black youths as dangerous criminals, and newspaper reports of rising crime among black teens all contribute to the negative image of black youths (Dance 2002). These images reinforce racist fears of black people among the general public and have an indelible impact on public policy. For example, policing practices that target black youth have resulted in disproportionate arrest rates in San Francisco. Despite the fact that blacks comprised only 7.3 percent of San Francisco’s total population in 2005, they made up more than 50 percent of the total arrests that year, the highest rate of arrests among blacks in California.<sup>1</sup> Public policy advocates and criminologists suggest that misperceptions about black youth and crime among law-enforcement agencies has contributed to policing practices that target black youth in their neighborhoods (Elikann 1999; Males 1999; Males and Macallair 2000).

African American males face a number of obstacles to educational success, economic mobility, and well-being (Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer 2008; Noguera 2008; Young 2004). Structural barriers including poor-quality schools and fewer job opportunities have limited the life chances for black



males in comparison to their white counterparts. These barriers are sometimes justified by negative perceptions held by white employers, police, and teachers, and are often based on the fear that black men are dangerous and a threat to public safety (Wilson b 1996). Extensive research has shown how sentencing laws, policing practices, and public policy have all contributed to disproportionate numbers of incarcerated and adjudicated black men (Brunson and Miller 2006; Mincy 2006; Young 2004). Scholars have also illustrated how film, television news, and even social science research have portrayed young black males in ways that reinforce negative perceptions in the minds of policy stakeholders (Hutchinson 1994). Images of young black men have “a way of maintaining themselves in the public’s mind and in the absence of quality information and analyses, these images have become the primary prisms through which people construct an understanding of social reality” (Sánchez-Jankowski 1991: 288).

As mentioned, social science research has also contributed to negative perceptions of black men. This is largely because researchers have become focused on describing and predicting negative behavior, including violence, aggression, idleness, and survival strategies (Anderson 1990; Anderson 1999; Wilson 1996). This myopic focus on young black men has a long tradition in social science research, and as a result, researchers and policy stakeholders have not adequately understood the assets among black men. These assets—such as social support networks formed in barbershops, and informal and positive mentoring of younger boys on the basketball court—can be a rich source to build effective public policy to support the development of black young men.

An asset-based approach avoids simply documenting disparities among black and white young men and boys; rather, the focus is on questions about what is good about black young men’s behavior. When public policy focuses on assets, stakeholders focus on questions: What is good about young black men’s behavior? How do black young men navigate systems and policies in ways that contribute to individual and community health and well-being? How do black men care for one another? These questions are vitally important for public policy, given the preponderance of youth programs and services in urban black communities that focus almost entirely on preventing problems rather than creating opportunities for social action.

This chapter argues for a shift to an asset-based approach in creating policies to improve the lives of black men and boys—assets often overlooked by policymakers and researchers. This approach, called radical healing, can help build more effective strategies and public policy for the most troubled black youth populations. This essay explores the ways in

which young black men (ages fifteen to twenty) discuss their fathers, manhood, racism, violence, and rage with love, compassion, and care in a community support group.

### BEYOND PATHOLOGY: TOWARD AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO PUBLIC POLICY

W.E.B. DuBois's "The Study of the Negro Problems" (1898) and *The Philadelphia Negro* (DuBois 1899) provided one of the first theoretically informed ethnographies of black urban life. Early in his career, DuBois was interested in describing the conditions and behaviors within black communities that he believed contributed to urban problems. For DuBois black social problems could be explained largely through an understanding of the impact of enslavement and its effects on black progress through examining social behaviors, physical surroundings, and work patterns. "We have two great causes for the present conditions of the Negro," he wrote, "slavery and emancipation with their attendant phenomena of ignorance, lack of discipline and moral weakness. . . . [And] the physical surrounding of house and home and ward, the moral encouragements and discouragements which he encounters" (DuBois 1898: 283).

DuBois's conclusion about problems in black life involves two fundamental elements that continue to shape the study of black communities in general and black men in particular. The first is that black problems can be best conceptualized as a "symptom" of broader social, economic, and structural factors. Thus crime, violence, and moral decay are not endemic to black communities, but rather the result of being locked out of good jobs, being forced into poor housing, and participating in poor-quality schools. Second, the environment and social settings in which black men go about their daily lives are rich with cultural information that can help to better understand values, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in black communities. More recently, research has focused more directly on how structural factors like joblessness influence values and behaviors among black men (Anderson 1999; Wilson 1996a).

Still researchers continue to depict black male youth as contentious and define their behavior through tough postures, potential violence, and maladaptive behaviors (Anderson 1999). For example, Elijah Anderson's (1999) ethnography of black families in Philadelphia details how rules, norms, and values unique to urban poverty foster violence and other problematic behaviors among black youth. His perspective of violent and high-risk

behavior, particularly related to youth, is viewed as a function of local beliefs and values that are adaptations to economic deprivation. For black male youth violence is thus an accepted code of conduct. The black youth participating in violence gain respect among their peers, while others participate in violence as a way to navigate risky confrontations on the streets. By focusing only on violence, however, Anderson fails to capture the mosaic of experiences and textured realities of black young men's lives. This focus has resulted in an "exceptionally myopic view of [black men's] humanity" (Young 2004: 20). Unfortunately, these discussions about black men's lives remain restricted to static conceptualizations of masculinity, rigid frames about work and family life, and distorted views about behavior.

Associating black young men with violence has become common in the media. Consider the ways in which the general public views violence and homicides among black youth (*We Interrupt This Message* 2001). Newspapers and evening news accounts of gang violence in urban black communities conveys the notion that the death of a gang member is less significant than the death of a student. Homicides among gang members are framed by the media in such a way that suggests that death from gang involvement deserves little sympathy. Rather than discussing how years of disinvestment in black communities has created joblessness, for example, the general public asks, "Where is the tragedy?" (Johnson 1995: 219). Educational researcher Jennifer Alleyne Johnson has accurately stated that the general public has come to view violence among black youth as a normal fact of life and therefore has become desensitized to the death of black youth. From her article "Life after Death," she explains:

Violence becomes the word that both subsumes one event (the tragedy of the victim's death) and qualifies another action (a brutal homicide). In addition, this framework defines the actors as potential menaces to society, thereby undermining any sympathy when lives are taken by an act of violence. As a result, the public feels a macabre sense of relief when it is reported that the "menaces" killed each other. Death framed as violence begs the question, "Where is the tragedy?" This framework leaves no room to mourn a family member lost to a brutal death. On an even more insidious level, the "violent" framing of African American homicide incriminates both the assassin and the deceased. Looking at death only through a lens of violence generates silence around the issue of this death as loss. Thus, the tragedy and overall impact of death felt by surviving African American adolescents is hidden by mainstream society's inability and unwillingness to deal with the issue of death or with the brutal way most Black adolescents encounter death. In this harsh light and harsher silence stands the African American adolescent whose friend or loved one was gunned down. (Johnson 1995: 219)

The persistent intellectual and public fetish of the problems of black young males has grossly obscured an understanding of social and behavioral assets shared among black young men, regardless of their social class and income. This chapter raises questions regarding alternative ways in which young black men care for one another, share advice, or help each other develop their beliefs about manhood. Recent research has given us a rare glimpse into the worldviews and “meaning making” of black men and their aspirations (Young 2004). The research illustrates how individuals can act on their environment in ways that improve their quality of life and that of others (Smith 2007; Young 2004). Focusing on agency (the capacity to make choices and act) demonstrates how black men make meaning out of dire situations and sometimes act to change their life chances.

Sociologist Alford Young’s (2004) work is important because it extends our view of young black male behavior beyond the conceptual boundaries of labor, crime, and notions of extinction. For many of us working in education, youth development, and community-based organizations, positive change is often viewed as “fixing” black youth. The very structure of funding often requires that we reduce youth violence, increase academic performance, or prepare youth for employment. The emphasis on programs that exclusively focus on harm reduction or prevention simply is not enough. Problem negation is not a social-justice approach. Social-justice educators and teachers must learn to connect resistance with creating; organizing with dreaming; and activism with hope. Making these connections provides us with a more holistic and richer understanding of what constitutes social-justice forms of public policy.

### **RADICAL HEALING AS A POLITICAL ACT IN BLACK COMMUNITY LIFE**

“Radical healing” is a framework used to understand the assets of black young men. It examines the capacity of black young men to act upon their environment in ways that contribute to well-being for the common good. This framework allows policymakers, educators, and practitioners to understand how hope, joy, and a sense of possibility contribute to individual well-being, community health, and broader social justice. Research on education, social movements, and youth development has not adequately addressed the theoretical significance of suffering nor does it consider the significance of hope. Radical healing is rooted in a vibrant community life through which love, hope, and goodness can solve problems. Hope and imagining are important prerequisites for activism and social change.

We must inspire youth to understand that community conditions are not permanent and that imagining new possibilities is the first step to change.

Radical healing involves building the capacity of young people to act upon their environment to create the type of communities in which they want to live. By integrating issues of power, history, identity, and the possibility of collective agency and struggle, radical healing rebuilds communities that foster hope and political possibilities for young people. This process acknowledges the ways in which joblessness, poverty, violence, and poor education have been toxic to black communities. At the same time this process fosters new forms of political and community life. By rebuilding collective identities (racial, gendered, youth), exposing youth to critical thinking about social conditions, and building activism, we can help black youth heal. Radical healing is much broader than simply moving from pathology to wellness. The concept focuses on how hope, imagination, and care transform the capacity of communities to confront community problems. For young people healing fosters a collective optimism and a transformation of spirit that over time contributes to a healthy and vibrant community life for all.

An important part of the radical-healing framework is the use of caring relationships that connect people to meaningful acts of resistance. In this sense a caring relationship refers not simply to individual acts of kindness, but rather to a relationship that prepares black youth to understand themselves in terms of a long history of struggle and triumph. In communities ravaged by violence, crime, and poverty, care is perhaps one of the most revolutionary antidotes to urban trauma because it facilitates healing and a passion for justice. Without investments in caring relationships, young people's anger and frustration from negative experiences are pent up and sometimes explode in violence. Care within the black community is as much a political act as it is a personal gesture because it requires that the relationship prepare black youth to confront racism and view their personal trauma as a result of systemic social problems.

Traditional modes of care in black communities have always been central in sustaining black life and affirming black identity in the context of brutal racism. Caring relationships among church members, in neighborhoods, and in the workplace provide black communities with a sanctuary to heal from difficult life situations. By discussing fears and concerns as well as hopes and dreams, caring relationships are important ways to foster hope. These modes of care function as buffers and as cultural armor that create and sustain community life and "ways of life and struggle that embody values of service and sacrifice, love and care, discipline and excellence" (West 1993). These views of care were defined not by compassion but by communal

survival, where community members would support one another in undergoing personal hardships, including death, illness, or loss of shelter. There are few community spaces for black youth to heal from trauma they experience. Schools rarely have opportunities or are ill prepared to engage young people in a healing process. Often schools actually breed violence through draconian rules and a fetish for control, containment, and punishment.

To be effective, public policy should focus on strategies, pathways, and opportunities to build the capacity of black young men to improve the material aspects of their lives. Power and control over life situations are key to social justice and wellness (Prilleltensky 2008; Prilleltensky, Nelson, and Peirson 2001). Wellness encompasses more than striving for the absence of risks and the elimination of community problems. Rather, it focuses on how to create the social conditions where individuals and communities can thrive. Wellness and social-justice programs illustrate how young people's aspirations to create better schools, safe neighborhoods, and vibrant community life require developing individuals and their communities. The relationship between social justice and wellness is an important aspect of radical healing. Individuals seek power and control both at the personal level, through their own decision making, and at the political level by organizing their neighborhood to influence public policy. This pursuit of justice and freedom yields both internal capacity to confront oppression while building social capital and a greater external capacity to create better community conditions.

There are places of refuge, often hidden from public view, that allow African American youths to reconcile, confront, and heal their psychic wounds. However, these spaces are often misunderstood and grossly undertheorized. Healthy community-building allows for black youths to remove the masks and tough exteriors they need to survive and encourages them to share their problems, hopes, and dreams. Support groups, mentoring, and simply spending time together builds opportunities for black youths to care, love, dream, imagine, and hope. Through testimony, dialogue, and witnessing, we can understand an affirming love for humanity and justice. This way of conceptualizing care also builds from prior treatments of social capital, which focus on the ways in which mutual trust facilitates community action (Ginwright and Cammarota 2007).

What follows are case studies in radical healing in the daily life of young black men, ages fifteen to eighteen. Located in Oakland, California, the Men Educating, Creating, Action (MECA) support group provides participants with a supportive space to share their ideas, dreams, and concerns. The conversations during these support group meetings provide young

men with a sense of purpose, direction, and hope. Key to these discussions is the way in which a sense of purpose, direction, and hope is translated to civic action that addresses the material reality of participants' lives. The data for these case studies were collected over a three-year period (2005 to 2008) and largely consisted of participant observation and interviews of ten African American youths from Leadership Excellence (LE), a community-based organization in Oakland that works primarily with African American youth. My observations occurred largely during the organization's summer events, such as summer camps, and during weekly political education meetings. These observations also extended into the youths' schools, local shopping centers, and occasionally their homes. My process involved collecting extensive field notes of observations of group meetings at the summer program, conversations as the youths traveled to other parts of the city, and one-on-one informal conversations.

During my participation and observations in many of the meetings, discussions, and summer programs, I was not a distant, objective observer. In fact, I often facilitated many of the group sessions. As the founder-director, I designed many of the programs and pedagogical strategies. I am also a longtime resident of Oakland and have a rather wide social network of individuals, families, and institutions that all have, at one time, worked with me on issues to improve the quality of life for Oakland's youth. As a result, numerous informal conversations with public officials, teachers, school board members, youth workers, and community residents about life in Oakland influenced these case studies.

### **CASE STUDIES IN RADICAL HEALING**

When I arrived at the support group for young men in May 2008, I was somewhat surprised that there were only twelve young men at the Men Educating, Creating, Action (MECA) support group. Bilal, the program coordinator, had told me several times about the powerful and insightful discussions youths often have during the Thursday-night meetings. There were no predetermined topics during the MECA support group's discussions. Young men would show up, and the facilitator would begin to check in with everyone. Someone's comment would spark a conversation that led to a larger group discussion. Sometimes they would talk about a new movie, other times they would talk about relationships. MECA was a place where the young men could be themselves and talk about whatever was on their minds.

The discussions were usually facilitated by Bilal, a streetwise and self-

educated thirty-year-old who worked part time for Leadership Excellence and part time for Federal Express at the Oakland Airport. Bilal's ability to navigate the streets has earned him a great deal of respect among the young men at MECA. During the support group sessions, he would challenge the young men's preconceived notions of manhood. Bilal's constant questioning and prodding would force the young men to think deeply. One night the conversation focused on the young men's fathers. Some of the young men held animosity toward their fathers, while others commented about how fortunate they were to have their fathers in their lives. These conversations were personal reflections, but they constituted a political education. The reflections on their fathers were entryways to understand the social, political, and economic realities in their lives.

Bilal was an important reason why these young men felt open and safe to share with each other. He was respected and looked up to; the young men knew that he had a story similar to their own. Bilal was what sociologist Antwi Akom (2006) has referred to as a "new old head"—an older man who spends time in barbershops, malls, and on basketball courts where youth congregate, to provide guidance. In some cases the new old heads may have been formerly incarcerated but no longer participate in illegal street life. Rather, they support young people with positive decision making. These are *not* exactly the "new old heads" whom urban sociologist Elijah Anderson (1990) described in his ethnography of the Northton community. As Anderson (1990: 103–4) explained it, a new old head "feels hardly any obligation to his string of women and the children he has fathered. In fact he considers it a measure of success if he can get away without being held legally accountable. . . . For him women are so many conquests, whose favors are obtained by 'running a game.' . . . Self-aggrandizement consumes his whole being . . . on the corner he attempts to influence others by displaying the trappings of success."

New old heads at MECA were more closely aligned with Akom's (2006) discussion of "old heads"—usually thirty-something African American working-class males who are not involved with gangs or drugs. They are considered "hustlers," defined as "a person who defies traditional social norms by sometimes working outside the formal economy, often without the privilege of possessing mainstream educational credentials, placing him squarely on the bottom of the new urban economy" (Akom 2006: 82). Akom departs from Anderson's conceptualization of new old heads, arguing that old heads care about young black men and impart life lessons at Raider games, on fishing trips, and have influence and respect that is rooted in caring—not intimidation.



One night the young men at MECA were discussing the movie *American Gangster*. The movie chronicles the life of Frank Lucas, a celebrated drug dealer who built one of America's largest crime organizations. The young men celebrated Frank Lucas for his ruthless, shrewd business practices. Bilal simply asked, "How did Frank Lucas help or hurt the black community? Is that the type of man *you* want to be?" Without telling young people what to think, he sparked discussions about their perceptions of manhood. Bilal's questioning supported lessons about masculinity, sexism, misogyny, and power.

When Vince, a streetwise sixteen-year-old, first participated in the MECA support group, he held some of the strongest and most sexist views about women. It wasn't until he was confronted and constantly challenged by Bilal and other young men that his views about women began to change. "My definition of what it meant to be a man was contorted because before coming to MECA," Vince recalled, "I figured being a man was like how much money was in your pockets. So if I'm a man, I got to have the biggest stacks. I have to crack on anybody who is in my way to get what I need, which was defined by how much I got in my pocket." Vince began to develop a new understanding of manhood through conversations at MECA meetings, as Bilal questioned and discussed views of manhood with the group. Bilal was not simply teaching these young men about manhood in formal lessons from a book; he modeled the behavior in his own daily life. "In order for me to reach these youngstas," he said, "I have to be 'bout it! I can't tell them something like, 'Black women are queens,' then turn around and call a woman a bitch. I have to live what I want to see in them. I have to believe it, live it, and be it." Bilal's strong commitment to social justice was contagious.

### Vince's Homecoming

After a few months of attending MECA meetings, Vince mentioned to the group that he wanted to see if he could get over the hatred he held for not having his father in his life. He wanted to go up to the county jail where he had recently heard that his father was incarcerated and tell him how he felt about not having him around. Another young man in the group confirmed that he too wanted the opportunity to meet his father and confront him about not having him in his life. Bilal suggested that they go up to the jail and that nothing was holding them back from doing what they wanted to do. Vince took Bilal's advice and found out when he could visit the county jail and talk to his father. Taking one of the most courageous steps of his

life, he placed his name on the visitor list at the jail and wrote his father's name next to his.

Vince recalled: "I just had to see him—his face—and I wanted to see his reaction when I told him that I was Dorothy's son, *his* son. At first he didn't really know who I was until I told him. The first thing he said to me was, 'You done grown up so fast!' I thought to myself, *Don't hold back, tell him exactly what I want him to know.* So I said to him, 'How would you know, you never were around to see me!' He just sort of sat there when I said that. I told him how much he hurt me for not being there. I told him I wished he was around to show me how to knot my tie on prom night. I wanted him to tell me to run faster at my football practices. I wanted him to get on me for not doing my homework! You know, all that kind of shit. I got emotional and started to cry because I was so angry at him. I wanted him to know how much he hurt me and my family."

Vince's father didn't respond with excuses, blaming his mother or blaming the system the way Vince had anticipated. What his father told him shook Vince to the core. His father looked directly into his eyes and said with a low, sincere voice that he was so very sorry for causing Vince and his mother so much pain. "Nothing I can say or do will ever heal that; I did y'all wrong and I'll have to live with that for the rest of my life. But you, Vince, can make another choice and not repeat the mistakes I made." Vince wasn't ready to hear that from his father. He was prepared for excuses from his father and would have preferred a heated confrontation with him. Instead, he saw his father shed tears right in front of him for the pain he had caused. The encounter was overwhelming: they both cried and shed tears without words, not really knowing what to say but feeling they were headed in the right direction.

Vince returned to MECA with a sense of accomplishment. He had finally done what he had only imagined: he had confronted his father and begun a reconciliation. The other young men were so intrigued by what Vince had done that a flurry of questions preempted the scheduled topic for the evening. "What did he say to you, Vince?" "How did you get into the visiting hours?" "Did he know who you were?" "Did you curse him out?" One by one, Vince responded to the questions. He realized that his encounter with his father was about more than his own individual healing; his act of courage had opened the doorway for his father to heal as well.

When Vince returned to the jail the following week, his father smiled, glad to see him again. They talked about why he had not been around, and they laughed at small things Vince remembered about his father before he was incarcerated, such as the time he had given Vince a sip of beer when

his mother wasn't looking. After several weeks of these meetings, his father confessed to him that there were "a lot of guys in here who would love to do this. You know, talk with children they didn't do right by, but they scared, Vince, they don't know what to say or where to start." Sometimes ideas emerge from the spirit over long periods of time, and other times ideas appear with lightning speed. Vince felt a sense of inspiration, fear, and concern that he had never experienced before. But something deep inside him told him that he needed to connect more incarcerated fathers with their children.

Vince didn't know what to expect on the first day that a group of incarcerated fathers met with their children at the jail. He would have been pleased if three or four men attended, despite all the work and time that organizing the session required. Maneuvering visiting hours, meal times, instructional classes, and permissions from the jail's warden, however, was not as difficult as he had anticipated—thanks in part to Bilal's help and guidance. When Vince walked into the room, he was surprised to find all twenty of the chairs filled with men wanting to renew their relationships with their children and to hear their children share their stories. Vince recalled: "I can't really describe the feeling to know that this was happening because of something I did. Meeting my father changed my life, because when I released all the hate that I was holding, it was like there was more space for positive things to come in my life."

By letting go of his pain and anger, Vince was able to act on behalf of others. Every Tuesday at 6 p.m., the group would meet to hear from fathers and their children. The rules for these meetings were simple: sit in a circle, share your story, do not blame others, and tell the truth. Vince had learned from Bilal that everyone had a story to tell—some profound, others ordinary. Giving people the opportunity to testify and bear witness to their stories was a powerful healing tool. If supported in a community, this experience can transform one's spirits and open up new possibilities. Vince's homecoming was more than a reconciliation with his father. It illustrates how the convergence of the personal and political domains of civic life can contribute to activism. For Vince, creating the fathers' group was not simply an individual act driven by personal motivation, but rather an example of new conceptions of masculinity and agency. Support groups like MECA can become a way for black young men to develop clear visions of their lives and a sense that they can change things in their communities.

Mutua's (2006) notion of masculinity suggests that progressive black masculinities must promote human freedom, embrace dignity, and celebrate justice. For young black men, remaking masculinity in ways that

promote healing, justice, and freedom are significant because this process resists negative images of black men and recasts these images in ways that more accurately reflect the fears and dreams, the doubts and imagination of young black men's lives. This notion of masculinity offers a new dimension of activism and another entry point into civic engagement for African American youth. This process involves building the capacity to heal from personal and social issues, developing young people's political consciousness to understand the root causes of these issues, and preparing them to act in ways that solve personal and social problems. The urban sociologist Martin Sánchez-Jankowski (2002) has reminded us that we need a more nuanced understanding of civic life for youths who have histories of experiencing racial discrimination, personal trauma, and exclusion from mainstream civic activities. Through progressive ideas about masculinity, these young men were able to reengage in community life in ways that were consistent with their new beliefs about manhood.

### **Kevin's Rebound**

Kevin started participating in a black male support group called Brotha's Keeper. Between ten and fifteen young men from ages fourteen to twenty-five met every Thursday night to talk about issues ranging from personal loss to academic success. The support group gave Kevin an opportunity to grapple with the murder of his friend and to address the rage and numbness he was experiencing as a result. Connecting to other youth who had experienced similar trauma provided Kevin with a rare space to heal.

He recalled: "The only way I would deal with this stuff before I came here was to drink. But that would make me real evil. All the rage would just come out to such an extent that my partners would tell me I need to stop drinking. I really didn't know how to deal with this trauma. I don't know about getting a psychologist or something like that, 'cuz if I go see a psychologist, how they gonna tell me 'bout something they never been through? The group of brothas really helped me see what happened and deal with it differently. We talked about all types of little things that would keep my mind off of the streets. One time I got up and told a story about what happened with [my friend] Amir. The energy in the room was cool so everybody in the room was getting up to tell their stories so I kinda got a chance to let out some of my emotions. Everybody was emotional, so you know what I'm saying? I got to tell my story and just based off the energy in the room, I got a chance to let out my feelings."

These types of experiences were critical to Kevin's healing process. By

being in a safe environment, he felt safe to listen to other young men's stories but he also felt secure and empowered enough to share his own. These environments are not easy to create. In fact, many of the young men come from rival gang turfs. The leader of the young men's group, however, takes time to prepare each young man by taking him on a retreat to build a sense of trust and community. The retreat offers a space of trust and respect, where young people feel they can share their experiences openly.

### **Care and Rebuilding in Community Life**

Care is also facilitated by building critical consciousness among black youth and providing opportunities and space for political expression and engagement. For example, in March 2003, Oakland's chief of police, mayor, and the local congresswoman convened a town hall meeting to learn more about the community's experience of police misconduct. Dereca Blackmon, the director of Leadership Excellence, was asked to attend the meeting to represent Oakland's youth. Dereca recalled: "When I got to the meeting, it was the usual cast of characters: the Mayor, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and the Chief of Police. We were there to talk about youth but there were no youth at the table. So I called a few youth who were hanging out at the LE center and asked them to come and represent and speak their mind to these so-called leaders. When they arrived, they got on the open mic and blew everyone away."

Kevin approached the microphone and everyone immediately focused on how he was dressed. His baggy jeans, oversized "hoody" sweatshirt, tennis shoes, and shoulder-length locks epitomized the urban uniform for young black males in Oakland. Despite the fact that this style of dress is common among urban youth, black young males who dress this way are often labeled as thugs and troublemakers by the police and are frequently targeted for surveillance and searches. Kevin talked about his experience with the police: "I just want to be real with y'all. When I am out there, I feel like a target for the police. People see me, and look at the way I dress, and treat me less than a man, less than human! I feel like a target for self-destruction! Sometimes I feel like giving up, fuck it! But I am a wise person. You cannot judge me by the way I look because I know what wisdom is inside me, and I just need the opportunity for you to see me for who I am."

By providing opportunities to let black youth articulate their feelings about the police, Leadership Excellence challenges the negative images of black youth in public policy and recasts black youth as key civic partners in community-change efforts. Equally important is the mutual trust that

developed between Dereca and Kevin. Because Leadership Excellence creates a space for black youth to be heard and recasts black youth as political actors, Kevin pushed himself to live up to the positive political expectation that LE staff holds of him. He explained: “They [the LE adults] see stuff that you don’t see in yourself, and they try to bring it out of you. They see me as an activist or something, and I’m not political like that. But when Dereca lets me speak my mind to folks like the mayor and political people, it makes you want to live up to that image, you know.”

Care is created between LE youth and adults through mutual trust and reciprocity. The adults expect black youth to engage in political affairs; in turn, black youth think of civic and community change as their responsibility. LE recreates negative images of black youth by creating opportunities for young people to engage in positive civic activities. The expectations that LE adults have about black youth turn them from civic problems to community activists. Care also involves creating a collective racial and cultural identity among black youth to provide them with a unified understanding of their plight in American society. This is important, given the entrenched notions black youth hold in urban communities, where they have been socialized to view each other through fragmented, often adversarial neighborhood identities (for example, East Oakland versus West Oakland).

The rich and meaningful relationships Kevin developed at Leadership Excellence contributed to a new consciousness about his own life and provided him with a sense of purpose. The meeting at City Hall that Kevin attended was broadcast on C-SPAN and was seen by thousands of people throughout the country. After learning about the significance of his comments and his newfound activist identity, Kevin became more eager to learn all he could so that he could be a better advocate for other black youth in Oakland. But he had not completed high school or received his GED. Dereca had been nudging Kevin to enroll in a program, but her constant encouragement to get his GED only reminded him of what he had not accomplished. Dereca continued to push him about his future plans. Despite the fact that he was deeply committed to social justice and had begun to organize his own block, he still had not completed school. She told him that he had to get his GED and that all he was doing was good, but that without an education, he would eventually end up back on the streets. Kevin never did well in school, nor did he really see the need to get his GED; this made their conversations tense. Shortly after their discussion about his GED, Kevin stopped coming to work, stopped participating in the programs, and disappeared from the LE community entirely.

Dereca fears that she pushed him away because she pressed him so hard

about getting his GED. She says: “He just stop [*sic*] coming to work! I didn’t see or hear from Kevin in nearly three months! This is after talking to him almost every day. I was hysterical, asking everyone if they know what was going on with him. I didn’t know if he was alive or what. I talked to some of his friends here and they told me that they see him sometimes but he seemed distant, and he really didn’t have much to say to them. What did I say to push him away? Why didn’t he call or come around? Deep inside I was tore up because I knew I had pushed him away. After about three months, I was sitting right here at my desk in my office and he just showed up out of nowhere! I just burst into tears when I saw him. I asked, ‘Where have you been? Why didn’t you call? What is going on with you?’ I cried and hugged him even though I was so upset. He said to me, ‘I thought a lot about what you said and I wanted to do more with my life.’ He pulled out a picture of himself in his graduation cap holding his GED diploma and said, ‘Look, it’s me!’ I just cried and I still have the picture. He had been going to school the entire time, working on his GED. Then he told me, ‘And I also got my driver’s license!’ We hugged and cried together, then I hit him and told him, ‘Don’t you ever do that to me again—you could have called me and told me what you were doing!’”

The author Janelle Dance (2002) has encouraged us to think more seriously about what she calls “the power of humane investments.” These are the investments in young people’s lives that require that we see in them more than they see in themselves. These investments build relationships that raise expectations about the possibilities in young people’s lives. Dereca’s investments in Kevin illustrate that one of the first steps in the healing process is to care more radically about black youth. This means that we ask not so much what we can do for black youth, but more important, how relationships can recalibrate what black youth do for themselves.

The educational researcher Jennifer Alleyne Johnson’s (1995) examination of black youth has reinforced the need to develop caring relationships with youth in classroom settings. She argues that there is a need to “make connections between the day-to-day realities of students’ lives and the day-to-day process of teaching and learning that takes place in urban public schools across the United States” (Johnson 1995: 219). After realizing the profound impact of homicide on the lives of young people in her community, she also understood the ways in which social marginalization and oppression create and sustain urban trauma. By connecting students’ real-life experience to classroom practices, she describes a healing process that integrates issues of power, history, self-identity, and the possibility of collective agency and struggle.

One of the undertheorized aspects of social capital is the conceptualization of hope and its impact on community, educational, and civic life among black youth. Kevin's experience detailed earlier illustrates the ways in which radical care departs from traditional ideas about care by placing a greater focus on the impact of trauma and the collective process required to heal from it. By focusing on relationships and dimensions of community change, radical care serves as an important community and social resource for youth. Care is facilitated by intergenerational advocacy that challenges negative concepts about black youth, is developed by building a collective racial and cultural identity, and is sustained by cultivating an understanding of personal challenges as political issues. Healthy relationships are fundamental prerequisites for radical care between youth and adults. If care is given meaning through relationships among individuals, then radical care is formed in community.

### **CONCLUSION: RADICAL HEALING IN POLICY AND PRACTICE**

What does radical healing mean for public policy? How can educators and youth workers use a radical-healing process? What practices can reshape how we work with black youth? Policymakers, educators, and youth workers must consider not only the short-term strategies that focus on preventing problems among black youth, but they also must embrace a long-term emancipatory vision that supports civic and political engagement among black youth. An emancipatory vision for black youth involves three steps: (1) shifting policies from focusing on problems to focusing on possibilities, (2) investing in action strategies rather than fixing strategies, and (3) building cultural pathways to well-being for young African American males.

#### **Shifting Policies from Focusing on Problems to Focusing on Possibilities**

Rather than concentrating on what behaviors we want to eliminate or reduce among black youth, we need to focus on what type of world we want to see. This might mean envisioning a society with racial and gender equality or imagining a community with a vibrant economy. The key is that we must have a vision of our society to articulate a vision for youth. Both visions are inextricably linked. Social scientists have been so constrained by the focus on solving problems that we have lost the ability to create new



policies, programs, and strategies that enhance behavioral assets, values, and social capital among black young men.

Articulating a new vision for black youth not only provides clear direction, but it is inspiring, life-affirming, and uplifting. There is something powerful about our capacity to create rather than our ability to destroy. Perhaps just as important as the political organizing during the 1960s was a common vision for equality and justice. Activists' collective goal was not simply to end segregation; they sought to create a just society. Black youth and their allies endured the brutal violence that resulted from sitting-in at lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina, or marching in Selma, Alabama, because of a commitment to a common vision for society.

If we listen closely, we can hear the ways in which today's black youth are articulating a fresh vision for society. Conversations among black youth in barbershops, at parks, and on street corners not only highlight how things are but also how things should be. The scholar and activist Makani Themba (1999) has reminded us that when oppressed communities have conversations about how the world should be, they often talk out of earshot of dominant society. For oppressed communities, these conversations validate what people experience every day and create a collective consciousness about how things should be. Historian Robin Kelley (2002) has explored the role of black radical imagination in black social movements throughout history. He argues that "progressive social movements do not simply produce statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones do what great poetry always does: transport us to another place, compel us to relive horrors, and more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society. We must remember that the conditions and the very existence of social movements enable participants to imagine something different, to realize that things need not always be this way" (Kelley 2002: 9).

One place to learn how black youth envision social change is through hip-hop culture. Despite the fact that some of hip-hop culture is commercialized, contradictory, and sometime even retrograde, this art form does enable us to learn how black youth envision society. To understand this vision, however, we have to look beyond music lyrics and videos. Hip-hop scholar Jeff Chang (2005) has chronicled how New York City's economic decline and layoffs in the public schools during the 1970s gave rise to hip hop. In response to years of gross disinvestment in New York's low-income communities, youth formed networks of break dance clubs, DJ crews, and neighborhood hip-hop block parties that encouraged youth from neighborhoods that were once at war with each other to come together and compete

through dancing or rapping. This activity ultimately served to mitigate violence in the Bronx and provided limited economic opportunities for local hip-hop artists.

Similarly, the late scholar and activist Lisa Sullivan (1997) argued that in the absence of traditional participatory opportunities—including student government, community review boards, and youth volunteering—some black youths participate in an intricate network of relationships among hip-hop artists, party promoters, filmmakers, and youthful hip-hop clubs that provide black youth with tangible organizing skills. More recently, the journalist Bakari Kitwana (2002) has discussed how the proliferation of new hip-hop political organizations (such as Hip-Hop Summit Action Network [HSAN] or the National Hip-Hop Political Convention in 2004) seek to garner the resources and energy of the hip-hop generation to build a common political platform relevant to the needs of millions of poor and working-class youth and young adults.

These efforts point to the ways in which black youth articulate a political vision for the communities in which they live. Hip-hop culture is forging a new paradigm by which to conceptualize social organization among black youth in urban America. Through music and culture, black youth and young people throughout the country are expressing their growing frustration with the inability of after-school programs and social services to confront the oppressive conditions in urban communities.

### **Investing in Action Strategies Rather Than Fixing Strategies**

African American youth are not passive victims of social neglect. Rather, many find remarkable ways to struggle collectively to improve the quality of their lives. We must prepare African American youth to confront inequality in their schools, communities, and society. For educators, youth workers, and policy advocates, this means shifting from a “fixing” perspective to an “action” perspective. We must consider simultaneously how structural inequality shapes young people’s lives while at the same time prepare youth to contest, challenge, respond to, and negotiate the use and misuse of power. Despite the tremendous challenges that young people experience in urban environments, good support and guidance can help them respond in ways that further their development and contribute to vibrant community life. The action perspective requires that youth understand how the misuse of power in institutions like their schools makes their lives more difficult. One might ask, Who has the power to influence the

quality of your education? Such analysis of power often reveals hidden systems of privilege and encourages critical thinking about social problems.

Preparing youth to confront power inequality develops their capacity to address school and community issues that do not meet their needs. This process rejects blaming young people for school and community problems. Rather, young people strategize, research, and act to change school policies, state legislation, and police protocols that create and sustain inequality. Systemic change focuses on root causes of social problems and makes explicit the complex ways that various forms of oppression work together. This helps counter the low self-esteem that comes from being blamed for one's own oppression.

Action in response to injustice can contribute to the well-being and mental health of African American youth. Although this is not a new idea, it opens some interesting opportunities for further research in this area. Coauthors Roderick Watts and Omar Guessous (2006) have offered a social-psychological discussion about the sociopolitical development of youth and the role of social oppression. Their study surveyed 131 youths about their capacity to change things they believed to be unfair. They found that black youth who displayed a strong belief that they could change things also displayed higher levels of mental health and youth-development outcomes.

Developing an action perspective involves teaching youth about the root causes of a particular community or social problem and supporting them with ways to address the problem. It entails transforming a problem into an issue and identifying parties responsible for bringing about desired changes. The action perspective also builds important cognitive skills that allow youth to develop meaningful and innovative solutions to school and community issues. In addition to critical thinking, relationship building, and identity development, the action perspective makes youth issues central to overall community-change efforts. This process broadens young people's understanding of power and how institutions affect their lives.

One example of an action strategy with black youth has been used among teachers. Teachers have developed surveys to document young people's perceptions of their school and the quality of their education (Cammarota and Fine 2008). Having students respond to key questions—Were you given books for all your major subjects this year? Where do you feel safe at your high school? What would you do to improve the lunchroom?—can provide them with insight about how other students may feel the same way about their school and share similar educational experiences.

After analyzing the surveys, youth may learn that safety is a primary concern at their school. This information could be used to build important

analytical skills, including critical thinking; consensus and relationship building; and how to negotiate, compromise, and navigate bureaucratic institutions. This type of action research also involves recruiting allies and members and educating the general public about safety at school. Action involves a wide range of activities: possibly speaking at a city council meeting, informational picketing, writing letters, organizing petition drives, displaying banners, and conducting walk-outs. Some forms of action are more subtle. Building optimism, hope, and the belief that youth can change things is an important form of action and also important political currency. More than simply creating a ruckus and getting media attention through organizing, action involves modeling the vision and living and treating each other with compassion and justice.

Action provides pathways for finding young people's life purpose and experiences that can help shape their sociopolitical identities well into adulthood. Often such experiences translate to new worldviews about social issues where young people see their communities as a place of possibilities and change. For example, researchers Miranda Yates and James Youniss (1998) found in their yearlong study that black youth who participated in civic and/or political activities developed a greater understanding of social justice and civic responsibility over time. Action thus connects the personal with the political because it removes self-blame and helps young people see the connections between personal life challenges and broader social issues.

### **Building Cultural Pathways to Well-being for Young African American Males**

Culture and identity provide black youth with purpose that is both rooted in the history of black struggle and connected to problems in everyday life. Scholar Peter Murrell (1993) has made this point by suggesting that Africans in the United States historically viewed education and literacy as an act of freedom in post-Emancipation America. He suggests that "Africans in America continue to struggle against institutionalized inequality, which makes our heritage of literacy very different from that of the mainstream American culture. . . . [Out] of a history of disenfranchisement and denial of access to education, the Africanist cultural value emerged—literacy as the practice of emancipation" (Murrell 1993: 30–31). Murrell suggests that freedom, liberation, and justice are values rooted in African culture and can guide pedagogical practices. The challenge is to build a cultural consciousness among black youth that can interrogate issues in everyday life. To accomplish this, we must grapple with such questions as how culture

encourages black youth to confront police brutality. How can African cultural identity encourage black youth to organize to gain access to culturally appropriate books and school materials?

Those of us who work closely with African American youth should constantly question and challenge approaches that cannot confront these difficult questions. However, this work requires that we make difficult choices about our own lives. Effective work with African American youth requires more than simply following step-by-step recipes for success. The conditions in which black youth find themselves did not come about from a simple three-step recipe, so we should not expect simple solutions to difficult problems. Effectively working with African American youth requires a commitment to justice and a vision for freedom. No graduate course, training program, or book can adequately provide this type of commitment. However, if we dedicate ourselves to the relentless pursuit of love, peace, and justice, perhaps we can achieve a better quality of life for young people, ourselves, and U.S. society.

#### NOTE

1. Sward, "High Black Arrest Rate Raises Call for Inquiry," A1–A6.

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**PART III**

**TRANSITIONS TO POSTSECONDARY  
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT**



**BUILDING PATHWAYS  
TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS  
FOR LOW-INCOME YOUNG MEN OF COLOR**

Linda Harris and Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield

**ABSTRACT**

This chapter looks at strategies for connecting male high school dropouts of color between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four to pathways to postsecondary credentials that have value in the labor market. Many of the millions of young men of color who have dropped out of school have the talent, ability, and aspirations for a better future and can benefit from being connected to a supported pathway to postsecondary credentials. This tremendous pool of talent and potential, if properly supported and channeled, can help close the skills gap in the United States and greatly contribute to the nation's productivity and competitiveness. Converting this raw talent into skilled workers with the credentials and mastery for the twenty-first-century economy will require considerable rethinking of how our secondary, postsecondary, workforce, adult education, youth development, and youth recovery systems work in tandem to build the supports and create the pathways at some scale to bring these youth back into the education and labor-market mainstream.

The chapter addresses why it is essential to invest in building postsecondary pathways for young men of color who are high school dropouts and highlights examples of innovations in policy, community intervention strategies, program delivery, pedagogy in basic skills, youth development and dropout recovery, and postsecondary education. While advocating for expanded adoption of these best practices, we also want to seed thinking about ways these policies and practices, if better integrated and funded, can bring about more robust and successful dropout recovery and postsecondary education to ensure that more male youth of color gain the skills and credentials necessary to open the door to higher wages and career opportunities.

## INTRODUCTION

This analysis considers the current labor-market status of low-income young men of color. We review current and historical factors that contribute to their high rates of unemployment and underrepresentation in middle-skilled jobs, and we call for the development of aggressive community-intervention strategies to build multiple postsecondary pathways aimed at putting young men of color on track to economic success. For many young men of color, particularly those residing in communities of concentrated poverty, finding and retaining work is a considerable challenge. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in January 2010 only 28 percent of black men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four were working, compared with 43 percent of Hispanic men and 44 percent of white men in the same age category (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010b). The percentage of young men working across all racial groups has declined dramatically in less than a decade. In 2002, 41 percent of black men, 78 percent of Hispanic men, and 60 percent of white men ages sixteen to twenty-four were working (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2002).

While the expectation isn't that all youth should be employed, the precipitous decline in youth employment in general, the dramatic decline in employment rates for young Hispanic men, and the persistently high level of joblessness for young black men is cause for concern and reason for action. Although male joblessness in communities of color has been an issue for decades, the recent economic recession has had a calamitous impact on the labor-market prospects for youth of color. The slow jobless recovery combined with historical barriers presents a crisis for young men of color, the communities in which they live, and the families they will not be able to support.

A publication of the Harvard Civil Rights Project, *Losing Our Future*, presented data for the hundred largest school districts which showed that those districts with the highest percentage participation in the free and reduced lunch program were also districts with predominantly black and Hispanic student populations; most had graduation rates below 60 percent (Orfield et al. 2004). These also tend to be the communities with high unemployment rates, much higher rates of crime and violence, and substantially diminished resources for communities and families. In these communities far too many young men are trapped in a perpetual cycle of low expectations, low achievement, limited labor-market prospects, increased exposure to the criminal justice system, and an inability to provide economic stability for their families. The permanence of these condi-

tions has contributed to a cycle of limited opportunity for generations. Priority attention must be given to implementing strategies to impact the labor-market situation for young men of color in these communities.

Another reason for urgency in improving the labor-market status of young men of color is the census projection that by 2023 minorities will comprise more than half the children in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Given this demographic trend, investing in building the skills and credentials of the nation's young minority male population is essential to assuring economic stability for these children and a sufficiently skilled labor pool to sustain the nation's economic growth.

The ages from sixteen to twenty-four represent the formative years for developing labor-market skills. Through early work experiences, part-time and summer jobs, internships, and other vocational and career awareness experiences, youth are exposed to the expectations of the workplace, learn workplace skills, develop a work portfolio, and have the opportunity to explore their interests. Studies have demonstrated that early work experience positively correlates with future labor-market success and earnings. An analysis released by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston has suggested that cumulative work experience has very substantial effects on the wages and annual earnings of young men and women. The report found that expected economic returns from work experience influence the decision of men and women to actively participate in the labor force. The study concluded that those who have only limited work experience in their late teens and early twenties cannot command high wages in the labor market, and their limited wage prospects reduce the economic incentive for them to participate in the labor market (Sum, McLaughlin, and Khatiwada 2006).

Thus the lack of access to jobs during this critical developmental period has an impact on the earnings capacity of young men of color well into their adulthood as they take on family, civic, and personal responsibilities. In January 2010, 44 percent of young white males were employed, compared with only 28 percent of young black males. This gap has grown over time. As young white men build their work portfolios during the same period that young men of color remain jobless, the competitive advantage in the labor market for young white men will continue to grow.

Improving labor-market opportunities for young men of color is about more than just jobs. It is about dramatically increasing the number of young men of color who are equipped with the postsecondary skills and credentials they will need to obtain opportunities in the labor market. It is also about improving their access to jobs that will provide them with stable

employment at decent wages and opportunities for advancement. The solutions must be at a scale to close the gaps between young white men and men of color in terms of education attainment, labor-market penetration, and earnings. The situation is complex. The solutions to address employment disparities require making the labor-market situation of young men of color the central focus for strategic action and assembling the talent, resources, and innovation to address the multiplicity of barriers that have historically impeded their stable employment at decent wages.

This chapter focuses on low-income young men of color in high-poverty communities. We make the case that if the story to be told a decade from now about the labor-market situation for these young men is to be substantially different from the disturbing narrative of today, we need new strategies. Such strategies must be commensurate with the challenge and must bring together: (1) leadership in the public, private, and community sectors; (2) the expertise of education, workforce, and youth development professionals; and (3) community resources in a coordinated way to put these young men on track to better futures. We recommend the following strategies:

- Establish a collective community strategy that focuses on putting young men of color on pathways to economic success.
- Set postsecondary success as the predominant focus of interventions for young men of color.
- Create multiple pathways that combine education, training, work experience, and support to help young men, especially those who lack high school diplomas and job skills, achieve successful postsecondary outcomes.
- Leverage regional economic development, community development and revitalization, and infrastructure-building, and “green” energy activities to build pipelines to the emerging opportunities in these areas.

### THE CHALLENGE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A high rate of unemployment for young men of color in the United States is not a new phenomenon. For decades the crisis of minority male unemployment has been documented in scholarly research, has been chronicled in articles, and has been the subject of various commissions:

- In the 1987 publication *Workforce 2000*, economists looked at demographic trends and cautioned that without substantial

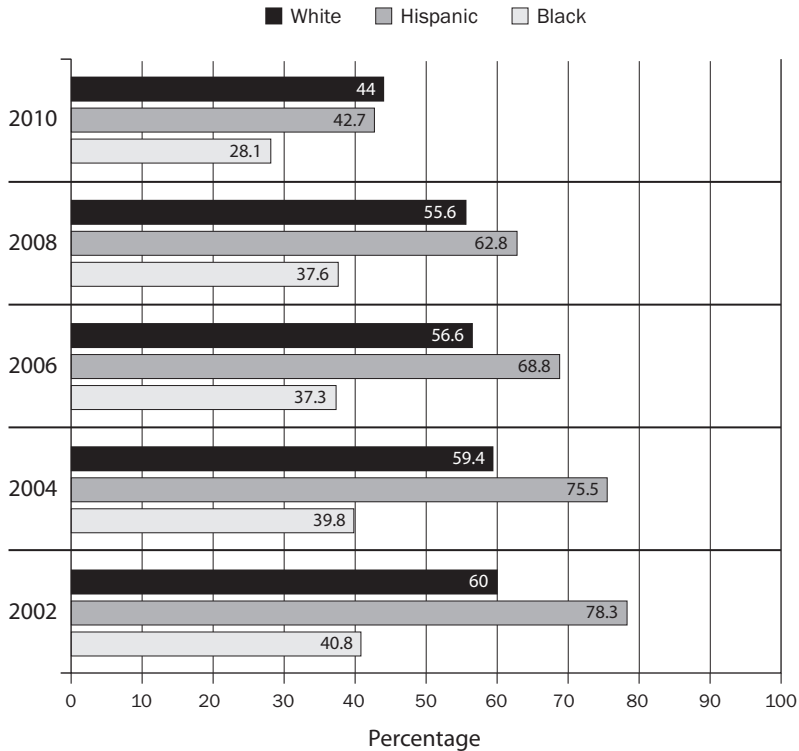
adjustments in policies and investments in education and training, the problems of minority unemployment, crime, and dependency on public systems would be worse in the year 2000 (Johnston and Packer 1987).

- The 1988 report of the William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship—*The Forgotten Half: Non-college Youth in America*—noted the discouraging labor-market situation for minority youth and recommended that comprehensive policies and programs be developed to address the growing gap between more fortunate youth and those with far fewer advantages.
- The 1990 report *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* called for a dropout-recovery system that would build the connection between education and work for youth without high school certification (National Center on Education and the Economy 1990).

The labor-market challenges facing young men of color have been noted over the decades, and the recommendations for increased investments for education and training of low-income and minority populations have been consistent. Yet since the mid-1990s, the level of federal investment in employment and training programs that could put these young men on better footing in the labor market has declined dramatically. The employment rates for young men ages sixteen to twenty-four have dropped dramatically across all racial and ethnic categories since 2002 (figure 9.1). Although employment rates for young Hispanic men have been higher over the past decade than those for young white men, young Hispanic men have experienced the greatest decline in employment. Employment rates for young black men have lagged substantially behind both white and Hispanic men. The persistence of these trends for young men of color is cause for great concern and reason for aggressive action.

As the nation's economy pulls out of the current recession, the slow pace of job growth coupled with fierce competition for the few available jobs will undoubtedly leave young men of color at the end of the queue. An analysis by the Center for Law and Social Policy of employment and earnings data during the peak business cycles from 1979 through 1999 found that despite the robust economy of the 1990s, young men with a high school diploma or less—and in particular black men in this category—were less likely to be working than their counterparts two decades earlier and more likely to be earning substantially less (Richter et al. 2003).

Over the next ten years renewable energy, health care, technology, re-



**Figure 9.1.** Percentage of employed men ages sixteen to twenty-four, by race and ethnicity, selected years. *Sources:* Compiled from data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: one-year estimates, years 2002–08; and Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010.

building the nation’s physical infrastructure, and replacing skilled baby boomers will be the engines of job growth and opportunity. Strategies to improve the labor-market status of young men of color should be tied to these engines—not just at the entry level but by creating the skilled technicians, craftsmen, management, and professionals who will be needed to fuel these industries. This will require building multiple pathways to these opportunities and supporting and nurturing young men as they navigate these pathways.

### WHY POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS?

We define “postsecondary pathways” as the integrated set of activities, interventions, and supports that lead youth to the attainment of certificates,



credentials, licenses, and two-year or four-year degrees that have demonstrable value in the labor market. Let us be clear: we are not advocating simply expanding the enrollment of young men of color in traditional two- or four-year institutions. Rather, we recommend the creation of nontraditional options that allow concurrent pursuit of academic and labor-market credentials and that combine work, training, career exposure, and support. We discuss many of these options and approaches in this chapter, including career pathway bridge programs, early and middle-college programs, career academies, and integrated basic skills and occupational programs. We advocate a postsecondary focus for three reasons:

1. To introduce expanded horizons and build a culture of higher expectations for young men of color and the delivery systems and programs that work with them.
2. To close the gap in postsecondary attainment—and the corresponding gap in employment and earnings—between young men of color and young white men.
3. To reinforce to young men of color that economic success in the twenty-first-century labor market will require postsecondary skills and credentials.

### **Expanding Horizons**

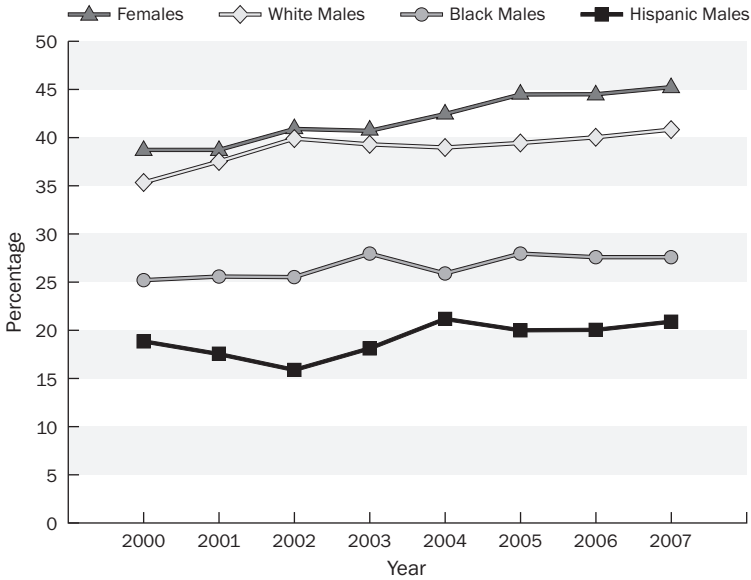
When there are more youth unemployed than working and when the only models they see for prosperity are sports superstars, rap artists, or those involved in illicit activity, their behaviors, aspirations (or lack thereof), and actions are shaped by that reality. Young people can't aspire to occupations or careers to which they have not been exposed or that they believe are out of reach. With high school dropout rates in many communities of color in excess of 50 percent, the options for access to “middle-skilled” career opportunities—that require some postsecondary training, pay decent wages, and provide career advancement—are seriously curtailed.

One way of providing expanded options for the economic success of young men of color is through developing pathways that lead to the attainment of postsecondary skills and credentials. Beyond just preparing young men for individual success, having such efforts in place in a community can expand the horizons and influence the aspirations of these young men and create a sustained culture of high expectations and optimism in the youth population. The millions of young men of color who are languishing outside the labor-market mainstream have talent, ability, and aspirations

for a better future. These young men can benefit from being connected to supportive pathways to postsecondary credentials. There is compelling evidence that given the opportunity, young male dropouts display considerable persistence and resilience. In 2000 the federally funded Youth Opportunity Grant program provided substantial resources to high-poverty communities to build supported interventions to connect high-risk youth to education, training, college, and the labor market. Sixty-two percent of the eligible, predominantly minority, out-of-school youth enrolled in the program (Harris 2006). The national evaluation of the Youth Opportunity Grant program found that the program:

- Reduced the number of out-of-school and out-of-work (disconnected) youth overall.
- Increased the percentage of Pell Grant–eligible students who received the grants in urban sites.
- Increased the labor-force participation rate overall and specifically for teens (ages sixteen to nineteen), women, blacks, and in-school youth.
- Increased the employment rate among blacks, teens, out-of-school youth, and native-born youth and had a positive effect on the hourly wages of women and teens.

Recent studies have revealed that despite a premature exit from high school, high school dropouts display substantial resilience, motivation, and aspirations for higher education and a better life. An analysis by Jobs for the Future of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study found that nearly 60 percent of young high school dropouts eventually earned their high school diploma; when researchers controlled for income, minority youths were just as likely to earn their GED as white youths. The researchers concluded that the commonly held perception of dropouts as lacking in motivation and not sharing mainstream values is incorrect (Almeida, Johnson, and Steinberg 2006). The Center for Law and Social Policy came to similar conclusions in a 2006 survey of 193 dropouts from 13 communities who had enrolled in alternative education and training programs. When asked why they enrolled, both minority men and women responded overwhelmingly that they wanted their GED and a better life. Forty-five percent of the young men had postsecondary ambitions (Harris 2006). Thus, finding ways not only to expand access to postsecondary education and training, but also to support these youths so that they reach some level of credentialing is integral to putting them on track to good jobs and good wages.



**Figure 9.2.** Percentage of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds enrolled in college. Sources: Based on data from Ryu 2009.

### Closing the Employment Gap

Part of the disparity in employment rates and earnings for young men of color when compared with their white counterparts is attributable to the much lower rates of enrollment and completion at the postsecondary level for young men of color. The percentage of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old black and Hispanic men enrolled in college is 27.8 percent and 21.8 percent, respectively—far below the 45-percent average college-enrollment level for this age category. The American Council on Education found that black and Hispanic men represented only 3 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively, of all bachelor’s degrees awarded in 2006—not any better than a decade prior (Ryu 2009). Black and Hispanic men represented 3.6 percent and 4.1 percent of associate’s degrees awarded during this same period. Figure 9.2 shows the dramatic gaps by race and comparisons to a decade ago.

Closing these gaps will require adopting nontraditional approaches and finding ways to concurrently support the educational attainment and labor-market exposure of males of color over a longer period of time. These non-traditional approaches will entail integrating education instruction with skills training, work experience, support, career exposure, and counseling

to put these youths back on track. Such a commitment will help young black and Hispanic men find security in the labor market by equipping them with the academic, occupational, and personal skills they need to succeed.

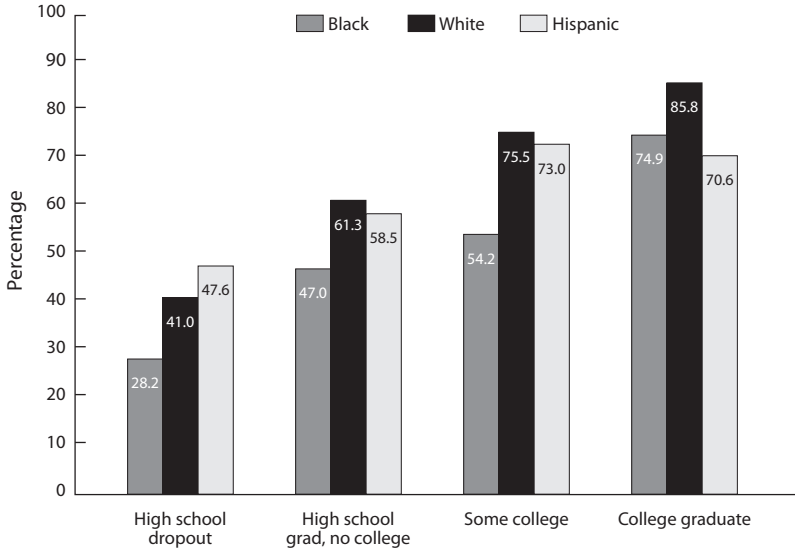
### **Labor-Market Success and Postsecondary Credentials**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2008 and 2018 the U.S. economy will produce 15.3 million net new jobs, nearly half of which will require postsecondary credentials. The fastest growth will be in occupations requiring an associate's degree. Of the thirty fastest-growing fields—including allied health, computer-related professions, environmental science, and social and human services—the majority will need a highly skilled and educated labor pool to draw from to remain competitive in a global market (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). Increasingly, access to family-sustaining wages is predicated on a skill set that reflects postsecondary training and credentials. Figure 9.3 shows the difference in employment rates for youth sixteen to twenty-four who are not enrolled in school by educational attainment and race.

Education and credential attainment are highly correlated with earnings and employment. In 2009 adults with an associate's degree earned 22 percent more and had an unemployment rate 30 percent lower than those with a high school diploma. The course of study that one chooses to pursue matters in the labor market as well. The returns on occupational associate's degrees are higher than those for academic associate's degrees, although these returns vary by occupational field (Grubb 1999). Occupational certificate and associate's degree holders also generally experience higher returns on education in terms of employment and earnings than those with similar years of education but no credential (Bailey, Kienzl, and Marcotte 2004).

### **INADEQUACIES OF THE WORKFORCE, ADULT EDUCATION, AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

Four main support systems exist for young men who have dropped out of high school: the secondary education system, the adult education/English literacy system, the postsecondary education and training system, and the workforce system. Ideally, these systems should work together, to provide the education, training, and access to higher education credentials needed by this population of young men. However, despite overlapping missions,



**Figure 9.3.** Percentage of out-of-school youth ages sixteen to twenty-four who are not employed, by education level and race/ethnic group, 2010. Sources: Calculated from Current Population Survey (CPS), Household Data, Table A-16, “Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by school enrollment, educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, January 2010.”

these systems are most often designed and implemented locally and poorly coordinated. Although resources are being spent in most localities on these systems, they are each failing to bring the majority of male youths of color to any level of postsecondary readiness. In this section we focus on the workforce, adult education, and higher education systems—the principal systems that help provide youth a second chance at an educational pathway.

### The Workforce System

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) authorizes the nation’s federally funded workforce-development system and provides funding for one-stop career centers in which employers and job seekers can access a wide array of employment and training services. WIA is made of up five titles, but the main funding streams that support youth participation in career pathways are the Title I Youth and Adult programs and Title II.<sup>1</sup>

*Title I Youth and Adult Programs.* Within Title I youth are primarily served through the Youth and Adult funding streams. The majority of these funds are distributed to states and local areas through a formula and

administered by local Workforce Investment Boards. The intent of the WIA Title I Youth funding is to provide comprehensive interventions to prepare low-income youth, ages fourteen to twenty-one, for labor-market and postsecondary success. Local areas are required to make services available to youth participants consistent with a service strategy based on individualized assessments of needs. WIA establishes a set of well-defined program elements drawn from best practices that make this funding stream ideally suited to contribute to the development of supported career pathways for youths who need more intensive assistance in navigating the transitions to college, occupational training, labor-market credentials, and economically self-sustaining employment. At least 30 percent of WIA funds must be spent on out-of-school youth.

Local WIA Title I Adult formula funds support the one-stop service-delivery system that brings access to several federally funded workforce development programs and services together in one place. It also funds employment and training services for eligible individuals older than eighteen. WIA-funded programs provide career counseling, assessment, job placement, work experience, short-term prevocational training, occupational training, customized training, and on-the-job training (OJT). These funds can also support career-pathway approaches at postsecondary institutions and the related supports necessary for participation, including child care, transportation, and needs-related payments (money to help cover living expenses while someone attends training).

The workforce system faces many challenges in serving youth. First, it lacks the resources to address the magnitude of need. Nearly half a million youth drop out of school annually, and as of 2010 an estimated 5.8 million youths (ages sixteen to twenty-four) are out of school and out of work.<sup>2</sup> Yet in 2007 the WIA Title I Youth Program, which provides state and local funding for comprehensive services to help youth achieve educational and labor-market success, served slightly more than one hundred thousand youths between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one. Among the 108,418 youths who exited Title I Youth programs in 2007 (the most recent year for which data are available), only 27,681 were high school dropouts (Social Policy Research Associates 2008). Second, both the Title I Adult (which funds the employment and training services for eligible individuals older than eighteen) and Youth programs insufficiently target training to individuals most in need, including high school dropouts. Since the enactment of WIA in 1998, there has been a steady decline in the share of program participants who are low-income and those who face barriers

to employment—such as limited English proficiency, low basic skills, and/or low-income—from 84 percent in 2000 to 54 percent in 2008 (Baider 2008). Third, the Title I Youth Program delivers very few youths to postsecondary enrollment. Fewer than 10 percent of youth who exited Title I Youth programs went on to postsecondary education and training—and only 5 percent who were high school dropouts went on to postsecondary education or advanced training (Social Policy Research Associates 2008).

*Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.* The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of WIA, provides states with funding for a variety of services to develop basic cognitive and language skills for youth and adults. The federal adult education law places strong emphasis on preparation for employment and for postsecondary education and training; this approach fits well with the career-pathway and bridge approaches described earlier. The adult education and English language services (ESL) that AEFLA supports can open doors to postsecondary career pathways programs and fund bridge programs below the postsecondary level for youths whose low skills or limited English might otherwise keep them out. AEFLA can also fund support services, an integral component of any successful strategy. Eligibility is largely targeted at those who are at least sixteen and are not currently enrolled, or required to be enrolled, in high school.<sup>3</sup> The individual must either lack a high school diploma or its equivalent, or function below that level (even if the student has a high school diploma), or have limited English proficiency.

The adult education system is one of the largest providers of educational services for dropout youth, yet it suffers from poor outcomes, with very few students achieving GEDs or transitioning into postsecondary education and training. In program year 2008–09 the WIA's adult education system served 326,950 young men of color between sixteen and twenty-four, accounting for 13.6 percent of the 2.4 million adults and youths who are served by adult education programs nationwide.<sup>4</sup> The WIA's basic skills system that serves hundreds of thousands of young men of color suffers from variable quality and in most cases fails to provide these youths with a stepping-stone to attaining meaningful credentials. Adult education students do not typically remain in the program long enough to advance even one grade or English ability level (Tamassia et al. 2007; Comings 2007; McHugh, Gelatt, and Fix 2007). Even though most young men of color who are in the adult education system are seeking a GED, most of these students do not earn one, let alone a college certificate, diploma, or degree (Porter et al. 2005; Patterson, Song, and Zhang 2009).

### The Higher Education System

The postsecondary education and training system is comprised of institutions of higher education, including but not limited to public two-year community colleges and four-year baccalaureate granting institutions. We focus largely on two-year institutions, since the majority of low-income young men of color attend these institutions. The Higher Education Act, the main piece of legislation influencing higher education institutions, includes a plethora of programs that can help youth of color access and succeed on postsecondary pathways. Funding flows directly to institutions and students under the provisions of the Higher Education Act. The programs range from Pell Grants to the eight federal TRIO programs, which fund educational institutions to provide supports intended to increase college attendance among low-income high school students and college-based services, including advising, tutoring, and mentoring to help low-income college students persist and complete their studies. Yet completion remains an elusive goal for many students. Forty-six percent of students who begin their postsecondary education at community colleges never complete a degree (Brock and LeBlanc 2005).

Outcomes for those students who enroll in community colleges—the main higher education system explored in this chapter—are inadequate as well. Fewer than three of ten students who start at community colleges full time graduate with an associate's degree in three years (National Center for Education Statistics 2007). Part-time students complete their course of study at community colleges (whether that is a certificate, an associate's degree, or transferring to a four-year institution) at even lower rates. A majority of community-college students, including low-income young men of color who are returning to the educational pipeline, need help with basic skills and enroll in at least one developmental education course. Developmental, or remedial, education is the formal coursework in reading, writing, and mathematics, and the academic support services provided to students who are underprepared for college-level work. Students with GEDs are even more likely to participate in remedial classes than students with a high school degree. Developmental education has similarly high attrition rates as adult education and ESL, with more than a quarter of all students failing to complete their prescribed developmental courses (Jenkins 2003). Given that such large numbers of students need developmental education, postsecondary institutions must improve the outcomes of students who enroll in these courses for more young men of color to achieve postsecondary credentials and find good jobs.



The largest federal financial aid initiative is the Pell Grant program. It is designed to fill the financial gap by providing need-based grant aid for tuition, fees, and living expenses to low-income students in eligible postsecondary-education and training programs that lead to a certificate or degree. In addition to requiring verification of low income, eligibility criteria include, but are not limited to, being a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, having a high school diploma or GED, and resolving any issues related to drug convictions.<sup>5</sup> In lieu of a high school diploma or GED, the student may also show the “ability to benefit” through testing or completion of six postsecondary credits with a C average or better that are applicable to a degree or certificate offered by the school. The ability to qualify for financial aid without having a high school diploma or a GED is a significant recent policy change that, if effectively promoted, could increase the number of youths of color who attend college.

The financial aid and support systems designed to help students complete their studies need to be fixed. Although the Pell Grant provides low-income students with considerable assistance with paying for college, an individual student’s unmet need may run in the thousands of dollars, and state financial aid programs have been inadequate in meeting this need. Student supports at postsecondary institutions, including advising and tutoring, are extremely underfunded by federal and state governments and are typically the first budget line cut when college and state finances are tight. For instance, the federal Student Support Services (SSS) program serves only 7 percent of eligible students. Rather than proactively identifying and serving students, the SSS program helps only those students who know about their services. SSS does nothing for those students who are unfamiliar with their services but who are at risk of dropping out. The tragic irony is that a young man can persist through four systems—secondary, adult education, workforce, and college—and yet find himself facing stumbling blocks because multiple systems are failing him. Although each of these systems is underresourced in terms of supporting the needs of vulnerable populations, it is imperative that these limited resources be used in a more effective and coordinated way.

### **A COMMUNITY INTERVENTION STRATEGY FOR BUILDING SUPPORTED PATHWAYS**

The intent of a community intervention strategy is to assemble resources from multiple systems—education, workforce, and other youth-serving systems—along with community-based resources to support successful

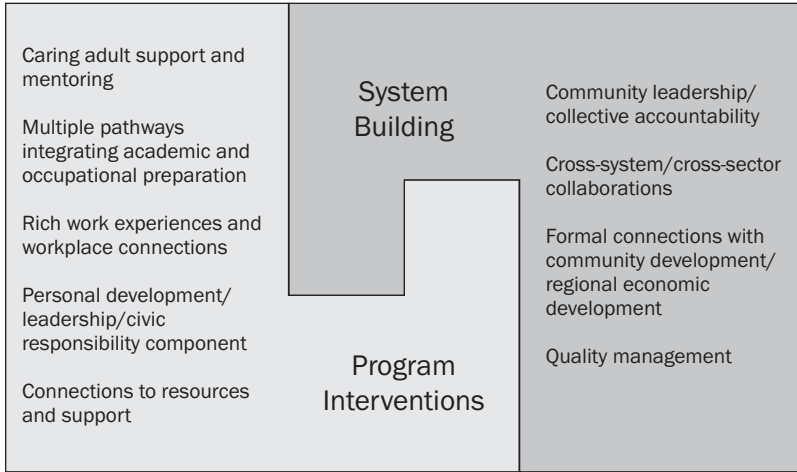
labor-market transitions for low-income young men of color. The biggest challenge is that the responsibility for programming for youth who are out of school and out of work without a high school diploma does not fall within the purview of any single publicly funded system. The K–12 system no longer has responsibility for the education of this population, since most have left the system. The academic skills of these youths are far below those required by the higher-education system; thus this population is not of interest to most postsecondary institutions. The workforce system, which provides training for youths and adults, is governed by a complex set of performance measures and often does not target services to the most difficult population groups. Although many of these young men find their way into the adult education system, that system falls short by failing to deliver them to the level of academic proficiency needed for labor-market success. Private employers tend not to see this group of young men as potential employees; rather, they often see only their liabilities.

The magnitude and complexity of the issues confronting this population of young men require intentional approaches that go beyond any one program model or service agency. The key elements of a community-intervention strategy fall into two categories: (1) programmatic interventions—those delivery approaches that will be necessary to build the skills, abilities, experiences, and career and labor-market exposure of the young men; and (2) system building, which focuses on leadership, management, stewardship, and cross-system/cross-sector connections. Highlighting various pathways to economic self-sufficiency for young men of color, figure 9.4 shows the interplay among these important components.

Although this chapter focuses on building multiple pathways to postsecondary credentials and labor-market success, it is important to examine each of the components of a successful community-intervention strategy individually. Without these strategies, it will be difficult for a multiple-pathways approach to succeed and grow to scale. The system-building components that are critical to a successful community-intervention strategy include community leadership/collective accountability, cross-system and cross-sector collaborations, formal connections with community development and regional economic development, and quality management.

### **Community Leadership and Collective Accountability**

Leaders can play a vital role in creating a sense of urgency and issuing a call to action on the economic crisis facing young men of color. Having the right people at the table—those who care about these issues and are com-



**Figure 9.4.** Building pathways to economic self-sufficiency for young men of color: key components of a community-intervention strategy. *Source:* Authors’ rendering.

mitted to being part of a broad-based, sustained solution—is an essential first step. Project U-Turn in Philadelphia is an example. This is a citywide campaign that focuses public attention on Philadelphia’s dropout crisis by designing strategies and leveraging investments to resolve it. The citywide collaborative includes representatives of the school district, city agencies, foundations, youth-serving organizations, parents, and young people themselves. The “right” people are those in leadership—whether public, private, not-for-profit, community, or foundation representatives—who can commit or substantially influence their respective agencies or sectors. Voices representing young men of color must also be included, not just to give the process legitimacy but to also ensure that the strategies and solutions under consideration actually address the issues and obstacles that young men of color face in the labor market.

The participation of the mayor and other elected leadership in a community that is tackling these issues signals the importance of putting young men of color on positive pathways. Such participation is also essential in convincing key leadership from business, industry, and the economic-development sector to be part of the strategic thinking. Committed leaders can inspire others to be part of a process that sees putting these young men to work as a critical part of an economic development and community development agenda. Leaders can assign those in their respective sectors to assess resources, practices, expertise, and talent to identify ways that their

sectors can contribute meaningfully and substantively to programs and interventions. This assessment can also lead agencies and organizations to alter their policies and practices to achieve the goals of this effort.

For example, the Boston Youth Options Unlimited (YOU) Initiative is a citywide partnership that targets court-involved, incarcerated, and gang-affiliated youth to redirect them toward a positive, self-sufficient future. It is a strong example of partnerships among workforce development, juvenile justice, law enforcement, education, and other youth-serving systems. Through innovative arrangements with law enforcement, courts, and corrections, the YOU program gains early access to intervene with the youth and supports them through community reentry and beyond. YOU draws on local, state, and federal resources from across the systems and connects youth with intensive case management, educational opportunities and support, and employment year-round (Hastings, Tsoi-A-Fatt, and Harris 2010).

Implementing comprehensive, broad-based community-intervention strategies requires a strong convening entity to engage community leaders in a vision process, to facilitate planning and implementation, to identify resources and opportunities, to use data effectively to lay out the dimensions of the challenge, set goals and benchmarks, move from strategic planning to action, track progress, and celebrate successes. Collective responsibility means that all assembled in the effort “own” the challenge, participate in setting goals and benchmarks, ask tough questions, use data to monitor progress, and assure accountability in the short and long term.

### **Cross-system and Cross-sector Collaborations**

Cross-system and cross-sector partnerships are formal agreements among systems or sectors to alter their policies and practices in ways that promote collaboration and innovation in the provision of service to a targeted population. Successful cross-system partnerships lead to better structures and practices for sharing valuable information; improve the experiences of young people dealing with disconnection; and change the way individual systems operate and how existing agencies do their work (Moore 2007). The secondary, postsecondary, adult education, workforce, justice, and social services systems need to be leveraged to create pathways that connect disconnected youth—including young men of color—to good jobs, with good wages, and opportunities for advancement.

Many young men of color have been touched by one or more of these systems. For the most part, however, intentional strategies that align the

programs and services across systems do not exist. Thus young men may transition from one system and one service to another without getting any closer to employment. For example, young men under the jurisdiction of the justice system, or those challenged with child-support issues, should be connected to the workforce and postsecondary systems. Increased coordination may help men of color obtain employment that in turn helps them meet the financial obligations imposed by these systems. The unfortunate reality is that all too often, such connections are not made and these men remain unemployed, further exacerbating their situation.

Fortunately, there has been considerable progress across all these systems in altering the ways that services are delivered and resources are deployed. Innovations abound—from credit recovery and competency-based approaches to the awarding of high school diplomas, to concurrent enrollment to achieve high school diplomas and college credit, to postsecondary bridge programs, customized sectoral programming, and try-out employment in the workforce system. The task is to expand these innovations so that they are the norm and not the exception, and to use them to build the multiple pathways to postsecondary success for young men of color. But only through collaboration among these systems will this be achieved at scale.

### **Formal Connections with Community Development and Regional Economic Development**

Providing young men of color with the academic, occupational, and employment skills necessary for postsecondary labor-market success is only part of the solution. These skills alone will not automatically create access to higher-wage jobs and career opportunities in the regional labor market. Discrimination still exists in the hiring process. The geographic mismatch between the location of good jobs in the region and residency of minority populations creates barriers to access to those jobs. Research has documented that address has been used to screen the applicant pool. More often, referral networks and references are the mechanism used to identify candidates for hire.

Thus unless strategies are put in place to dramatically expand access for young men of color to occupations, industries, and workplaces where they can access higher-wage jobs with advancement opportunities, then these young men will be educated and trained with a ticket to nowhere. Developing these intentional strategies will require fostering ongoing relationships with leaders in economic and community-development agencies, workforce investment boards, chambers of commerce, transportation and

natural-resources agencies, and key industry sectors. The question to be asked of each economic development effort, each infrastructure project, every community revitalization effort, and of representatives from the growing industry sectors—especially renewable energy and health—is: How can the learning, earning, and training of young men of color be tied into each of these efforts? Formal job-referral mechanisms are necessary but not sufficient. Formal networks and pipelines must be built that will expand access, mentor young men of color, and nurture their upward mobility. Engaging these leaders in strategizing solutions can catalyze creative thinking about ways to leverage energy and transportation funding, federal job creation efforts, the Community Development Block Grant, other federal funding streams, and business and industry expansion activities to forge employment pipelines to the jobs that are created.

The lingering perceptions that make employers wary of hiring youth of color need to be overcome. Consider, for example, that among sixteen- to twenty-four-year-old youths who are not enrolled in school, white high school graduates with no college experience have a higher rate of employment (62 percent) than black youth with college experience or an associate's degree (55 percent) (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010b). This discrepancy suggests that factors other than education come into play. Discrimination still poses an impediment to access in many workplaces, and many young men of color lack access to formal and informal networks meant to help them successfully navigate often unwelcoming environments. Algernon Austin, of the Economic Policy Institute, has recently refuted many of the stereotypical reasons often given to explain the low employment rates of black men. He counters the argument that young black men don't want to work for "chump change" with data showing that nonworking black men's reservation wages—the economic term for the lowest wage at which an individual will work—is consistently lower than white men's reservation wage and lower than all other racial and ethnic groups. He challenged the notion that the disparities in employment are simply attributable to a lack of skills, citing the work of the Center for Labor Market studies findings that the poorest white teens with the lowest employment rates among whites were still able to obtain jobs at a higher rate than more prosperous black youth (Austin 2008).

There is no simple or quick answer to dismantling all the policies and practices that result in the disparities that have been noted. A good starting point, however, is to ensure greater inclusion of young men of color in every effort that brings jobs to the community. For example, business and workforce leaders can help identify "middle-skilled" and professional jobs

that will require a highly skilled workforce. They can identify the types of training, work experiences, internships, apprenticeships, part-time placements, scholarships, and on-the-job training experiences required for such positions. Business and workforce leaders can also support the building of a continuum of work-related activities—work experiences, internships, job shadowing, and career awareness—that can expose young men of color to an expanded range of opportunities, occupations, and work environments. Equally important is for business and workforce leaders to learn to view young men of color as a talent pool they can and want to tap.

Many workforce boards and progressive community organizations have implemented successful approaches for linking economic development activities with employment opportunities for low-income individuals. Some vehicles that should be considered to improve access to employment for young men of color include:

- *Community benefit agreements (CBAs)*. These are legally binding contracts between developers and community coalitions that ensure major development projects benefit local community residents. Common elements of CBAs include first-source hiring agreements, living wages, and affordable-housing assistance.
- *First-source hiring agreements*. These are often included in economic development packages or loan agreements. They usually require employers that are beneficiaries of public resources to give priority in hiring to targeted populations by the appointed agent of the jurisdiction (e.g., the workforce system). The strongest agreements require sufficient advance notice of potential openings to allow for the preparation and training of candidates.
- *Customized training*. This involves developing specific training to meet the needs of a particular employer for existing job openings. The employer participates in identifying the skills and certification needed for success. Often, workforce entities partner with community colleges to develop customized training. Employers enter into a contract requiring them to hire all successful candidates who complete the training. This strategy has been used successfully by Workforce Investment Boards around the country and represents a win-win strategy for the employers with specific needs for a trained workforce and for the trainees.
- *Try-out employment*. These programs provide wage subsidies to private-sector employers to hire candidates whom they may have been reluctant to hire because of age, inexperience, or other

perceived barriers. Under this arrangement employers get the opportunity to assess the abilities of the new hires without the wage obligation for an introductory period, the program can assist employees with any work-related or other issues to assure retention, and the employees have access to employment opportunities that they may have had difficulty obtaining on their own. WIA youth programs in many cities—Baltimore, Boston, Houston, and Kansas City—use this vehicle to gain access to jobs in quality work environments for youth completing education and training programs that they fund.

### **Quality Management**

A strong collaborative effort requires management and coordination support. Such a management entity must have: (1) staff with leadership skills and the capacity to work across systems and with community entities, to implement the strategies identified in the collaborative process; (2) effective management systems in place to assure fiscal and programmatic accountability; (3) the ability to work effectively with providers to assure the consistency and quality of the delivery of program services across the partnering organizations and agencies; and (4) the ability to facilitate data-sharing across systems, evaluate progress and encourage improvement, negotiate agreements, write proposals for funding, and keep the partnerships vibrant and action-oriented.

### **ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTION**

Programmatic interventions are those delivery approaches that will be necessary to build the skills, abilities, experiences, and career and labor-market exposure of the young men. The education level, skills, talents, and deficits of this population of young men of color will span a considerable range and will require a varied mix of program education options and program strategies, supports, and approaches. In identifying the key components of program intervention, we chose those elements that are common to programs that have been evaluated and found to be effective (Doolittle and Ivry 2002). These components are essential if the program is going to succeed in addressing the range of needs—employment, academic, social, personal, family, and life skills—when working with groups with significant barriers to employment. These elements must all be present to provide the kind of holistic approach necessary for young men of color to



attain the skills, credentials, and experiences that will lead to economic self-sufficiency.

### **Caring Adult Support and Mentorship**

A caring adult advocacy and support system helps youth navigate a complex maze of programs, services, and educational options and guides them in choosing the set of services that best suits their individual needs. Such a system creates a personal relationship of respect and support between the young men and well-trained, caring adult advocates. This relationship should continue until the young men achieve stability in the labor market. These advocates serve as role models; provide encouragement and feedback; and encourage young men to stay focused on their long-term goals.

Mentoring is another important intervention to help youth stay on a pathway to education and a good job. Successful youth-employment and apprenticeship programs provide community- and work-based mentors who offer guidance and encouragement to young men and women. A meta-analysis of evaluations of mentoring programs for youth found that youths from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to benefit from such programs than those from less disadvantaged backgrounds (DuBois et al. 2002).

### **Multiple Pathways Integrating Academic Skills and Occupational Preparation**

The education and competency levels of young men of color who have dropped out of high school span a broad range. Students whose basic skills and English literacy are at low levels need substantial amounts of education to achieve a secondary school credential; students who have sufficient skills to quickly earn a high school diploma or GED may be nearly ready for college. Given these differences, a system that allows for multiple entry and exit points along an educational continuum is most useful in meeting the diverse educational needs of the dropout population. If communities are to succeed in reengaging these young people, it is essential to provide multiple pathways to ensure that members of this population can obtain the education and training that lead to decent-paying jobs that match their interests and aspirations. These pathways require leveraging the multitude of federal, state, and local resources available to serve this population, improving the performance of education and workforce systems, as well as aligning programming across the systems that serve young men of color.

### **Rich Work Experiences and Workplace Connections**

A range of paid work experiences is essential to provide young men exposure to a variety of work environments and to foster the development of appropriate workplace skills and a work ethic. In addition, many young men have family and other financial obligations that require that they have an income. The ability to sustain participation in education and training over a longer term is therefore directly dependent on earning income. The array of work related options should include subsidized employment, work experience, internships, paid community service or unpaid community service (with a stipend), on-the-job training, try-out employment, part-time and full-time employment, and college work-study. These offerings should be arranged along a continuum that allows young men to progress from the most sheltered experiences to unsubsidized private-sector workplaces, depending on their level of work preparedness and comfort. The quality of work sites and work experiences is important. Poorly constructed projects and poorly supervised work experiences reinforce inappropriate work behaviors. The entire community—including hospitals, public agencies, public lands, nonprofits, and for-profit establishments—should be considered fertile ground for work experiences.

### **Personal Development, Leadership, and Civic Responsibility**

Preparing young men for success in postsecondary endeavors and for advancement in the workplace requires not only developing their critical academic and occupational skills, but also honing their personal, communication, social, and life-management skills. Activities that expose young men to new environments, engage them in civic projects, allow them to volunteer, and provide them with opportunities to lead and to function as part of a team all contribute to the development of their skill set. Helping these young men mature into responsible adults who possess integrity, a strong work ethic, and a sense of personal, civic, and family responsibility is a key objective of program intervention. An evaluation of service-corps programs that provided labor-intensive work on civic projects in conjunction with education support and leadership-development activities found that the corps had significant positive employment-related effects on the young black and Hispanic men who participated (Jastrzab et al. 1996).

### Connections to Resources and Support

Even young people with the best intentions of pursuing an education can be sidetracked by the weight of financial burdens, family responsibilities, and personal crises. *The Silent Epidemic*, published by Civic Enterprises, surveyed dropouts and found that 32 percent left because they needed to work, 22 percent left because of pregnancy, and 22 percent had to take care of a relative (Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison 2006). A U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on disconnected youth noted that in its review of programs in thirty-nine communities, access to health, mental health, and substance-abuse services; HIV testing; child care; housing; and food were important supports accessible at the program site or through formal partnerships (U.S. GAO 2008).

#### ALIGNING SYSTEMS TO CREATE EFFECTIVE CAREER PATHWAYS

To ease transitions between different levels and types of education and to align program content with industry requirements, states, school districts, and postsecondary institutions are increasingly using a “career-pathways approach.”<sup>6</sup> The adoption of this approach can lead to more low-income young men of color attaining postsecondary credentials that in turn lead them to good jobs. Career pathways are carefully crafted programs that link education, training, and support services to “enable students, often while they are working, to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare students to progress to the next level of employment and education.”<sup>7</sup>

Ideally, pathways begin with short, intensive remedial programs for those at the lowest literacy levels and extend through postsecondary certificates and degrees. Creating and maintaining pathways entails weaving together various education, training, and support services into an interlocking web that leads to postsecondary credentials with value in the labor market while allowing the individual to reach higher levels of educational and professional achievement. Good pathways incorporate a number of innovations in instruction and delivery and help students realize their goals faster. Career pathways are not only a way of organizing and offering services at the local level, but also a framework for the alignment of multiple systems that serve youth. Such alignment ensures that there are no gaps or

barriers among the systems serving this population. Because these systems are governed by different laws and regulations, this alignment requires intervention at several levels. Alignment entails restructuring the laws and rules governing various programs to ensure that pathways can be built at scale. Other barriers to alignment are embedded in the culture, protocol, or interpretations of rules. These barriers can be addressed through dialogue among state and local administrators, who can redirect programming and resources to effect better alignment and integration of delivery of service.

The career-pathway framework is helpful in developing strategies to serve young men of color because this approach is based on the assumption that multiple pathways lead to the final goal of employment that provides good wages. It also acknowledges that differentiated strategies are necessary to ensure that more students reach their educational and employment goals. As noted earlier, many of these young men have found their way to adult education, GED, and developmental education programs only to find that these programs use the same traditional instructional approaches that often lead to repeated failure. New strategies and practices are needed for a population that has struggled with and abandoned the traditional education pipeline. Figure 9.5 illustrates the multiple-pathway approach. Successful career pathways require innovation in approaches that accelerate learning and the time to obtain a credential or degree along with innovations in program content and delivery approach. Fortunately, over the past decade several approaches have proven successful for working with out-of-school youth who have substantial academic deficits.

### **APPROACHES THAT ACCELERATE LEARNING**

A number of promising innovations emerging from the secondary, adult education, workforce, and postsecondary systems demonstrate that learning and the achievement of secondary and postsecondary credentials can be accelerated, even for students who have previously not done well in school. Rather than relying on a sequential approach and the underlying assumptions about teaching and learning that are embedded in the traditional education system, these innovations accelerate learning through a variety of strategies, including credit recovery, competency-based approaches, dual enrollment, and bridge programs. If these innovations are incorporated as part of a multiple-pathways approach, young men can attain academic competencies, master occupational skills, and achieve postsecondary credentials in a shorter period of time.

Overcoming the academic deficits of youths who have left school prema-

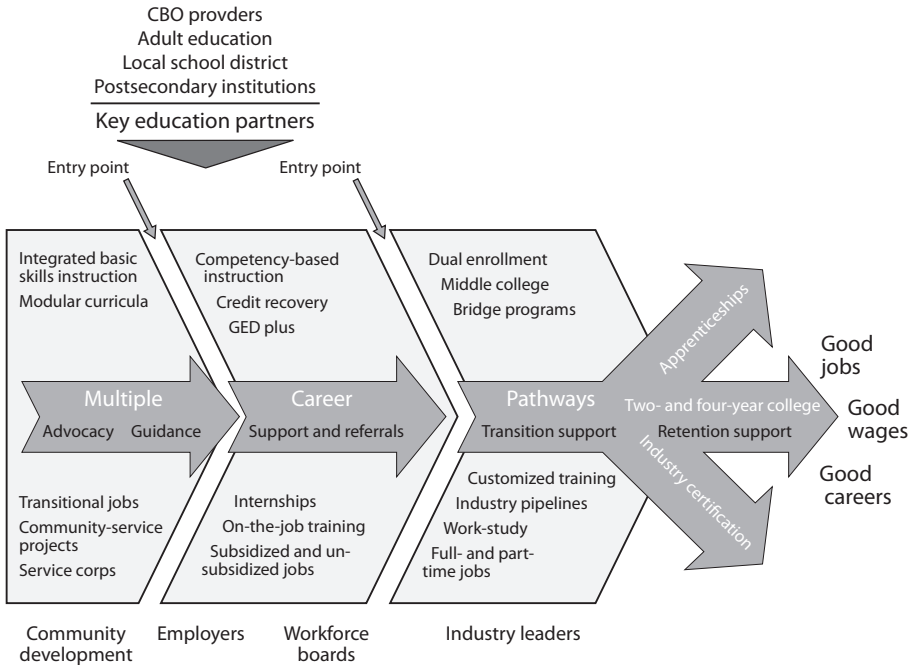


Figure 9.5. Multiple pathways schematic. Source: Authors' rendering.

turally, with various levels of academic mastery and credit accumulation, is a daunting challenge, particularly in light of the inadequacy of the basic skills systems (including WIA's adult education system and the remedial and developmental departments in community colleges) to meet these youths' needs. Most of them cannot return to a traditional school environment, in which credit accrual is based on seat time (that is, spending a particular amount of time in a classroom) because they are too old, too far behind to matriculate in the traditional setting, or other district policies preclude their return. GED programs generally require students to have skills at the ninth-grade level or above, which eliminates many youths from eligibility.

Given these barriers, many states, districts, and colleges have developed more flexible approaches to instruction and the awarding of credit and credentials. Some of the same approaches that blur the line between secondary and postsecondary education and are commonly used for more advanced students, such as dual enrollment and early- and middle-college programs, have been shown to dramatically help lower-skilled students catch up. Communities that want young men who have dropped out of

high school to more quickly achieve high school credentials and increase postsecondary connections should consider adopting the following innovations, which have been successful with the out-of-school population. These educational strategies are being used in youth recovery programs, adult education programs, and in many bridge programs at the college level. Each of these approaches is often used as part of broader program interventions and is accompanied by comprehensive supports to ensure that students succeed.

*Credit-recovery programs.* These programs allow a student who previously has not completed a particular course to “recover” credit for that course by demonstrating competency on the content standards of the course instead of requiring him to spend a particular amount of time in a classroom. Credit-recovery programs are particularly effective in helping students who are beyond the average graduation age and behind catch up and earn their high school diplomas.

*Competency-based approaches.* These programs award a high school diploma based on attainment of the skill-proficiency equivalent of a high school graduate. This approach is even more flexible than a traditional credit-based approach.

*Dual enrollment at the secondary and postsecondary levels.* These programs allow students to work toward a high school diploma while accruing postsecondary education credit. Also called concurrent enrollment and dual-credit programs, these approaches expose students to postsecondary-level work, add rigor and intensity to the educational experience, and help students achieve their goals faster. Dual enrollment allows students to increase multiple skills concurrently and facilitates the accumulation of college credits in a compressed time frame. The most common secondary-level dual-enrollment programs are collaborations between secondary schools and community colleges. Colleges can use dual enrollment in a number of ways, including combining adult and developmental education or dual-enrolling students in adult education or ESL and occupational training. Dual enrollment accelerates the time in which a student’s skills are remediated. These models also make college more financially accessible, because tuition-free adult education can be used to offer developmental education, and financial aid is available to students enrolled in degree programs that integrate adult education and English literacy.

*Early- and middle-college programs.* These programs involve collaborations between secondary schools and local postsecondary institutions to give students the opportunity to earn college credit while attending high school. Often offered on or near the college campus, these initiatives famil-

### WASHINGTON STATE'S I-BEST PROGRAMS

Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs use an integrated approach to provide educational access and support for adult education and ESL students to progress faster and further along career pathways. There are more than 135 I-BEST programs spanning a variety of professional fields at the state's thirty-four community and technical colleges. The Architectural CAD Drafting I-BEST program at Clover Park Technical College is a three-quarter program designed to start ESL students on a pathway toward the Architectural Engineering Design associate's degree. The program at Clover Park pairs English-language and allied-health instructors in the classroom to advance students concurrently in both areas, while the students earn credits toward certificates or degrees. Colleges provide robust student supports to I-BEST participants, including financial aid assistance, system navigation, and career and educational planning.

In the Architectural CAD Drafting I-BEST program, each of the technical courses applies directly toward the associate's degree. The courses provide foundational terminology, concepts, and knowledge essential for success in the architectural and drafting industry. They also provide the technical skills required for entry-level CAD drafting positions. The program is 684 clock hours and 30 credits, spread over three quarters. All I-BEST programs have to be part of a one-year certificate program or another occupational program with proven ability to place graduates in higher-wage jobs (at least thirteen dollars an hour in the state and fifteen dollars an hour in the Seattle area). An independent study of I-BEST showed that participants take more college courses, persist in postsecondary education and training, and earn credentials at higher rates than those who are not enrolled in I-BEST (Jenkins, Zeindenberg, and Kienzl 2009).

iarize youth with college life. They serve students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out as well as students who have higher skills. Upon graduation from these programs, students receive a high school diploma and some postsecondary credit. For early-college high schools, the secondary and postsecondary institutions develop an integrated academic program so that students earn from one to two years of transferable college credit (Nodine 2008).

*Integrating remediation with occupational instruction.* Another strategy to reduce the time to credential is to integrate remediation with occu-

### NEW YORK'S MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO GRADUATION

The New York City Department of Education's Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation has established programs that combine a number of the best practices in youth development and education and training to ensure that more students who drop out or are at risk of dropping out get on a pathway to postsecondary education and training. The Youth Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) are full-time evening academic programs that feature supportive learning environments where youth between the ages of 17.5 and 21 concentrate only on the credit portfolio needed for graduation. YABCs rely on the flexibility of credit recovery in customizing the educational programming for over-age and undercredited youth. Each site is operated jointly by the Department of Education and a community-based organization that provides services to students, including youth-development support, college and career advising, individual counseling, and tutoring. Transfer schools are small, academically rigorous, full-time high schools designed to reengage students aged sixteen to twenty-one who are behind in high school or have dropped out. The essential elements of transfer schools include a personalized learning environment, rigorous academic standards, student-centered pedagogy, support to meet instructional and developmental goals, and a focus on connections to college.

Learning to Work (LTW) is an in-depth job readiness and career exploration component offered in conjunction with the academic component of some YABCs, transfer schools, and GED programs. LTW provides students robust wraparound supports, including academic and student support, career and educational exploration, work preparation, skills development, and internships. Students gain valuable work experience through internships in a variety of sectors, including education, health, business and retail, and nonprofit and social services (Crotty and Pendleton 2009).

pational training, rather than requiring students to complete remediation before starting for-credit occupational coursework. This approach can be used by adult education, workforce systems, and community-based providers in conjunction with postsecondary remedial options to contextualize academic learning and remedial coursework, to allow concurrent mastery of academic and occupational skills, and to apply those skills in the context of the occupation or workplace. An integrated approach accelerates learning by customizing the basic skills and remedial coursework to the student's occupational pathway and provides for an easier transition to higher-level study or certification.



*Bridge programs.* These programs incorporate occupational or academic content into basic-skills training as a means of providing students with the foundation needed to advance and succeed in postsecondary education. These programs can be designed to meet the needs of English-speaking students at fifth- or sixth-grade reading levels or non-English speakers at the low-intermediate ESL level (Henle, Jenkins, and Smith 2005). Bridge programs also cover other areas viewed as essential for college success (for example, problem solving, working in teams, developing good study habits, and so on) and offer support services.

*Career-pathway bridge programs.* These programs typically cover “soft skills” (the personal qualities, habits, attitudes, and social graces that make someone a good employee), precollege academic skills, and specific job skills, ideally ones that are part of a career pathway.<sup>8</sup> Career-pathway bridges tailor and contextualize the basic-skills and English-language content to general workplace needs and to the knowledge and skills needed in a specific occupation. The creation of a good bridge program requires rewriting or creating curricula. Ideally, technical job content is integrated with basic skills and English language content, thereby increasing skill acquisition and shortening the time to completion. Bridge programs can entail dual-enrolling students in basic skills or remedial education and for-credit occupational coursework simultaneously, which can accelerate their educational advancement.

### INNOVATION IN PROGRAM CONTENT AND DELIVERY

Several common elements have been shown to be successful across adult learning, dropout-recovery, and postsecondary systems. These innovations have been successful in increasing student-learning gains and strengthening connections to employers and local labor-market requirements. Contextualized instruction, modularized curricula, flexible scheduling and delivery modes, and compressed instruction will be important for building multiple pathways that blend secondary, postsecondary, adult education, and workforce resources. These practices are most successful when they are adapted to the learning style and level of young men of color, customized to the needs of employers, and structured to award credits and credentials that can be transferred to other institutions and valued in the labor market. Key innovations include:

*Contextualized instruction.* This entails customizing reading, writing, math, and English curricula to students’ occupational goals to help them recognize the relevance of what they are learning to their life and career

goals. Course and program content can also be contextualized to particular occupations or sectors or to more general career-exploration content.

*Chunked programs, modularized curricula, and embedded certificates.* Career pathways can be structured as a series of “chunks” or compressed modules that enable the student to advance toward increased skills in a series of small and manageable steps. These modules can be chunks of existing credential programs that are broken into segments that combine existing courses in new ways. In some cases modules are tied to entry-level job skill requirements and different levels of industry-recognized credentials. Because student progression is often nonlinear, chunks and modules provide students the flexibility of moving up a career ladder to better-paying employment while continuing their education. This approach also provides an opportunity to create more flexible, individualized methods that better meet student needs. Chunked programs and modularized curricula make it easier for community-education providers and workforce systems to work with postsecondary institutions and employers to customize training and pipelines for specific industries and occupations.

*Intensive instruction.* Intensive instruction can include compressing a program or accelerating instruction. Compressed programs allow students to receive the same number of hours of instruction in fewer weeks by scheduling more class hours each week. Accelerated programs move through content at a faster pace, allowing the student to cover more material in fewer hours. Both approaches allow this population to move through coursework and achieve their goals more quickly, which saves the student money and is more likely to keep the student engaged.

*Flexible scheduling and delivery modes.* Distance learning and flexible scheduling also promote persistence in education and help keep students in school. Flexible scheduling can entail providing instruction in concentrated blocks on weekends or offering coursework on weeknights. This is particularly useful in designing educational components for young men as they concurrently pursue other work activities, participate in internships, or receive other training. It is also helpful for students who work during traditional hours or are balancing school with family responsibilities. Programs can combine traditional classroom time with distance learning to help students stay connected.

*Cohorts or learning communities.* Students in learning communities or cohorts take linked courses that have mutually reinforcing themes and assignments with a group of peers to provide mutual support and encouragement. Creating learning communities can also help students gain a deeper understanding of the interrelationship of content they are

studying because of the linked courses and promote increased interaction with teachers. A recent study of learning communities at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York, found that three semesters after being placed in a learning community of twenty-five students each, students in the learning community moved more quickly through developmental English requirements, took and passed more courses, and earned more credits in their first semester. Two years later, they were also somewhat more likely to be enrolled in college (Scrivener et al. 2008).

*Tangible rewards for learning.* Such rewards have been shown to help motivate students to excel and persist in their studies. One example of this approach is performance-based scholarships, which provide monetary rewards to students for persistence and good grades. In the Opening Doors demonstration program of MDRC (formerly Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation), two Louisiana community colleges offered college-ready low-income students who were also parents a one-thousand-dollar scholarship for each of two semesters, for a total of two thousand dollars if they maintained a 2.0 (C) grade point average and were enrolled in the community college at least half time. The scholarships augmented Pell Grants, federal need-based grant aid for tuition, fees, and living expenses to low-income students, and other financial aid (Brock and Richburg-Hayes 2006).

### **SUPPORTS TO ENSURE POSTSECONDARY RETENTION AND COMPLETION**

Even if pathway interventions are successful in delivering academically prepared young men of color to postsecondary institutions, college retention and completion can still pose a challenge. Analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that while 60 percent of African American and 66 percent of Hispanic former high school dropouts enrolled in college, only 11 percent of them attained a postsecondary degree (Almeida, Johnson, and Steinberg 2006).

There are a range of reasons why students don't complete their postsecondary studies, including lack of financial resources, underpreparation, and the difficulty of balancing work, family, and school. Financial aid plays a large role in ensuring that students can both attend and complete college. Research also shows that nontraditional students, including those who have delayed enrollment in college—as many young men of color have—are more likely to attend college once they are eligible for the federal Pell Grant program, which provides assistance with tuition, books, fees, and

living expenses for students attending college; this applies even for those attending less-than-half time (Seftor and Turner 2002). Students who leave college are less likely to have a scholarship or financial aid than those who complete (31 percent versus 57 percent) (Johnson and Rochkind 2010). An additional thousand dollars in aid increases college attendance by about four percentage points (Deming and Dynarski 2009). If more low-income young men of color are to complete postsecondary education and training, it will be necessary to provide adequate financial aid that not only fully covers tuition and books, but also living expenses including housing, food, and transportation.

Federal and state financial aid, in the form of grants and loans, is available to help low-income students attend postsecondary education and training. Many communities and states engage in public-awareness campaigns that educate low-income youth about the availability of Pell Grants and other forms of student aid that make college-going more realistic. Some communities have targeted young men of color, who are already lagging behind other demographic groups in college attendance and completion, through advertisements and outreach activities. Community-based organizations and other organizations offer help in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Although financial aid is vital in enabling low-income youth of color to attend college, student-support services are also an essential yet insufficiently funded component of increasing the retention and completion rates of youth who are at risk of dropping out. Developed and administered at local institutions, these supports can be categorized into three groups: academic supports; nonacademic supports; and material and financial resources.<sup>9</sup> Academic supports include academic guidance and counseling; tutoring, study groups, time management, and study-skills training; college-success courses, career counseling, and academic-resource labs (where students can access computers, reference books, online resources, career exploration tools, and so on); and testing accommodations for students who have learning disabilities. Nonacademic supports include personal guidance and counseling; advising and coaching (which may include intensive support by a coach who helps students manage both academic and nonacademic issues); and referral services to resources, including social services, health care, and peer mentoring. Material and financial support services include subsidies for transportation, books, and supplies; emergency funds for short-term crises; and assistance with food and clothing. A national study of Student Support Services, the small federal funding stream that provides financing for these types of resources, showed

that these services positively affect student grades, the number of credits earned, and educational persistence (U.S. Department of Education 1997).

### FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Several key federally funded systems should be playing a pivotal role in constructing multiple postsecondary pathways for young men of color. Yet they do not. At a minimum we recommend that through legislative and administrative changes in state plan requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), WIA Titles I and II, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and the Higher Education Act (HEA), the federal government should require states to be more explicit about how coordination and articulation will occur across systems to align structures, supports, and services to facilitate the reengagement and successful matriculation of the dropout population in pathways to postsecondary and labor-market success.

This section advances other recommendations on actions that can be taken at the federal, state, and local levels to facilitate synergies among key systems to accomplish the task of building career pathways to family-supporting jobs. We discuss how the various titles of the WIA, programs funded through HEA, and the ESEA can be strengthened to extend opportunity to disconnected youth populations to ensure that more of them reach their education and career goals. Although we do not discuss them in this chapter, other funding sources that states and communities should examine include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Employment and Training, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education program, among others.

#### The Workforce Investment Act

*Title I: Youth and Adult Programs.* If adopted, these recommendations could strengthen the workforce system’s ability to contribute to the development of high-quality postsecondary pathways for young men of color. We recommend that federal agencies:

- Increase the targeting in both the youth and adult titles requiring local areas to direct more WIA resources to support training interventions for “high-needs” populations, including those who are low-income high school dropouts, ex-offenders, parenting teens, disabled, or in other disadvantaged situations.

- Continue targeted funding to economically distressed communities via Youth Opportunity grants (or other innovations in funding streams) that focus on building comprehensive and integrated youth-delivery systems in communities of high youth distress.<sup>10</sup>
- Require that at least 50 percent of the funding for WIA Title I adult services be spent on training and training support for individuals in targeted “high-needs” categories. Allow an expanded venue for training, including classroom occupational training, on-the-job training, transitional jobs, customized training, as well as access to certificate training at postsecondary institutions using individual training vouchers.
- Create a separate funding stream to support summer and year-round subsidized work experience for youth ages fourteen to twenty-four. This can subsidize a broad range of work experience in the public and private sector, community conservation and service corps, and internships.
- Use incentive and technical-assistance funding to strengthen the ability of state and local workforce boards and youth councils to play a strategic convening role. Require that state and local boards, in their WIA plans, outline specifically how funds will be used to improve the labor-market situation of males of color and other population groups with disproportionately low employment and earnings rates in the local and regional labor-market area.

These recommendations focus on the state and local level:

- Fifteen percent of WIA funds that flow to states can be used at the governor’s discretion to support special initiatives and provide technical assistance. States should set aside a portion of the governor’s discretionary funding to incentivize the development of local pathway models to support populations including young men of color. State funding should also be used to leverage the expenditure of local WIA youth funds to create career pathways linked to growing areas of the state or regional economy.
- Local workforce boards can and should prioritize service to high-risk populations. Advocates should ask local boards to review their level of service to young men of color who are dropouts, offenders, and in other risk categories. The outcomes for these men should also be reviewed. Local workforce boards and youth councils should be asked to put this challenge in the forefront when making

decisions on priority of service and service strategies. They should be asked to identify how services in the one-stop centers—and how training funds for adults as well as youth—can be expanded and aligned with other funding to support the creation of pathway programs for high-risk groups.

*Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.* If more young men of color with low basic skills and limited English proficiency are to reach their educational and career goals, changes to AEFLA-funded programs are necessary. We recommend the following changes at the federal and state levels:

- Narrow the focus on adult education so that it better reflects the educational demands of the labor market. This can be achieved by redefining the goals of AEFLA-funded programs to increase the rate at which students achieve postsecondary and career success. This change would increase the compatibility of adult education with the needs and goals of youth in these programs and help ensure that they receive the services necessary for them to succeed in postsecondary education, training, and careers.
- Change the performance-measurement system for local programs to incentivize and encourage higher outcomes, particularly success in postsecondary education and training and careers. The current system is focused on completion of the GED and enrollment in postsecondary education or placement in a job. The GED goal is insufficient in the current economy and enrollment in school or placement in a job is meaningless if the student quickly drops out or is fired for inadequate skills. By reaching toward higher goals, and being held accountable for them, local adult education programs will better prepare students for the next step along the educational and career pathway.
- Provide additional funding for adult education and English literacy services, with a particular focus on increasing the intensity, duration, and quality of programs; better training for instructors; and developing innovative approaches to ensure that more students reach their educational goals faster.
- Incentivize and encourage more adult education programs to provide opportunities for their students to enroll dually or concurrently in postsecondary education and training, or develop programs that integrate basic skills and postsecondary education and training.

### Higher Education Act

We make the following recommendations to improve access to and success in postsecondary education and training for young men of color:

- Increase the amount of Pell Grants to cover the unmet need of low-income students and to restore the Pell Grant's purchasing power, which has eroded over the past several years because of increasing college tuition and level-funded Pell Grants.
- Ensure that federal and state financial aid formulae reflect the needs of part-time and older students. Do not penalize those who are working to support themselves or their families.
- Expand funding for the Federal Work-Study Program so that more low-income young men of color can have access to these flexible jobs, which tend to be on-campus and thus make balancing work and school easier while providing valuable work experience.
- Direct state financial-aid dollars toward need-based grant programs instead of merit-based programs, which reward higher-income students for good high school academic performance instead of concentrating scarce state dollars with low-income students, where they are most needed.
- Provide federal and state funding to community and technical colleges to create comprehensive career-pathways programs in decent-paying industries, such as allied health, construction, and production.
- Increase federal and state funding for services that support student success. At the federal level such programs include Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, and Student Success Grants. Under the Student Success Grant pilot that was included in the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act but was not funded, every student who receives a Pell Grant would also receive a fifteen-hundred-dollar Student Success Grant. This grant would offset the costs to the college of providing intensive supports to ensure that students succeed.<sup>11</sup>
- Incentivize and encourage states and institutions to ensure that more young men of color graduate from college with certificates, diplomas, and degrees. A greater focus on completion will change how colleges educate students and should lead to innovations in developmental, or remedial, education practices that produce better outcomes.



### **The Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

In 2010 the U.S. Congress will start engaging in discussions related to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In recent years there has been increased focus on high school reform and graduation accountability. Reauthorized ESEA legislation will undoubtedly encompass provisions that will affect state- and district-level accountability for delivering each cohort of ninth graders to graduation. ESEA reauthorization provides an opportunity to expand the role of the school system in dropout recovery and creating multiple pathways. Ways in which ESEA reauthorization can support the development of multiple pathways that can lead to successful education and labor-market outcomes for young men of color include:

- Requiring states and districts to report on graduation rates, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and to outline the policies, programs, and processes that will be used to close the gaps.
- Elevating high school reform within ESEA and designating resources to be accessed by states and targeted to “high-need” districts to support the implementation of multiple pathways for high-risk in-school and out-of-school youth.
- Requiring the engagement of community partners, employers, and other youth-serving systems in the development of strategic plans associated with ESEA-related expenditure on high school redesign and improvement activities.
- Allowing community-based organizations and institutions of higher education with a proven track record of working with struggling students and dropouts to receive ESEA Title I funds to provide family, community, and education support services necessary to retain students in school or on pathways leading to a high school credential.

### **CONCLUSION**

Building postsecondary pathways to good jobs for low-income young men of color will require stretching the paradigms of secondary, postsecondary, workforce, and adult education systems, as well as greater collaboration among these systems. Aligning systems and programming across funding streams, building partnerships, and creating new pathways are complex endeavors. But there are many innovative approaches that have shown

promise and can be implemented and taken to scale. Integrating academic instruction with skills training, work experience, support, career exposure, and counseling can put these youths back on track. It will require a communitywide effort to change the landscape on education and labor-market outcomes for young men of color in economically distressed communities. This is a time when leadership and forward thinking on the part of the federal government, governors, mayors, college officials, community leaders, workforce leaders, and employers could dramatically alter the landscape of how we prepare these young men for the skilled opportunities of the future. It will require individual players within communities to come together as never before. This is the challenge and the opportunity.

### NOTES

1. Title I (adults, dislocated workers, and youth); Title II (adult education and literacy); Title III (Wagner-Peyser employment service); Title IV (vocational rehabilitation); and Title V (general provisions for states).

2. These figures are based on data from Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Household Data. Table A-16. Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population 16–24 Years of Age by School Enrollment, Sex, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C., February 2010.

3. In some states the mandatory school attendance age ends at sixteen years old.

4. Authors' calculation based on data from the National Reporting System, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

5. A student is ineligible for federal financial aid if the drug conviction occurred while the student was receiving federal financial aid. The period of ineligibility depends on the number and type of offenses. The student can regain eligibility by meeting certain requirements, including completing a rehabilitation program.

6. These states include Kentucky, Oregon, Virginia, and Wisconsin, among others.

7. This is the definition used by the Oregon Career Pathways Initiative. Available online at <http://worksourceoregon.org/index.php/career-pathways>.

8. Not all job skills are part of a career pathway because not all jobs lend themselves to advancing along a career ladder.

9. These categories were established by the Breaking Through Initiative, as outlined in *Jobs for the Future: The Breaking through Practice Guide* (Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2010).

10. Youth Opportunity grants were introduced in the original WIA legislation in 1998 as the vehicle to enable high-poverty communities to build youth delivery-system capacity to address youth challenge at a scale and make a difference in the education and labor-market outcomes for the community's youth as a whole. These grants were highly successful in building delivery capacity in these communities. However, the level of appropriations was insufficient to allow the continuance of such grants. More than ninety thousand mostly minority youths were

enrolled in programs in thirty-six communities; 48 percent of these youths were out of school. The Youth Opportunity communities were particularly successful in making educational connections, postsecondary connections, and short- and long-term placements for these youths.

11. More than fifty new programs were included in the Higher Education Act reauthorization, but only a handful were funded because of the current federal budget constraints.

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## THE EQUITY SCORECARD

### *A Process for Building Institutional Capacity to Educate Young Men of Color*

Frank Harris III, Estela Mara Bensimon,  
and Robin Bishop

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter frames postsecondary educational outcomes for men of color from the perspective of institutional accountability. It begins with a national statistical snapshot of the status of Black and Latino men in higher education. Following is a synthesis of the published research documenting the experiential realities of Black and Latino men in higher education, as well as programs and interventions that have been enacted nationally in response to the challenges that impede their participation and success. Highlighted are the ways that institutions target *students* as the point of intervention and overlook the ways that *educators* produce and reinforce outcome gaps for Black and Latino men. In response, the Center for Urban Education's Equity Scorecard is presented as a tool to foster a more evidence-based approach to improving the success of men of color in higher education. Using the Equity Scorecard as a guiding framework, the chapter provides institutions of higher education with the data tools and data practices to assess the status of male students of color on indicators of access, academic progress, academic attainment, and excellence. These tools enable college administrators and others to set specific benchmark goals to remove roadblocks and reduce equity gaps for male students of color in higher education.

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2005, a number of national reports have documented the “crisis of men of color” in higher education.<sup>1</sup> Professor Shaun R. Harper’s (2006a) report on Black male students at public flagship universities was among the first to chronicle the status of Black men on key indicators of participation, success, and outcomes in higher education compared to the same measures for white men and Black women. He showed that Black men represented the same proportion of total college enrollment in 2002 as they did in 1976 (4.3 percent); that across all racial groups the gender gap in enrollment is greatest between Black men and women; that only 147 more doctorates were earned by Black men in 2003 than in 1977; that more than two-thirds (67.6 percent) of Black men do not graduate from college within six years; and that Black men have the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups. “Higher education,” Harper concluded, “is a public good that benefits far too few Black men in America” (ibid.: viii).

Similarly, in their article “The Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education” professors Victor B. Saenz and Luis Ponjuan (2009) have documented the sociocultural factors that lead Latino males away from higher education and serve as barriers to their college participation and success. They point to financial pressures that result in low-wage and low-skilled jobs, military enlistment, and an overrepresentation in U.S. prisons to explain the declining participation of Latinos in higher education. A 2010 report from the College Board, *The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color*, has warned that if current downward trends in educational attainment persist, the educational level of the American workforce will continue to decline and will be most noticeable by 2020—the year that President Barack Obama has set as the deadline for the United States to be first in the world in its college-educated proportion of the population.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on these and other reports about the crisis of men of color in higher education, our analysis addresses not simply the problem. Rather, it seeks to reframe the issue from the standpoint of educational equity to serve males of color more effectively.

The first section provides a statistical snapshot of the educational status of Black and Latino males. We highlight national data that document higher education patterns by race and ethnicity, gender, and finally by gender within race and ethnicity. Data within the latter category are scarce and more difficult to obtain, a finding that reinforces the need to address how or who is involved in the determination of which indicators are included in national and state-level data systems. As long as race and



gender are included merely as demographic descriptors of the population, assessing the state of equity for men of color on fine-grained indicators of success will be impossible. In the second section of the chapter we review how scholars of higher education interpret the “crisis of minority males” and point out that the chief response by institutions of higher education has been through student affairs programs that target students of color as the point of intervention.<sup>3</sup> Although these programs are necessary and go a long way in providing important academic and emotional support, it is doubtful that programs alone can dismantle the academic and cultural practices instituted over decades that make it possible for racial inequities to endure on college campuses.

In the third section we address the need to go beyond programs in seeking equity for minority males. We introduce the Equity Scorecard, an organizational learning tool that engages instructors, staff, and institutional leaders in a collaborative process of assessing gaps in educational outcomes and setting improvement targets to reach equity goals for racial and gender groups (Bensimon 2004; Bensimon et al. 2004; Bensimon, Rueda, Dowd, and Harris III 2007). The Equity Scorecard is different from typical campus interventions because it focuses on developing practitioners’ contextualized awareness of inequities in educational outcomes, rather than on support programs for students, because it places practitioners in the role of researchers who collect, analyze, and interpret student-outcome data.<sup>4</sup> When practitioners have a heightened awareness of inequities and the reasons why they persist, they are more likely to take the actions necessary to eliminate them (Bensimon 2004). The data analysis practices that are part of the Equity Scorecard process enable practitioners to place their own institutional structures, policies, and practices under the microscope to determine how and why they might be failing to produce successful outcomes for students from specific racial/ethnic groups. Accordingly, in this section we describe the key principles of institutional change that have shaped the processes of implementing the Equity Scorecard, and we provide a prototype for an Equity Scorecard focusing on males of color.

Based on our research on the implementation of the Equity Scorecard at colleges and universities across the United States, our premise is that institutional and systemic change are more likely to happen when college leaders and instructors look for the causes of inequities in the domains of policy and practice that they control and can influence directly.<sup>5</sup> Most important, the Equity Scorecard process is designed to shift practitioners’ attention away from what is wrong with students to what they, and their own institutions or departments, might be doing wrong or might be failing

to do at all. This shift in focus offers greater possibility for change than when the problem is framed as a consequence of factors that are beyond the influence of practitioners. Faculty will often attribute unequal outcomes to students' underpreparation. Although this may be an accurate perception, it is futile to dwell on students' past experiences. It is also harmful if inequities are rationalized as beyond the control of practitioners. We focus on what *is* within the control of educators in terms of changing their own practices to meet the needs and circumstances of men of color. The Equity Scorecard process empowers practitioners to locate themselves as agents in the process of creating positive academic outcomes for men and boys of color, to stop playing the blame game, and to become part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

The following key points are made in this chapter:

- It is impossible to provide a comprehensive picture of college-going patterns for Black and Latino males on a national scale because of the lack of data on key indicators of student success (for example, year to year persistence, graduation, grade point average) that are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender within race/ethnicity.
- As has often been the case with issues of racial equity in higher education, efforts to improve the college participation and success of minority males usually consist of compensatory or support programs carried out by student affairs personnel. Thus the issue is treated as a question of individual deficits rather than symptoms of structured inequality in the educational system.
- To improve outcomes for men of color in higher education, leaders and policymakers need to be more conscious of racial and gender disparities in student success and insist on equity in educational outcomes being treated as a matter of institutional accountability and responsibility.

### **THE STATUS OF MEN OF COLOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

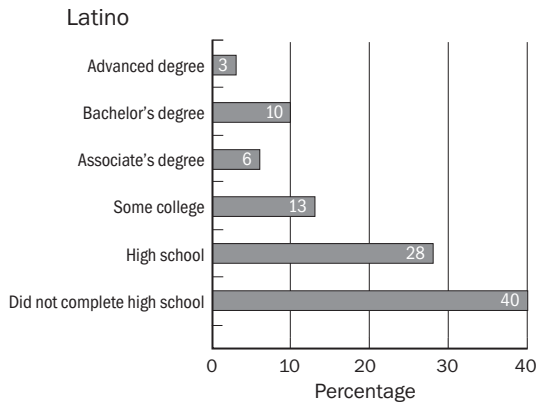
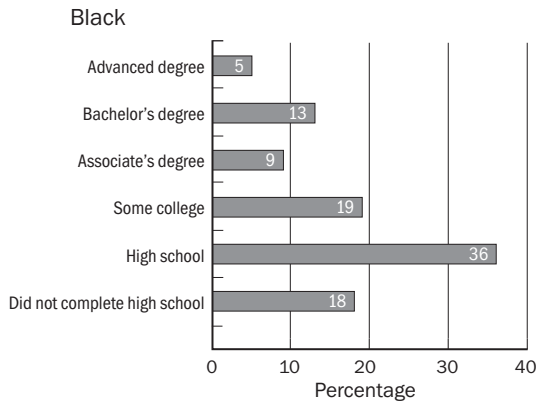
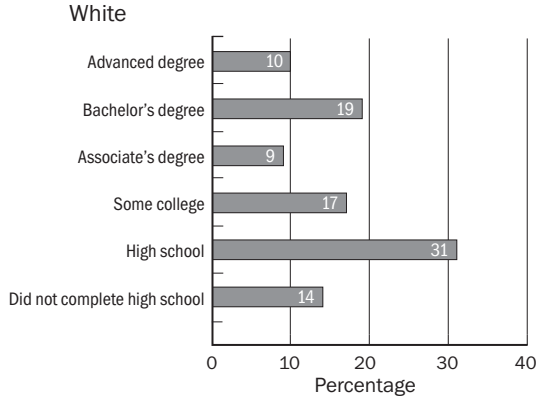
Data can be interpreted in different ways and sometimes convey contrasting messages. Some might look at college enrollment and degree attainment data and infer that U.S. higher education has made great strides with regard to equity. Perhaps is much to celebrate: After all, the number of people of color earning bachelor's degrees has increased more than 60 percent in just one decade, from 227,002 in 1996 to 369,730 in 2006 (Mikyung 2009). The numbers of master's, doctoral, and professional degrees

granted nationally has grown substantially from 1996 to 2006, and this growth is attributable largely to minorities (*ibid.*). Many minority groups are participating in higher education in record numbers. However, when these numbers are examined in context, two important themes emerge: (1) Black, Latino, and other students of color are not experiencing successful outcomes, as measured by enrollment and degree completion, in higher education comparable to those of their white counterparts; and (2) males are achieving at lower levels than females. Together, these themes underscore the need to examine ways to address the educational success of students of color generally—and males of color specifically—and to search for ways that institutions and systems can hold themselves accountable for these outcomes.

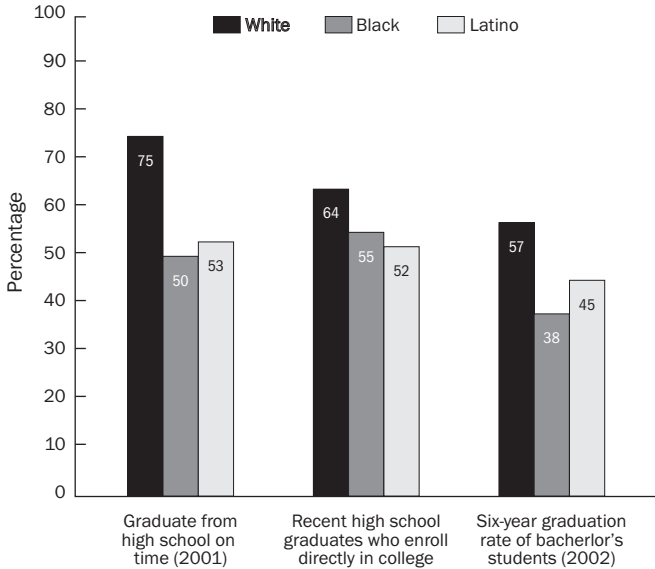
Although nearly all racial and ethnic groups have experienced growth in higher education achievement rates, the gap between groups in relation to the population is actually widening (Kelly 2005). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), while 14 percent of all white adults in the United States have not completed high school, this percentage jumps to 18 percent and 40 percent for Black and Latino adults, respectively. Conversely, 19 percent of white adults have completed a bachelor's degree, compared with 13 percent of Black adults and 10 percent of Latinos (figure 10.1).

Although it is not possible to track individual student progress at the national level, the best approximation involves combining measures of achievement at various levels to obtain a snapshot of how specific populations are progressing from high school graduation to college enrollment and ultimately to college graduation. At each milestone Black and Latino students tend to drop out in greater percentages than their white counterparts (Kelly 2005; Mikyung 2009), highlighting the importance of targeted college access and retention strategies as well as efforts to increase high school completion (figure 10.2).

Although racial inequities clearly exist within various measures of enrollment or performance in higher education, why focus specifically on *males* of color? Hasn't higher education—and education in general—long been concerned about equal treatment and performance of girls and women? The history of education in the United States contains many examples of the unequal treatment of females (AAUW 1991), and elements of traditional sexism surely continue to exist in various forms in education and within the larger society. Nonetheless, a marked trend has arisen since the early 1980s: women are consistently outpacing men in college enrollment and completion. In his 2008 study, *Educational Attainment and Economic Welfare*, postsecondary education policy researcher Thomas G.



**Figure 10.1.** Highest educational attainment by race. *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau 2009.

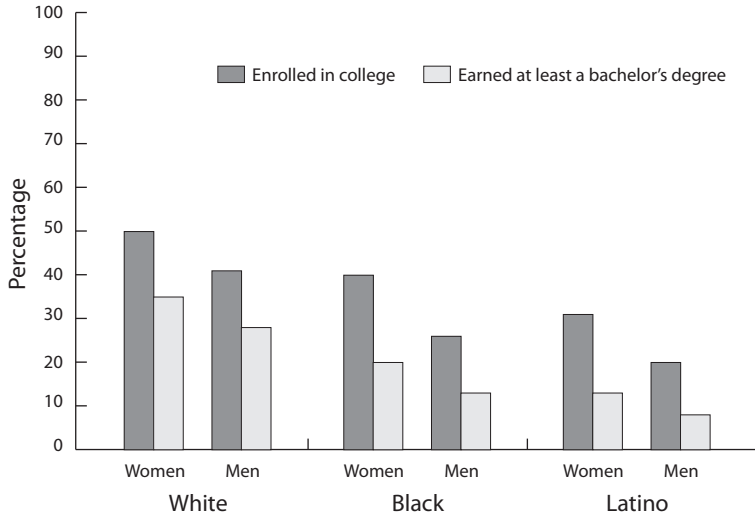


**Figure 10.2.** Educational milestones by race. *Note:* Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. *Source:* Kelly 2005.

Mortenson has pointed out that young men are obtaining less education on average than their fathers, while young women are achieving higher education levels than their mothers. In 1977 women from all racial and ethnic backgrounds earned 46 percent of bachelor's degrees, *half* of all bachelor's degrees in 1981, and 57 percent by 2000—a rate that has held constant since (King 2010; Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2007). Women made up 60.3 percent of graduate enrollment in 2007, the most recent year of national data collection (King 2010).

Although this gender gap exists across racial groups, it is most pronounced among groups that are the least represented in higher education. Consider these trends in U.S. higher education:

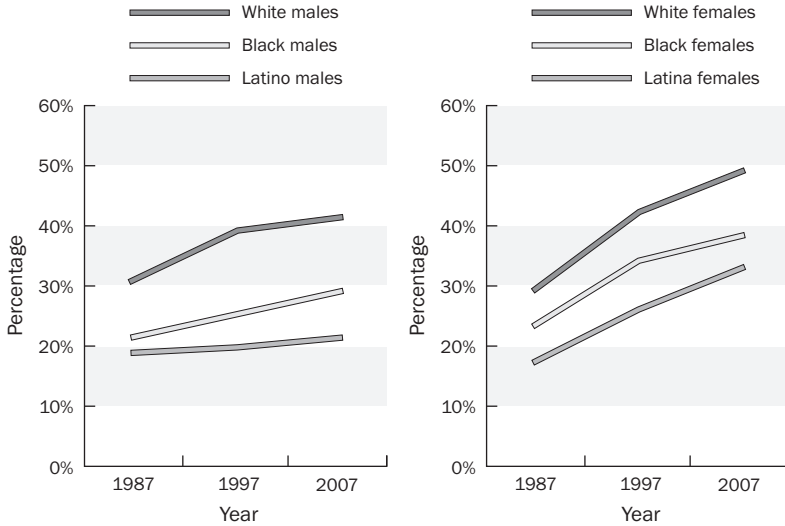
- Among Asian and Pacific Islander undergraduate students, eighty-seven males attend college for every hundred females.
- Among white students, eighty males attend college for every hundred females.
- Among Latino students, seventy-two males attend for every hundred females.
- Among Black students, only fifty-six males attend for every hundred females (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2007).



**Figure 10.3.** College enrollment and bachelor's graduation rates by race and gender, 2007. *Source:* Mikyung 2009.

It may be argued that these numbers exaggerate the disparity because they include students of all ages, and women are more likely than men to return to college as adults (King 2010). Therefore, other useful measures are the percentage of college-aged students, defined by the policy analyst Ryu Mikyung (2009) as persons ages eighteen to twenty-four who are enrolled in college and the number of younger adults ages twenty-five to twenty-nine who have completed a degree. Racial disparities—as well as the proportional gender gaps within these racial differences—become wider in the progression from college enrollment to completion (*ibid.*). Also noteworthy are the drastic differences across race. For example, although the difference in college enrollment and completion between Black males and females is conspicuous, the difference between Black males and white males is even more pronounced (figure 10.3).

It is also useful to examine college enrollment among the college-age population within racial/ethnic groups (figure 10.4). In 1987 nineteen of one hundred college-age Latino males were enrolled in college; in 2007 that number had increased to twenty-two of one hundred (a net increase of just three percentage points). Meanwhile, Latina women experienced a much larger increase, from seventeen of one hundred in 1987 to thirty-three of one hundred in 2007 (a net increase of sixteen percentage points). Over the same period Black male college-age attendance rose from twenty-



**Figure 10.4.** College enrollment of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds by race and gender, 1987–2007. *Source:* Mikyung 2009.

three of one hundred to twenty-eight of one hundred (a net increase of five percentage points), while the college-enrollment rates for Black females jumped from twenty-three of one hundred to thirty-nine of one hundred (a net increase of sixteen percentage points). Black and Latino males *and* females are still grossly underrepresented in comparison to their white male and female counterparts, whose rates of college-age enrollment grew by ten and twenty percentage points, respectively (Mikyung 2009).

A 2010 report by Jacqueline King of the American Council on Education emphasized that these gender gaps have held steady over the past several years. Nonetheless, King points to one significant exception to this trend: Latinas are outpacing Latinos each year in attainment of bachelor’s degrees, a pattern that may be due to overrepresentation of males among foreign-born Latinos. King notes that the gender gap is largest among the lowest economic quartile and that as income rises, the gender gap within each race shrinks (King 2010).

American Indian populations show similar trends, but data are often not collected at the same rate because of low representation in many geographic areas. Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander communities are grouped into the broader category of Asian Americans, who perform at the highest rates on many indicators, masking challenges facing these subgroups (College Board 2010). So although we make mention of Black and

Latino males explicitly, the Equity Scorecard (discussed in detail below) can be used to examine and address inequities for all males of color. We now turn to the scholarly literature on men of color in higher education and examine institutional responses to improve access and success for men of color.

### **FACTORS AFFECTING THE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND SUCCESS OF MEN OF COLOR**

Men of color face many challenges as they seek to enroll and succeed in higher education. Few research studies focus exclusively on the experiences of Latino men. Thus much of what we present here is based on published studies and discussions of the experiences of Black male students. We also discuss initiatives designed to assist males of color. Despite the voluminous collection of empirical and anecdotal evidence documenting racial/ethnic and gender disparities that affect the educational and life success of boys of color, efforts to document the status of their enrollment and success in higher education have been slow to emerge (see, for example, Ferri and Connor 2005, Harper 2008, Mendez and Knoff 2003, Noguera 2003, Saenz and Ponjuan 2009, Schott Foundation for Public Education 2008, and Thomas and Stevenson 2009). This perspective is echoed by Harper, who declared: “Despite the consistent provision of empirical evidence regarding the status of black male students in K–12 education . . . similar effort[s] to document trends, issues, and inequities in postsecondary education . . . [have] not been undertaken” (Harper 2006a: 1).

Much of the published empirical research on the experiences of men of color attributes their lack of success to a host of institutional factors—namely, hostile campus climates, disengagement in educationally purposeful and enriching campus programs and activities (for example, leadership programs, study abroad, student organizations, and community service), and poor social support from faculty and peers. For example, based on data collected from nearly seven thousand Black students who completed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), the professor Michael Cuyjet (1997) found that men reported lower levels than women on a range of campus engagement indicators, including reading the campus newspaper; attending a meeting, program, or event sponsored by a campus group; and serving on campus committees.

Predominantly white campus environments are consistently noted in the published literature as being especially hostile and not conducive to facilitating college success for Black and Latino males. There is an exten-



sive body of published empirical research that considers the racial climates of predominantly white institutions (for example, Allen 1992, Carter 1999, Chang 1999, Hurtado 1992, Hurtado et al. 1998). Among the conclusions drawn from these studies were that students of color perceived predominantly white campus environments as more racially hostile than their white peers, and racial tensions were likely on campuses where concern for individual students was not an institutional priority (Harper and Hurtado 2007). Although these studies did not focus exclusively on the experiences of men of color, men are just as likely as if not more likely than women to be negatively impacted by racially hostile campus climates.

A qualitative study by professors William A. Smith, Walter R. Allen, and Lynnette Danley (2007) has offered empirical evidence of the negative effects of hostile campus climates and racial microaggressions directed at Black men. Racial microaggressions are best understood as racialized “mini-assaults” ranging from “racial slights, irritations, and stigmatization to contentious classrooms, personal threats, or attacks on one’s well-being” (ibid.: 554). Focus-group interviews conducted with thirty-six Black male students who were enrolled at five predominately white institutions and reportedly experienced racial microaggressions revealed a host of psychological and physiological consequences that threatened their achievement and success in college. These consequences included frustration, anger, anxiety, difficulty transitioning to college and integrating socially and academically, and a diminished sense of belonging.

The professor Kenneth Gonzalez (2002) studied racial disparities in a predominantly white institution and focused specifically on the experiences of Chicano men. The study revealed that, much like their Black male counterparts, these students also experienced marginalization and alienation that impeded their success in higher education. Gonzalez identified several factors situated in the predominantly white campus context that produced feelings of marginalization among the men in his study, such as the “lack of Chicano representation among the students, staff, and faculty on campus, the lack of political power these [Chicano] groups possessed, and the lack of Spanish spoken on campus” (ibid.: 202). Consequently, Gonzalez’s participants reported feeling “out of place,” “ignored,” and “like foreigners” at their institution despite its close proximity to their predominantly Latino neighborhood and the high school they attended. These findings are largely consistent with those from other studies confirming the role of social support and campus racial climate in the college success of students of color.

A qualitative study by researchers Jana L. Schwartz, Jody Donovan, and

Florence Guido-DiBrito (2009) explored the intersection of race, ethnicity, and social class among Mexican American men enrolled at a predominantly white institution. Participants in this study linked their motivation to pursue higher education to their desires for upward social mobility, increased economic status, and hopes of greater financial security. The participants shared stories of personal and family sacrifices that had been made to support their pursuit of higher education; they also spoke of the challenges they faced while in college. One notable barrier the participants reported was the burden of having to work part time to support themselves and their families; this commitment limited their opportunities for meaningful campus involvement. Though not specific to men, the 2005 critical race study by researchers Daniel G. Solórzano, Octavio Villapando, and Leticia Oseguera of the educational progress of Latino/a students cited many challenges that negatively affect the attainment of bachelor's degrees by this group. These included their overrepresentation in two-year colleges that fail to facilitate transfer to four-year institutions, lack of adequate financial aid, and hostile campus racial climates.

Much of the published literature on men of color in higher education focuses exclusively on their underachievement and institutional factors that limit their success in college. In contrast, a rich body of empirical research by Harper (2004, 2006b, 2009) challenges these "deficit approaches" to studying Black male achievement in higher education. This literature calls for more studies that focus on the experiences of Black men who achieve academic success *despite* the aforementioned challenges that are often experienced by men of color on college campuses. Harper has offered two concerns regarding the continued exploration of the experiences of Black male collegians from a deficit perspective. First, a singular focus on Black male underachievement in higher education will reinforce racist and stereotypical perceptions, suggesting that these students are simply not capable of achieving success.

Second, he contends that important lessons and implications can be derived from exploring the experiences of Black men who have achieved academic success. Harper purposefully seeks to study participants whose undergraduate profiles and experiences are largely inconsistent with prevailing patterns of underachievement that are consistently reported in published research on Black male collegians. For example, he studies those whose grade point averages exceed 3.0; those who are elected by peers to prestigious leadership positions in both minority and mainstream student organizations; those who establish mentoring relationships with high-ranking campus officials; those who are awarded scholarships and other

recognitions for their academic achievement; and those who participate in educationally enriching activities like study-abroad programs, internships, and summer research opportunities.

Harper's (2008) study explored the acquisition of social capital and the role it played in the undergraduate experiences of thirty-two Black men enrolled across six predominantly white institutions who achieved successful outcomes. Social capital was defined as "relationships with institutional agents and the networks that afford access to resources and information for social progression and the accomplishment of goals" (ibid.: 1,033). Harper's participants attributed their acquisition of social capital to their campus leadership and out-of-class involvement. Moreover, the participants confirmed that the relationships they established with institutional agents were important and contributed to their having an enriching educational experience and their achievement of successful outcomes. Although these findings are promising, Harper questioned why so few Black men enrolled at predominately white institutions are afforded similar relationships and opportunities for college success.

The professor Bryan Warde (2008) has also looked at the experiences of men who achieve success in college and persist through baccalaureate degree attainment. Based on a qualitative study of eleven Black male graduate students, Warde reported that the participants attributed their educational success to several key factors. These include the belief that higher education was their only path toward upward social mobility, having adequate financial support to cover the costs of attendance, and having access to mentors to help navigate the challenges and rigors of college. Regarding mentors, the participants recalled times when teachers and administrators shared important information, guided them through difficult processes, made them aware of campus resources, and offered encouragement during critical junctures in their pathways toward the attainment of bachelor's degrees. The participants reported that mentors were especially important for overcoming academic challenges and financial pressures that threatened their persistence.

Most of the published research on the status of men of color in higher education prioritizes the experiences and outcomes of those who enroll at four-year institutions. Questions remain about how the experiences of these men differ from their counterparts enrolled at community colleges. This knowledge gap is somewhat problematic given that most students of color who participate in higher education begin their undergraduate studies at a community college. The experiences of men of color in community colleges were the focus of a 2010 policy study by Alissa Gardenhire-Crooks and

colleagues. The stated purpose was to explore and understand the influence of high schools, communities, student backgrounds, and identity-related factors in men of color's participation and engagement in community college. Drawing from qualitative data that were collected from eighty-seven African American, Hispanic, and Native American men at four community colleges, the study's authors reported several insightful themes.<sup>6</sup> For example, few of the participants pursued higher education immediately after high school, instead opting to pursue employment. Most reported being drawn to college to gain access to higher-paying jobs that would allow them to take better care of their families and improve their quality of life.

In addition, like men of color at predominantly white four-year institutions, participants in the MDRC study regularly encountered racial prejudice and stereotypes from college faculty and personnel, which they attributed to their race/ethnicity and gender. For instance, they reported routinely feeling unwelcomed because of their physical appearances (for example, baggy clothing, tattoos, and braided hair). The men also believed faculty made negative judgments about their academic abilities based on these factors. One of the most insightful findings from this study related to the connection between the participants' identities as men and their experiences in higher education. The participants believed it was important for them, as men, to work to earn money and take care of their families, yet they recognized that doing so had a negative impact on their academic success. The participants still prioritized work over school because they saw the former as "an essential element of their identities as men" (Gardenhire-Crooks et al. 2010: ES-5).

The men also reported reluctance to seeking academic, personal, or financial assistance while in college because doing so violated the masculine norms they had been socialized to embrace, such as strength, independence, and self-reliance. Based on these findings, a range of strategies and recommendations are proposed by Gardenhire-Crooks and her colleagues. These include focusing on the transition-to-college process for men of color; creating opportunities to build social connections between men of color, faculty, and other students; being more intrusive and proactive in counseling and advising men of color; and providing more financial resources to support their pursuit of higher education.

Although the published literature and research discussed in this chapter offers important insights into the ways college men of color experience higher education, several knowledge gaps are worth noting. First, these studies are narrowly focused on a few factors—namely, student engagement, social support, cultural capital, and campus climate. These factors

are undeniably important. However, focusing exclusively on these issues is not likely to close outcome gaps between men of color and their white counterparts. Second (and perhaps most consequential), students rather than institutions are consistently prioritized as the units of analyses in these studies. Strategies to build institutional capacity—beyond programmatic interventions—to better serve men of color in higher education are therefore largely absent. Last, discussions about the use of student-outcomes data to guide decision-making and improve the status of men of color in higher education are also absent in the published literature.

Again, efforts to improve the participation and success of men of color are not likely to have impact if they remain loosely coupled with accountability systems in higher education. Central to this effort is having reliable data to track and monitor institutional progress toward improving the status of men of color. We now turn to a discussion of programs and interventions that have been enacted nationally in response to the challenges that impede the participation and success of men of color.

### **IMPROVING COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND SUCCESS FOR MEN OF COLOR**

Given the documented challenges for college men of color, it seems reasonable to wonder: What have educators done to address these issues? What have been the outcomes of these efforts? Most of the interventions described in the limited body of literature on men of color have been small-scale, compensatory, ad hoc programs that are housed in college and university student affairs units and disconnected from the academic core of institutions. The policy researcher Loren Harris (2009) has identified six nationally recognized programs that were created to improve the enrollment and success of men of color in higher education:

1. *Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models)*. This is a teacher-education partnership among Clemson University, Benedict College, Clafin University, and Morris College that seeks to increase the number of Black male teachers in South Carolina.
2. *Maricopa Community College Achieving a College Education (ACE)*. This program focuses on high school retention and persistence to higher education for Latino students.
3. *University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative (AAMI)*. This regents-supported initiative is designed to fund

campus-based programs at public institutions throughout the state that target Black male outreach, retention, and graduation.

4. *City University of New York (CUNY) Black Male Initiative (BMI)*. This initiative funds a series of “demonstration projects” to increase inclusion of and success for underrepresented populations, including Black males, individuals who do not complete high school, and formerly incarcerated individuals.
5. *Student African American Brotherhood*. This is a national network of more than a hundred high school and college-based chapters of Black men and other underrepresented male minorities who support each other in pursuing academic excellence and engaging in community service.
6. *The Puente Project*. This is a thirty-year-old college-access partnership among the University of California system, thirty-three high schools, and fifty-nine community colleges that serve low-income Latino students.

Although most of these programs are relatively new—meaning that their impact has not yet been assessed—experts believe that such programs are necessary to increase and sustain the success of men of color in higher education (Harvey 2008). However, because of enduring funding challenges in higher education, programmatic approaches for males of color, like other programs for “special populations,” are likely to face resource and status constraints that severely limit their capacity to benefit large numbers of students or to influence comprehensive institutional change. Recognizing these limitations—as well as the propensity of institutions of higher education to circumvent the question of how race shapes and is shaped by institutional values, practices, and structures—researchers at the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California created a change model that helps institutions of higher education use data and inquiry methods to learn why they are failing students of color and to determine what they need to do differently. This change model (described below) supports organizational learning about the causes of inequity among males of color.

### **BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR RACIAL EQUITY**

Framing inequality as a problem arising from lack of practitioner knowledge, ineffective pedagogical approaches, or “culturally held” ideas about

students of color (Nasir and Hand 2006) is rare among higher education leaders, policymakers, or practitioners. The absence of structural analysis of racial inequity within institutions of higher education is due in part to normative models of student success that attribute successful outcomes to individual effort and engagement in behaviors and activities that facilitate academic and social integration (Braxton and Lien 2000; Kuh 2003; Tinto 1987). Viewed through the normative lens of student success, unequal outcomes among students of color are commonly attributed to characteristics that classify members of this population as “disadvantaged,” “at risk,” “unprepared” beings who lack the “social capital” to know how to be college students (Bensimon 2007).

The Equity Scorecard is a structured process of examining data and conducting inquiry to help college educators and leaders develop awareness of patterns of racial inequity, unlearn entrenched normative views of student success, and become equity-minded agents of change (*ibid.* 2007; Sharp and Gallimore 1988). The primary means of implementing these principles is to convene practitioners who are involved in an institution’s formal learning systems and who are viewed as key actors in informal institutional networks. These practitioners form communities of practice, which are “groups of people informally bound together by a shared expertise and passion” (Wenger and Snyder 2000: 139). The community of practice in the Equity Scorecard process is referred to as an “evidence team” or “inquiry team.” The theory of change that governs the processes of the Equity Scorecard is based on the principle that the engagement of practitioners in the social construction of “data meaning” can bring about new awareness of a problem not previously recognized. It can lead them to question why their individual or institutional practices are not producing equitable results, motivate them to learn more about the contours of the problem, and experiment with new approaches (Bensimon 2007).

Modeled after “the Balanced Scorecard” for business (Kaplan and Norton 1992) and “the Academic Scorecard” (O’Neil et al. 1999), the Equity Scorecard was initially developed when it became evident that equity, although valued, is generally not measured in relation to educational outcomes for students of color. When campus leaders notice decline in enrollment, persistence, or graduation rates among males of color within their institutions, they are not likely to recognize it as a situation in which their current practices are no longer effective that calls for data-driven inquiry (Bensimon 2007; Dewey 1938; Polkinghorne 2004).

Institutions typically become involved in the Equity Scorecard process in one of two ways. When the process was initially developed, we invited

institutions that had already achieved structural diversity and enrolled a critical mass of students of color, yet were not experiencing equitable outcomes in student persistence, graduation, and academic achievement. The institutions were compelled to adopt the Equity Scorecard because they were concerned with the success of students of color at the institution and because student equity was somehow connected to the institutional mission (which often made reference to “diversity” or “social justice”) or other campus initiatives.

Once the Equity Scorecard process became established and nationally recognized, institutions began to adopt it on their own and incorporate it into strategic planning, student-learning assessment, accreditation, and other campuswide planning processes. Regardless of how institutions become involved in the Equity Scorecard process, accountability and support at the senior levels of leadership are critical to its overall effectiveness and impact. The Equity Scorecard has had the most meaningful and measurable impact at institutions where senior leaders are willing to invest the financial and personnel resources necessary to fully implement the process, where open discussions about race and ethnicity are modeled and encouraged by senior leaders, and where there is a willingness to embrace vulnerability and shortcomings in institutional practices that produce inequitable outcomes (Bauman et al. 2005).

Equity Scorecard evidence teams typically comprise five to seven practitioners who are appointed by the campus or system chief executive officer (the president, chancellor, or district superintendent). Chief executive officers are asked to be purposeful in their selection of evidence team members and to consider such criteria as faculty teaching gateway courses in English and mathematics, administrators in key campus units, instructional leaders, and faculty and staff serving on important campus committees. One of these members is appointed the team leader, who is responsible for organizing the team’s work, keeping the team on track to meet benchmarks, and alerting the president of the team’s discoveries.

A staff person from the office of institutional research participates to provide the team access to the disaggregated student-outcomes data necessary to identify inequities. In advance of the first team meeting, the institutional researcher completes a spreadsheet comprised of data that are routinely collected on most campuses, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and sometimes gender. These data are called “vital signs” because they signify the health of the system or institution with respect to equity in student outcomes. The purposes of the vital signs are to make it fairly easy for team members, especially those who are not quantitatively oriented, to



identify outcome inequities and to provide a starting point for the team's discussion and analysis.

Evidence teams typically meet monthly at their campus or system office over the course of twelve to eighteen months. Each team is assigned a facilitator who has been formally trained in methods of inquiry and in how to facilitate critical conversations about race and inequity. The role of the facilitator is to model equity mindedness, the practice of viewing inequities as a problem of institutional performance rather than as student deficits, and to challenge team members to rely on data and evidence rather than on deficit perspectives and taken-for-granted assumptions about students. In doing so, the facilitator uses a set of teaching strategies, including modeling, reinforcing, providing feedback, instructing, questioning, and reframing (Tharp and Gallimore 1988).

When team members attribute inequities to students' "lack of motivation," the facilitator's role is to ask questions such as, "What data or evidence can you share to support your assertion?" Or he or she might offer other, more equity-minded attributions, such as, "Perhaps students are not participating in campus leadership programs because they do not feel welcomed or that their perspectives are valued." The work of the facilitator is critical in this process, given the hidden-but-pervasive nature of negative stereotypes about students of color and the reasons practitioners often attribute to their underachievement (for example, lack of motivation, poor K-12 preparation, and work and family commitments that conflict with school). The facilitator's role becomes less critical as team members begin to adopt equity-minded perspectives and challenge each other when they blame students for inequities or when they attribute inequities to factors that are external to the institution.

In addition to examining assumptions about data, team members probe for possible reasons for and solutions to the inequities they find. As members examine data tables and make note of patterns that jump out at them, the team leader and facilitator ask them to share reactions and pose questions. For example, the low numbers of Black and Latino males enrolling in a college may be identified as a problem at a given institution. In this case one of the vital signs will become "completed applications from high school students in the local or service area." This vital sign allows team members to see how many male high school students of color submitted a completed admission application to the institution. It also allows them to make comparisons to the number of completed applications received from other groups, including white students and women of color.

Perhaps there is a significant gap between the number of male students

of color who applied to the university and the number who actually completed applications. Several questions can emerge from this data, such as: What items do most students seem to be missing (letters of recommendation, test scores, transcripts)? Are the students who have incomplete applications concentrated in a particular area or school district? What type of notifications do students receive from the admissions office when their applications are not complete? How many of these students would likely have been admitted to the institution had their applications been complete? These types of questions are effective because they lead the team to focus on issues that are within the institution's locus of control instead of such issues as the students' K-12 preparation or similar factors. They are also framed from an equity perspective.

By the conclusion of a typical team meeting, team members have raised a number of equity-oriented questions. Based on these questions, they request additional data that will be presented at the next meeting. In between team meetings the institutional researcher, team leader, and facilitator work together to gather the data and come up with the most effective ways to present the data to the team. If through their examination the team learns that more Black and Latino male students might have been admitted had they completed applications, then "the number of students who submit completed admissions applications" may well become an indicator of the Equity Scorecard. The team would establish a baseline, representing the current status of the indicator, as well as yearly improvement targets that would likely lead to equity in a reasonable time frame. The process could also result in changes in practice at the institution. For instance, the evidence team may learn that incomplete admission applications are one reason why Black and Latino males are not enrolling at the institution. Thus, requiring admissions staff to take a more proactive role in following up with students with incomplete applications and assisting them during the application process is one concrete change that could help close equity gaps. This process continues until data have been reviewed and sets of indicators have been established by the evidence team.

Examining disaggregated student-outcomes data and choosing indicators for the Equity Scorecard are not the only work the evidence teams do on behalf of their institutions. Another important role is to share their learning and communicate findings throughout the campus. As noted in Bensimon et al. 2004: "The opportunity for institutional change lies in the possibility that individual participants will transfer their learning to other contexts within the institution, and in doing so, enable others to learn and to change" (ibid.: 113). Dissemination occurs both formally, through such

publications as comprehensive reports to the chief executive officer, town-hall meetings, and presentations to campus governance bodies (academic senate, strategic planning, academic departments), as well as informally in department meetings and other campus units. This is why the selection of evidence team members is important. The inclusion of “boundary spanners” who hold leadership roles at the institution and are members of important campus committees is necessary to ensure that the learning that takes place among evidence-team members will have an impact on campus decision-making.

The Equity Scorecard develops evidence-based awareness of race-based inequities among practitioners and instills a sense of urgency and responsibility for addressing them. The Equity Scorecard is designed to encourage campus presidents, faculty members, counselors, deans, and directors to become local experts on the educational outcomes of minority students within their own campus and to come to view these outcomes as a matter of institutional responsibility (Harris III and Bensimon 2007). In the next section we present a set of Equity Scorecard indicators for assessing and monitoring the success of male students of color in higher education.

### **CREATING AN EQUITY SCORECARD TO ASSESS INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Four issues are worth noting before we present the Equity Scorecard indicators for male students of color. First, the proposed indicators emerged from several sources, including our examination of the few sets of available student-outcomes data that are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender within race/ethnicity, most of which are discussed in the first section of this chapter; trends and issues identified in the published literature on the participation and success of men of color in higher education; and our previous work in implementing the Equity Scorecard at more than fifty institutions. Second, we did not allow the lack of data to limit our selection of indicators. Instead, we chose indicators that warrant ongoing monitoring given what we know about the status of males of color in higher education nationally.

Third, the indicators selected will vary for two- and four-year colleges and depending on the system or institution’s priorities. For example, community colleges are likely to care about improving Black and Latino success in precollege credit courses in mathematics and English and about increasing the number of students of color who transfer to a four-year college. Four-year public comprehensive colleges need to improve six-year gradu-

ation rates for males of color; they also need to reach out more directly to minority males in community colleges and facilitate their transfer and completion of the baccalaureate. Hispanic-serving institutions may be particularly concerned with how to improve the participation and success of Latinos in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics majors. Last, what is most important about the Equity Scorecard is the collaborative process of creating the scorecard and how the evidence team members work with one another to make sense of the data. If the Equity Scorecard is treated like another annual accountability report delegated to institutional researchers, then its potential as a catalyst for institutional learning and reflection will be undermined.

The Equity Scorecard provides four concurrent perspectives on institutional effectiveness in terms of equity in educational outcomes: access, retention, excellence and completion, and campus effort. Each perspective is populated with data that provide information about the status of each racial/ethnic population on key indicators of student success, such as enrollment at the institution, retention and persistence, and academic achievement. To the extent possible, these data are also disaggregated by gender. Some indicators are provided in the form of rates and others in the form of shares. *Rates* make it possible to compare interracial differences in outcomes (for example, retention rates for Black males compared to white males). *Shares* make it possible to determine whether Black males are underrepresented, overrepresented, or at equity compared with their share of the cohort on the outcome of interest (retention after the first year, for example). Shares are necessary to determine equity. If Black males' share of the first-year student population is 7 percent, then the expectation is that they will account for at least 7 percent of students returning in the following semester or year.

### **Access Perspective**

The *access perspective* allows institutional leaders and policymakers to become informed about the extent to which male students of color have access to institutions, programs, and resources that can lead to increased enrollment and success in higher education. Access perspective indicators are as follows:

- Applications, admissions, and matriculation
- Total headcount enrollment, full- and part-time
- Headcount first-time college enrollment

- Enrollment among high school graduates from local or service-area schools
- Placement into basic skills, developmental, remedial, and college-ready courses.

### Retention Perspective

Indicators in the *retention perspective* monitor students' continued enrollment, accumulation of academic units, and academic progress and performance. Retention perspective indicators are as follows:

- Retention term-to-term or year-to-year
- Persistence in a critical sequence of courses leading to completion or benchmark milestones (for example, ascending courses in remedial sequence; courses leading to a degree in a field identified as high demand and with low males of color participation; cohort migration of males of color through basic skills, developmental, and remediation to transfer courses)
- Credit accumulation for designated markers (for example, half the units in GE curriculum, half the units for transfer curriculum, half the units for degree attainment, and so on)
- Academic probation after the first semester and after the first year
- Number of students who delay taking math, English, and science courses
- Students who graduated in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) major they started out in, and students who were initially STEM majors but graduated with a non-STEM degree
- Drops, withdrawals, incompletes, fails (in STEM and GE courses).

### Campus Effort Perspective

The *campus effort* perspective is concerned primarily with factors of institutional support that create affirming and welcoming campus environments for underrepresented and historically underserved students. Campus effort indicators answer the following question: What is the participation of males of color in key extracurricular programs? These might include study abroad, residential education, undergraduate research, service-learning, mentorship/internship programs, and other programs that enrich

undergraduates' out-of-class experiences. Campus effort perspective indicators are as follows:

- Participation in key extracurricular programs (for example, study abroad, residential education, undergraduate research, service learning, mentorship/internship programs, and other highly visible programs with significant benefits attached)
- Males of color receiving merit-based scholarships
- Support services for males of color
- Use of academic supplemental services (for example, tutoring)
- Professional development programs to increase instructors' understanding of and responsiveness to males of color.

### **Excellence and Completion Perspectives**

*Excellence indicators* measure the opportunities males of color have to participate in selective programs that provide access to important academic and social networks and leadership development. *Completion indicators* assess the progression of males of color through milestones leading to degree or program completion. Excellence indicators are as follows:

- Graduating with a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Transferring to a selective four-year institution (for two-year institutions only)
- Enrollment in graduate programs
- Degree attainment in STEM or high-demand fields
- Representation on dean's and provost's lists and Latin honors.

Completion indicators are as follows:

- Degree completion within 150 percent time
- Completion of general-education or lower-division curriculum
- Transfer-out to four-year institutions within three years of starting at a community college.

### **EVIDENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE**

The collaborative process of creating an Equity Scorecard and examining indicators develops leaders' and practitioners' knowledge of how struc-

tures, practices, policies, and cultural beliefs increase or reduce barriers for students of color. For example, at Long Beach City College in Long Beach, California, the Equity Scorecard revealed inequities in transfer rates among students of color as well as a noticeably small number of students of color transferring to the University of California even when they met transfer requirements. Instead of assuming that low transfer rates had to do with students' preferences (such as getting a job or earning an occupational certificate), the Long Beach City College team conducted a comprehensive qualitative audit of the transfer process at their own institution.

They studied the Web site information on transferring, observed what went on in the transfer center, interviewed students who had transferred, observed what went on at transfer fairs, and examined the quality of transfer information materials. Based on the study of their transfer practices, the team concluded that the college had a "weak transfer culture." The audit resulted in concrete changes informed by the findings of the team members. These included a reformatted Web site, the creation of a transfer academy to provide a peer community for first-time students with transfer aspirations, increased information on scholarships, and greater involvement of faculty members in the dissemination of transfer information in their classrooms (Bensimon and Dowd 2009; Bensimon, Dowd, Alford, and Trapp 2007).

The leadership of the University of Wisconsin system, dissatisfied with their progress after twenty years of diversity planning, decided to implement the Equity Scorecard throughout the system's campuses. Through the system's involvement in the Equity Scorecard process, university accountability metrics are now reported disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Individual campus Equity Scorecards have been made part of the data points used by the president of the system to conduct the annual performance evaluation of chancellors.<sup>7</sup> At the individual campus level there have been changes in recruitment practices to target predominantly minority high schools that had been previously overlooked.

At Los Angeles Southwest College findings from the Equity Scorecard showed that African American men and women had shockingly low rates of success in math courses. This finding prompted a serious examination of instructional practices as well as the availability and use of academic support services. The culmination of the college's inquiry was to restructure the basic-skills curriculum and place it under a newly created deanship that was filled by one of the leaders of the college's Equity Scorecard evidence team. Another change in practice is that math instructors now hold their office hours in the tutoring center. Holding office hours in the tutoring center allows math instructors to be more available to talk with students,

foster more informal faculty-student interaction, and make help-seeking more natural (Bensimon et al. 2009; Los Angeles Southwest College and Center for Urban Education 2008).

In the cases of Long Beach City College, the University of Wisconsin system, and Los Angeles Southwest College, institutional changes that can lead to more equitable outcomes for students of color were made possible because faculty and administrators were willing to examine their own practices rather than simply attributing the problem to student deficits. Because the institutions, rather than the students, were the focus of intervention, these changes will likely be more enduring and effective in building institutional capacity to educate these students.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the explosion of diversity programs on campuses nationwide during the 1990s, measures to assess how well these institutions were educating the students who made diversity possible were conspicuously absent. Recognizing that the equity aims intended by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were not being realized in higher education, we created the Equity Scorecard to raise awareness that racial stratification in outcomes was a reality, even in institutions that had highly diverse student bodies. We have found that the Equity Scorecard has been an effective means of engaging campus leaders and practitioners in reframing inequity as evidence of an institutional failure or malfunction that needs to be understood before action can be taken. In addition, we have learned that higher education institutions lack the tools, structures, practices, and experience to view low rates of academic success, retention, or graduation as problems of practice. Instead, institutions of higher education often view these patterns as problems of student preparation, motivation, and self-efficacy, leading to the design of programs to compensate for the deficiencies attributed to students.

The ways in which problems are constructed shape the solutions that are created and implemented. Building institutional capacity to create successful outcomes for males of color is made possible by leaders and practitioners who are able to ask, In what ways are our practices failing Black and Latino males? The processes that comprise the Equity Scorecard are intended to make these questions the first ones that come to mind in response to inequity. The questions, which are framed from a perspective of institutional accountability and responsibility, are consistent with the Equity Scorecard's goal of bringing about concrete changes and equitable outcomes. In closing we offer the following recommendations for institu-



tional leaders and policymakers who are concerned about the status of men of color and seek concrete actions to reverse the trends outlined throughout this chapter. Each recommendation is aimed toward building institutional capacity to serve male students of color equitably.

- Policymakers must hold institutions accountable for serving men of color equitably. Just as institutions are evaluated based on enrollment targets, retention rates, and graduation rates, student equity should also be considered. Rewards and consequences must be clearly articulated and enacted as incentives for institutions to meet this expectation. Moreover, this equity in student outcomes should be factored into annual performance reviews and other periodic evaluations for senior administrators.
- Estela M. Bensimon, Lan Hao, and Leticia T. Bustillos (2006) and others have noted that what gets measured gets noticed in higher education. Student-outcomes data that are routinely collected at the system and institutional levels must therefore be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, and gender within race and ethnicity to effectively track and monitor the extent to which men of color are achieving successful outcomes. Disaggregating student-outcomes data is necessary to hold institutions accountable for serving male students of color equitably.
- Too often, institutions implement programs and interventions to address problems of underachievement among men of color without fully examining why these problems persist in the local institutional context. The factors that contribute to a problem at one institution are not always the same contributing factors at another institution. Investing time and resources toward deeply understanding the problem *before* implementing solutions and interventions is thus both necessary and wise. Forming a campus committee or task force, much like the Equity Scorecard evidence team, to assume leadership in identifying outcome gaps, inequities, and institutional factors that have a disproportionately negative impact on men of color will likely lead to important insights that may remain hidden otherwise. The initial charge of this group must rest exclusively on understanding the problem rather than prematurely identifying and implementing solutions.
- Beyond collecting and disaggregating student-outcomes data, creating institutional structures and practices to turn these data into actionable knowledge is equally important. Higher education leaders who are serious about ensuring equity in student outcomes will build

communities of practice where faculty, administrators, and other institutional agents can convene regularly to examine and discuss student-outcomes data from an equity perspective and consider the extent to which their units are facilitating equitable outcomes for men of color. Student equity should be a central goal in institutional strategic-planning processes and in staff development activities.

The Center for Urban Education offers a range of consulting and partnership opportunities for organizations that are interested in adopting or fully implementing the Equity Scorecard. Please visit the center's Web site for details at <http://cue.usc.edu/>.

### NOTES

1. We use the terms "higher education" and "postsecondary education" interchangeably throughout this essay. Both terms refer to education beyond the high school level.

2. According to researchers David C. Miller, Anindita Sen, and Lydia B. Malley (2007), the United States currently ranks third among G-8 countries in the percentage of twenty-five- to sixty-four-year-olds who have completed higher education (39 percent), behind the Russian Federation (55 percent) and Canada (45 percent). Rankings for the remaining G-8 countries are: Japan (38 percent), United Kingdom (29 percent), Germany (25 percent), and Italy (11 percent).

3. The terms "males" and "females" are used interchangeably with "men" and "women" in this essay.

4. In the context of the Equity Scorecard, "practitioners" are individuals in educational institutions who play a role in the delivery of instruction and services to students, or the formation of policies that impact students' experiences and success at the institution. They include faculty members, academic advisers, counselors, deans, program directors, vice presidents, and other institutional leaders.

5. For a list of institutional partners, see "Partners: Adopters of the CUE Equity Model," Center for Urban Education, online at <http://cue.usc.edu/about/partners.html>.

6. The terms "Black" and "African American" are used interchangeably in this essay.

7. Personal communication from Rebecca R. Martin, senior vice president for academic affairs, University of Wisconsin system, indicating that quantitative measure 3.1 in the "Chancellor Annual Performance Evaluation Guidelines 2008-09" includes Equity Scorecard goals and initiatives as a performance criterion.

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**PART IV**

**HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES,  
AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS**







## ELEVEN

# IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF COLOR

Natalie Slopen and David R. Williams

### ABSTRACT

In the United States there are pronounced disparities in health by race, ethnicity, class, and gender for a wide range of outcomes, and research suggests that young men and boys of color are particularly at risk. This chapter presents data on the health of young men and boys of color, and describes how these disparities are shaped by disadvantaged contexts and unequal opportunities. A variety of social factors—including early life conditions, education and employment opportunities, neighborhood conditions, the criminal justice system, health care, and experiences of discrimination— affect the health of young men and boys of color and the disparities that are observed. We review a growing body of research on promising strategies to reduce health disparities and to promote physical and mental health among young men and boys of color in the United States. This chapter considers examples of (1) targeted initiatives designed to improve specific health outcomes or behaviors, and (2) broader initiatives designed to address social conditions that impact multiple health outcomes. We provide examples of strategies that can be implemented by schools, community-based organizations, private-public partnerships, and governments.



### INTRODUCTION

Good health is not only the foundation of a productive society. It is also an essential prerequisite for young men of color to achieve social and economic success. This chapter uses the term “health” globally to capture indica-

tors of physical and mental health status as well as indicators of high-risk behavior. Healthy minds and bodies enable youth to learn, to embark on positive developmental trajectories, and to become active and productive citizens. Healthy child and adolescent development is shaped by multiple layers of social factors—from the family to neighborhood settings to state and federal policies (Bronfenbrenner 1979). National health statistics reveal striking disparities in health by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status among males in the United States, beginning early in life and continuing throughout adolescence and adulthood (Mulye et al. 2009; Williams 2003). We argue that health disparities by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are rooted in social and contextual disadvantage, shaped by a history of unequal opportunities and discriminatory practices. Although there have been considerable improvements in the life chances of African American and Latino men over the past several decades (Satcher 2003), young men and boys of color continue to encounter powerful inequities that contribute to poorer life chances regarding education, employment, housing, residential environments, nutrition, and health care—all of which affect health.

The racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population is undergoing dramatic change. By the year 2050 black, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian adolescents will make up 56 percent of the total adolescent population (MacKay, Fingerhut, and Duran 2000). While eliminating disparities in health by race and ethnicity is important in its own right, the health of youth of color will have large implications for the overall health of the nation. In the first section of this chapter, we profile the health of young men and boys in the United States and discuss contextual factors that contribute to patterns of health in this population. In the second section, we review interventions and social policies that have the potential to promote the physical and mental health of young men and boys of color. We recognize that the racial and ethnic categories we discuss encompass heterogeneous populations with dramatic variation in socioeconomic status, health status, and length of time in the United States.

### **PART 1: HEALTH PROFILE AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH**

National surveillance data are essential for identifying disparities by race and gender in the United States. Below, we provide an overview of disparities by race and gender in mortality, health outcomes, and health behaviors, as well as social determinants of the health of young men and boys of color.

*Mortality.* In the United States, as in almost all other countries in the world, men generally die earlier than women (Doyal 2000). In 2007, U.S. life expectancy was 80.4 years for women and 75.3 years for men (Xu, Kochanek, and Tejada-Vera 2009). Racial disparities combine with gender disparities to create pronounced risk of premature mortality among men of color: in 2007, for example, the life expectancy for white females was 80.7 years, while the life expectancy for black males was 70.2 years (ibid.). Disparities in mortality by gender and race are evident across the life span, including adolescence and young adulthood. Table 11.1 presents death rates for adolescent and young adult age groups by race/ethnicity and gender. Death rates for minorities are compared with those of whites; and death rates for males are compared with those of females. These data illustrate that compared to white males, black and American Indian or Alaska Native males have higher death rates, while Hispanics tend to have comparable or slightly elevated rates and Asian/Pacific Islander males have lower rates. For all racial groups the mortality rate for males is consistently higher than for females, with the gender ratios highest in early adulthood.

Table 11.2 presents mortality rates, minority/white ratios, and gender ratios for the three leading causes of death for individuals ages ten to twenty-nine (motor vehicle accidents [MVAs], homicide, and suicide). Across all racial and ethnic categories, males have markedly higher death rates than females for each of these causes of death. Native American males have death rates from MVAs and suicide that are twice those of whites, while all other groups have rates that are equivalent to or lower than those of whites. All minority males have homicide death rates that are higher than those of whites, with the homicide rate for African American males dramatically higher than that of all other racial groups and eighteen times higher than that of their white peers.

*Violence.* Disparities by race and ethnicity are also evident in youth risk behaviors. Violence is one of the most serious public health issues facing all youth, with young men being more likely than other groups to be both perpetrators and victims of violence (World Health Organization [WHO]). In 2006 more than half of all individuals arrested for murder were under the age of twenty-five (Centers for Disease Control [CDC] 2008). Table 11.3 presents national data on violence behaviors among high school males ages twelve to seventeen in 2007, stratified by race and ethnicity (CDC 2009d). Overall, nearly one-third of males reported carrying a weapon at least once in the past thirty days (28.5 percent), 9 percent reported carrying a gun, and 40 percent indicated that they had been in at least one physical fight in the past year. Asian males have low rates of these behaviors, but all

**Table 11.1** Age-specific mortality rates by race/ethnicity and gender, 2006

Age	Mortality rates (per 100,000)				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander
<b>Males</b>					
10–14	18.0	27.6	19.3	23.5	12.4
15–19	79.0	134.7	98.0	155.9	51.1
20–24	136.5	223.0	141.4	229.7	72.4
25–34	141.1	266.0	112.7	264.6	53.8
<b>Females</b>					
10–14	11.9	18.4	13.7	22.2	9.8
15–19	38.1	38.2	30.5	79.8	23.8
20–24	47.6	68.6	40.0	82.0	27.9
25–34	62.5	111.4	43.1	121.2	28.8
<b>Male/female ratios</b>					
10–14	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.1	1.3
15–19	2.1	3.5	3.2	2.0	2.1
20–24	2.9	3.3	3.5	2.8	2.6
25–34	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.2	1.9

SOURCE: CDC and National Center for Health Statistics 2009.

NOTE: White, black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander categories exclude Hispanics.

other minority groups tend to have comparable or higher rates than whites. Data reveal that disparities in exposure to violence begin very early in life, with black and Latino children ages two to seventeen being much more likely than their white counterparts to witness a shooting and experience the murder of someone close to them (Finkelhor et al. 2005).

*Mental health and suicidal ideation.* The World Health Organization has identified mental illnesses to be among the most serious and burdensome of all health conditions (WHO 2008). They are estimated to affect 20 percent of Americans each year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1999). Major depression, for example, is more disabling than heart disease, arthritis, asthma, and diabetes (Moussavi et al. 2007).

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Minority/white ratios				
White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander
1.0	1.5	1.1	1.3	0.7
1.0	1.7	1.2	2.0	0.6
1.0	1.6	1.0	1.7	0.5
1.0	1.9	0.8	1.9	0.4
1.0	1.5	1.2	1.9	0.8
1.0	1.0	0.8	2.1	0.6
1.0	1.4	0.8	1.7	0.6
1.0	1.8	0.7	1.9	0.5

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Adolescence and young adulthood are important moments for emergent mental health problems to be identified and treated (Mulye et al. 2009), as research indicates that nearly half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age fourteen and three-quarters of all lifetime cases occur before age twenty-four (Kessler et al. 2005). Table 11.3 presents national data on symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation among male high school students ages twelve to seventeen in 2007, overall and stratified by race and ethnicity (CDC 2009d).

Approximately one in five males reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row; Hispanic males were most likely to report this condition (30 percent). About 10 percent of males reported

**Table 11.2** Mortality rates for ages ten to twenty-nine by race/ethnicity and gender, 2006

Cause of death	Mortality rates (per 100,000)				
	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander
<b>Males</b>					
Motor vehicle	27.4	23.2	29.2	55.0	12.0
Homicide	3.9	71.2	22.2	21.6	7.7
Suicide	15.3	9.8	8.8	30.7	8.9
<b>Females</b>					
Motor vehicle	11.6	8.3	8.7	26.2	5.3
Homicide	1.7	8.6	2.9	3.1	1.3
Suicide	3.3	1.5	2.1	9.5	3.1
<b>Male/female ratios</b>					
Motor vehicle	2.4	2.8	3.4	2.1	2.3
Homicide	2.3	8.3	7.4	7.0	5.9
Suicide	4.6	6.5	4.2	3.2	2.9

SOURCE: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control 2006.

NOTE: White, black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander categories exclude Hispanics.

that they had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, and all minority groups considered here were more likely than white students to report this behavior. A variety of adverse consequences are associated with child and adolescent mental disorders, including high school dropout, sexual risk behaviors, poor physical health, impaired social relationships, and substance disorders in adulthood (Lewinsohn et al. 1999; Reinherz et al. 1999).

*Substance use and unintentional injury.* Alcohol, tobacco, and other illegal drugs can pose significant health risks, both in the short term and over time. Consumption of these substances often begins in adolescence, peaks in young adulthood, and then declines with age (SAMHSA 2009). Adolescent males and females (ages twelve to seventeen) report similar rates of cigarette use (10 percent), but males are more likely than females to engage in a variety of alcohol-related risk behaviors and illicit substance

Minority/white ratios				
White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian or Alaska Nati(ve	Asian/ Pacific Islander
1.0	0.8	1.1	2.0	0.4
1.0	18.3	5.7	5.5	2.0
1.0	0.6	0.6	2.0	0.6
1.0	0.7	0.8	2.3	0.5
1.0	5.1	1.8	1.8	0.8
1.0	0.5	0.6	2.9	0.9

use (ibid.). Table 11.3 presents national 2007 data on tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use among high school males ages twelve to seventeen. Blacks and Asians have markedly lower rates of cigarette use, heavy drinking, drinking and driving, and cocaine use than whites. Lifetime marijuana and cocaine use were reported most frequently by American Indian or Alaska Native males, and least frequently by Asian and Native Hawaiian males.

*Body weight and physical inactivity.* The proportion of adolescents who are overweight or obese has rapidly escalated in the United States over the past several decades. Recent estimates show that a third of U.S. adolescents (34.4 percent) are overweight or obese (Ogden, Carroll, and Flegal 2008). Children and adolescents of color are more likely to be overweight and obese than white children and adolescents (Caprio et al. 2008). Table 11.3 shows that compared with white adolescents, Native Hawaiians and Asians have low rates of obesity, while members of other minority

**Table 11.3** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2007:  
Risk behaviors and health status among males ages twelve  
to seventeen years, stratified by race and ethnicity

	White	Hispanic	Black
<b>Violence</b>			
Carried a weapon <sup>a</sup>	30.3% (2.0)	28.2% (1.8)	24.6% (1.3)
Carried a gun <sup>a</sup>	7.8 (0.8)	10.4 (1.0)	11.2 (1.4)
Physical fight <sup>b</sup>	41.9 (1.3)	47.3 (1.6)	50.3 (2.3)
Threatened or injured with weapon at school <sup>b</sup>	9.2 (0.7)	12.0 (0.9)	11.2 (1.3)
<b>Mental health and suicide</b>			
Attempted suicide <sup>b</sup>	3.4 (0.4)	6.3 (0.6)	5.5 (0.8)
Feeling sad or hopeless longer than two weeks <sup>b</sup>	17.8 (0.9)	30.4 (1.9)	24.0 (1.5)
<b>Substance use and unintentional injury</b>			
Lifetime daily cigarette use	15.8 (1.5)	8.9 (0.9)	7.3 (1.0)
Alcohol use before age thirteen	25.0 (2.1)	33.6 (1.3)	30.8 (2.2)
Episodic heavy drinking <sup>1, a</sup>	31.8 (1.8)	28.3 (2.2)	14.5 (1.3)
Lifetime marijuana use	41.8 (1.75)	42.0 (2.9)	44.5 (2.8)
Lifetime cocaine use	7.9 (0.7)	11.5 (1.7)	2.8 (0.8)
Rode with drunk driver <sup>a</sup>	27.8 (1.4)	36.0 (2.1)	28.1 (2.3)
Drinking and driving <sup>a</sup>	13.9 (0.9)	13.0 (1.6)	7.5 (1.3)
<b>Physical activity, overweight</b>			
Inadequate physical activity <sup>2, c</sup>	53.9 (1.7)	61.4 (1.6)	58.7 (1.2)
Overweight (>85th, <95th percentile) <sup>3</sup>	15.7 (0.7)	18.3 (1.2)	16.6 (1.3)
Obese (>95th percentile) <sup>3</sup>	14.6 (0.8)	20.3 (1.3)	18.9 (1.5)
Watched TV more than three hours on average per day	30.4 (1.2)	42.4 (2.8)	64.7 (1.3)
<b>Reproductive health</b>			
Sex before age thirteen	5.7 (10.1)	11.9 (0.9)	26.2 (1.6)
Four or more sex partners	12.2 (1.3)	23.3 (1.5)	37.6 (2.0)
Condom use at last sexual intercourse	66.4 (2.1)	69.9 (2.2)	74.0 (2.0)

SOURCE: CDC 2009d.

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses reflect standard error

\* Cell size is <20, therefore estimates may be unstable. Hispanics are not included in any category other than the Hispanic category.



Multiracial	Native Hawaiian	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	p
28.7% (4.7)	27.6% (5.8)*	12.6% (2.2)	26.6% (3.4)	0.0054
11.3 (3.8)	7.9 (4.3)*	3.8 (1.1)*	16.3 (2.3)	0.0034
59.1 (5.4)	60.9 (8.1)	33.9 (4.4)	41.0 (2.4)	0.0010
18.1 (3.9)	7.7 (3.3)*	10.5 (3.3)	6.9 (2.0)*	0.1960
8.8 (3.2)*	9.6 (5.6)*	6.2 (2.0)*	8.3 (2.3)*	0.0017
21.9 (4.3)	29.4 (6.4)*	21.6 (3.5)	15.5 (2.3)	<0.0001
9.5 (2.4)*	5.4 (3.7)*	6.3 (2.4)*	15.5 (1.6)	<0.0001
35.5 (4.8)	31.7 (6.7)*	19.7 (3.0)	22.8 (2.0)	0.0008
27.1 (4.1)	23.3 (5.3)*	15.0 (3.5)	23.8 (2.1)	<0.0001
42.3 (5.1)	35.3 (5.9)	21.6 (4.3)	55.4 (8.9)	0.0356
6.2 (2.1)*	4.0 (2.1)*	4.9 (2.0)*	13.7 (2.5)	<0.0001
30.4 (4.4)	32.5 (8.6)*	26.2 (3.5)	27.4 (1.7)	0.0170
18.5 (4.2)	13.4 (5.6)*	8.6 (2.5)*	15.0 (1.5)	0.0013
51.8 (5.0)	46.1 (9.1)	66.8 (3.8)	66.1 (3.6)	0.0083
17.6 (4.4)	18.1 (7.0)*	18.1 (2.3)	24.1 (1.7)	0.5575
20.2 (4.1)	11.7 (4.7)*	11.4 (2.9)	23.0 (2.8)	0.0003
36.2 (4.0)	39.5 (7.2)*	25.0 (4.0)	36.1 (1.5)	<0.0001
15.2 (3.6)	18.8 (7.0)*	5.2 (2.2)*	5.7 (2.2)*	<0.0001
21.8 (4.4)	21.9 (6.6)*	5.0 (1.5)*	11.5 (3.3)	<0.0001
60.7 (9.4)	68.7 (11.3)*	68.3 (12.5)*	59.1 (4.0)	0.1304

<sup>1</sup> Consumed five or more drinks on the same occasion.

<sup>2</sup> Any kind of physical activity that increased their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time for a total of at least sixty minutes at least five times a week.

<sup>3</sup> Based on 2000 CDC growth charts.

<sup>a</sup> Occurred one or more times in the past thirty days.

<sup>b</sup> Occurred one or more times in the past twelve months.

<sup>c</sup> In the past seven days.

groups have elevated rates. Research also indicates that children and adolescents from families with low socioeconomic status are more likely to be obese than children from families with higher incomes (Wang and Beydoun 2007). Youth obesity is a pressing public health concern, given a demonstrated association between obesity and lower school performance (Crosnoe and Muller 2004). In addition, overweight children and adolescents are at increased risk of becoming overweight adults (Dietz 1998), and adult obesity is associated with elevated risk of multiple diseases (Must et al. 1999). Over the past forty years changing social conditions have affected children's and adolescents' access to healthy foods and engagement in physical activity, resulting in a greater number of overweight and obese adults (Brownell et al. 2009). Table 11.3 reveals high levels of inadequate physical activity among adolescent males, with two-thirds of Asians and American Indians or Alaska Natives reporting insufficient physical exercise, according to CDC recommendations (CDC 2009d).

*Reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections.* Adolescence and young adulthood is a time when many males and females begin to engage in sexual activity (Gavin et al. 2009). Approximately 30 percent of males and females ages fifteen to seventeen have had at least one sexual experience with another person, and this increases to more than 85 percent by ages twenty to twenty-four (ibid.). Table 11.3 shows that Hispanic, multiracial, Native Hawaiian, and especially African American boys are more likely than whites to report having sex before age thirteen. Moreover, 25 percent to 40 percent of all males ages twelve to seventeen reported that they had not used a condom during their last sexual encounter involving intercourse. The prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI) in the adolescent and young population is substantial. The 2003–2004 National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey (NHANES) reported that 24 percent of females ages fourteen to nineteen had at least one of five STIs considered in their study, while 38 percent of females who were sexually active had at least one of the STIs they were tested for (Forhan et al. 2009). A comparable analysis for males has not yet been published, but these data suggest that the prevalence of STIs among adolescent males is also high.

Table 11.4 shows significant differences by race and ethnicity in rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis for individuals ages fifteen to twenty-nine (CDC 2009c). For all racial groups females are disproportionately affected by chlamydia and gonorrhea, while males are more likely than females to have syphilis. At the same time, for both males and females, there are striking disparities by race in the rates of STIs: young people of color, with the exception of Asians, have higher rates of STIs relative to

**Table 11.4** Sexually transmitted infections rates (per 100,000) for ages fifteen to twenty-nine, by gender, race, and ethnicity, United States 2008

	Rate per 100,000		Gender ratio	Minority/white ratio	
	Female	Male	Female:	Females	Males
			Male		
<b>Chlamydia</b>					
African America	5735.0	2241.1	2.6	6.3	9.5
Hispanic	2005.3	540.6	3.7	2.2	2.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	3074.5	755.9	4.1	3.4	3.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	663.4	172.1	3.9	0.7	0.7
White	916.8	235.4	3.9	1.0	1.0
<b>Gonorrhea</b>					
African American	1819.0	1421.7	1.3	13.7	27.9
Hispanic	191.3	128.2	1.5	1.4	2.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	357.1	155.9	2.3	2.7	3.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	61.1	39.9	1.5	0.5	0.8
White	132.5	50.9	2.6	1.0	1.0
<b>Syphilis</b>					
African American	18.8	51.7	0.4	16.6	11.4
Hispanic	2.1	12.1	0.2	1.8	2.7
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.5	5.8	0.4	2.2	1.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4	5.1	0.1	0.4	1.1
White	1.1	4.6	0.2	1.0	1.0

SOURCE: CDC 2009c.

NOTES: White, black, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander categories exclude Hispanics.

whites, and this difference is especially pronounced for African Americans. Other data show that young men and boys of color are disproportionately affected by HIV: within the thirty-four states that collect confidential name-based HIV reporting, 69 percent of adolescents (thirteen to nineteen years old) who received HIV diagnoses in 2007 were male (CDC 2009b).

While African Americans comprised 17 percent of adolescents ages thirteen to nineteen, 72 percent of individuals diagnosed with HIV in this age group were African American (CDC 2009b).

It is worth noting that comparisons of STI rates by race and ethnicity from clinic surveillance reports may be inaccurate because of differential STI reporting based on location of screening (that is, public or private clinic) (Ross et al. 2004; Ross and Fernandez-Esquer 2005). Some evidence suggests that there may be (1) underreporting of cases at private clinics compared with public clinics, and (2) private clinics may be less likely to report racial and ethnic information along with confirmed cases. These biases could artificially inflate observed disparities in the prevalence of infection by race and ethnicity, given that minorities are more likely than whites to visit public-sector reproductive health clinics (Frost 2001). However, population-based surveys, including NHANES (Forhan et al. 2009) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Upchurch et al. 2004), indicate disparities in STI prevalence by race among adolescents, suggesting that resources to address these disparities must be allocated to high-risk populations.

### **Social Determinants of the Health of Young Men and Boys of Color**

A full understanding of disparities in health by race and gender requires attention to the social conditions in which health is embedded. There is wide variation in the physical and social conditions experienced by children and adolescents in the United States, and these conditions vary dramatically by race and ethnicity (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). Below we discuss aspects of the physical and social environment that influence the health of young men and boys and that determine the magnitude of disparities by race and ethnicity.

*Migration status and health.* Migration status, including country of birth and the amount of time that an individual has spent in the United States, has implications for health. In 2006 approximately 10 percent of individuals ages fifteen to twenty-four were born outside of the United States; this population was predominantly comprised of Hispanic (63.5 percent) and Asian (21.1 percent) youth (Mulye et al. 2009). Hispanic youths (ages sixteen to twenty-five) born in the United States do better than their foreign-born counterparts on some indicators of well-being (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). For example, native-born Hispanic youths are less likely than first-generation Hispanic youths to have dropped out

of high school (9.9 percent versus 32.9 percent), to live in households below the poverty line (19 percent versus 29 percent), and to be without health insurance (31 percent versus 61 percent). However, on other indicators U.S.-born Hispanics have worse health and social outcomes than foreign-born Hispanic youths. Second-generation Hispanic youths are more likely than foreign-born Hispanic youths to have carried a weapon (8 percent versus 3 percent) or gotten in a fight (16 percent versus 7 percent) in the past year, to have been questioned by the police (26 percent versus 15 percent), or to have a friend or family member who has been involved in a gang (37 percent versus 17 percent).

Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health indicate that for both Asian and Hispanic groups, adolescents born outside of the United States are less likely to be obese than those born in the United States (Popkin and Udry 1998). For example, among Asian adolescents 11.6 percent of first-generation residents were obese, compared with 26.9 percent of second-generation Asian adolescents and 27.6 percent of third-generation Asian adolescents. This pattern is considered a paradox, because one might anticipate better health among individuals who have been in the United States for a longer period of time, given that length of stay is associated with higher socioeconomic status (Markides and Eschbach 2005).

*Socioeconomic status.* Greater income, higher levels of educational attainment, and higher occupational status are associated with better health behaviors, health outcomes, and longer life (Adler and Newman 2002). For example, education may lead to better employment prospects, more choices about where to live and what to eat, and increased opportunities to engage in health-promoting activities. National statistics indicate pronounced racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment, for both high school graduation and college graduation. Data from 2009 indicate that the high school dropout rate for Latino youth (ages sixteen to twenty-five) is nearly three times the rate for white youth (17 percent versus 6 percent, respectively), and nearly twice the rate for black youth (9 percent) (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). Among Latino youth the most common reason for discontinuing school before college is financial pressure to support a family (ibid.). In 2008 only 61 percent of Hispanic males had a high school degree or more, in comparison with 86 percent of white males, 82 percent of black males, and 91 percent for Asian and Pacific Islander males. A similar pattern was observed for college degree attainment: 13 percent of Hispanic males had a college degree, in comparison with 30 percent of white males, 19 percent of black males, and 56 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander males (U.S. Census Bureau 2009a).

Since 1991, the proportion of women enrolled in college has exceeded that of men (Mather and Adams 2007), and women now earn 58 percent of all bachelor's degrees granted in the United States (Buchmann, DiPrete, and McDaniel 2008). Researchers have posited several reasons for this pattern: females are more likely than males to graduate from high school; men are more likely to delay college enrollment; and men drop out of college more often than women (Buchmann, DiPrete, and McDaniel 2008). To date, it is unclear why there are gender differences at each of these stages of academic development; accordingly, this issue should be considered priority for future research.

More education leads to increased opportunity for higher-paying, safe, and rewarding jobs with better benefits—all of which are potential pathways to better health. Work can affect health by providing income and benefits, social support, and a sense of purpose and identity. In the third quarter of 2009, among youth ages sixteen to twenty-five, 47 percent of Hispanic youth were employed in comparison with 56.0 percent of white youth, 37 percent of black youth, and 41 percent of Asian youth. Black youth had the highest unemployment rate (28 percent), followed by Hispanics (20 percent), Asians (16 percent), and whites (15 percent) (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). Structural labor-market conditions, including a reduction in the number of jobs matching the education and skill levels of urban residents, make it difficult for young males of color to avoid joblessness in the United States (Wilson 1987; Corcoran 1995). The effect of male unemployment is far-reaching: male joblessness is associated with a reduction in marriage rates, and with increases in the number of children being raised by a single parent (Corcoran 1995; Wilson 1987).

*Early life socioeconomic conditions.* Health and health behaviors are also affected by social contexts early in life. A large body of research describes the negative effects of poverty on the health and academic success of children and adolescents (Evans 2004; Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997). For example, compared with economically advantaged children, poor children are exposed to a wide variety of social and environmental inequities, including lower-quality housing, air, water, neighborhoods, and schools (Evans 2004). Poor parents often lack material resources to invest in their children and have less time and energy to devote to caretaking (Corcoran 1995).

Poverty is not distributed equally across racial and ethnic groups in the United States. In 2007, 34 percent of African American children lived in households below the poverty line, as did 28 percent of Hispanic children, 12 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander children, and 14 percent of white children (U.S. Census Bureau 2009b). Children living in female-headed

households were particularly at risk: within such households, approximately half of all black and Hispanic children were poor (52 percent and 50 percent, respectively), in contrast to a third of white children who were poor (32 percent) (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2009). For a substantial proportion of children who grow up poor, there are enduring socioeconomic consequences. On average, adults raised in poor families complete fewer years of school, earn lower incomes, and are more likely to be poor in adulthood relative to adults who do not come from a poor family (Corcoran 1995).

*Race, socioeconomic status, and health.* Socioeconomic status, which is patterned by race, may explain a substantial part of the observed racial and ethnic differences in health and risk profiles. For example, low socioeconomic status adolescents and young adults are at greater risk for sexually transmitted infections (Newbern et al. 2004; Buffardi et al. 2008). One national study of young adults (ages eighteen to twenty-seven) found that the presence of an STI was associated with housing insecurity and exposure to crime (Buffardi et al. 2008). However, complex patterns emerge when researchers examine the intersection of race, socioeconomic status, and health. Several studies have shown that the beneficial effects of socioeconomic status on health can differ by race and ethnicity (Farmer and Ferraro 2005).

Table 11.5 presents data on lifetime history of asthma among children (under eighteen years old) from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey, stratified by race, ethnicity, and the ratio of household income to the federal poverty line (FPL). Within each racial and ethnic category the percentage of children who have ever received a diagnosis of asthma becomes smaller as household income increases from less than 50 percent of the FPL to greater than or equal to 400 percent of the FPL. However, the decline in lifetime asthma prevalence is dramatically greater for white children (a 19 percent decrease) relative to black or Hispanic children (a 3 percent decrease for both groups). Table 11.5 illustrates that the disparities in asthma prevalence by race persist when household income is held constant and cannot simply be explained by variation in socioeconomic status across groups. These differences may be driven by noneconomic factors related to neighborhood environment, immigration, racism, and access to health care.

The persistence of differences by race at each level of income may also result from the *nonequivalence* of common indicators of socioeconomic status across race and ethnicity (Williams 1997). Research has documented that there are disparities by race in (1) quality of elementary and high school

**Table 11.5** Percentage of children (under age eighteen) who have ever received a diagnosis of asthma, by race/ethnicity and ratio of family income to the federal poverty threshold

Federal Poverty Threshold	White	Black	Hispanic
<50%	20.1% (4.5)	25.7% (4.6)	13.5% (2.8)
50–99	15.2 (3.8)	17.1 (3.3)	12.3 (2.0)
100–199	15.0 (1.8)	21.5 (2.9)	9.6 (1.4)
200–399	12.5 (1.3)	23.1 (2.8)	10.3 (1.9)
400+	12.7 (1.1)	22.7 (3.6)	10.7 (2.5)

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics 2008.

NOTES: Data is self-reported by a parent. Black and white categories exclude Hispanics. Numbers in parentheses reflect standard error.

education; (2) personal earnings at each level of education; (3) wealth and financial assets at a given level of income; and (4) the purchasing power of income, given that many goods and services can be more expensive in disadvantaged neighborhoods (*ibid.*; Williams and Collins 1995). As a consequence, the health-related advantages associated with common measures of socioeconomic status, such as household income, may differ by race and ethnicity.

*Family composition during childhood.* A child's family can play a key role in his or her health and development: family structure affects the emotional and financial resources that are available to children and adolescents during their formative years. In 1960, 6 percent of children in the United States lived in a household with a single parent; in 2008 it was estimated that more than 50 percent of all children will live in a single-parent home for some period of time before age eighteen (McLanahan and Percheski 2008). There is substantial variation by race in household composition: in 2008, for example, only 35 percent of black children lived in households with two parents married to each other, compared with 64 percent of Hispanic children and 75 percent of white children (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2009). Single-parent households can present challenges for successful child development; one salary often means there is less money available (Painter and Levine 2004), and, as a result, the child may be more likely to grow up in a poor household and neighborhood.

Studies generally find that children raised in single-parent homes perform worse on measures of school success (such as standardized achieve-



ment tests and classroom grades) and are less likely to graduate from high school compared with children with continuously married parents (Amato 2005). They are also more likely to become sexually active at a younger age, use drugs, and engage in other illegal activities (Antecol and Bedard 2007). Research indicates that lower levels of parental monitoring and support, especially of males, are predictive of school truancy, delinquency, and a variety of health risk behaviors, including early sexual activity, substance use, and violence (Griffin et al. 2000; Li, Feigelman, and Stanton 2000; Hair et al. 2008). Sociologists report that the high proportion of poor and minority children in single-parent households in the United States perpetuates inequalities in American society (McLanahan and Percheski 2008).

*Neighborhood environment.* The neighborhood one lives in can greatly affect one's health and behaviors that have an impact on health (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Cohen et al. 2009). Neighborhood features affect child and adolescent health; relevant factors include the proximity to environmental hazards, the quality of housing and schools, employment opportunities, relationships among neighbors, frequency of crime and violence, the availability and quality of health services and other municipal services, affordable healthy food options, and opportunities for physical activity. There is an unequal distribution of these neighborhood features across communities as a result of residential segregation by race, considered to be a fundamental determinant of health disparities in the United States (Williams and Collins 2001).

National data reveal vast differences by race in neighborhood poverty rates for children. An analysis of the hundred largest metropolitan areas in the United States shows that 76 percent of African American children and 69 percent of Latino children reside in neighborhoods with poverty rates that are higher than those experienced by the most economically disadvantaged white children (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). Children and adolescents of color are also more likely than nonminority children to live in neighborhoods that have high rates of crime and violence (Aisenberg and Herrenkohl 2008), fewer job opportunities (Boardman and Field 2002), and fewer health-related resources, including supermarkets (Moore and Roux 2006) and physicians (Komaromy et al. 1996). Studies indicate that neighborhood characteristics are associated with a range of health outcomes in children and adolescents, such as symptoms of depression (Xue et al. 2005), levels of physical activity (Franzini et al. 2009), and prevalence of asthma (Subramanian and Kennedy 2009).

*Incarceration.* Research suggests that incarceration is a social factor that contributes to disparities in health by race and gender (Iguchi et al.

2005). The incarceration rate in the United States is higher than in any other country in the world (Walmsley 2009), and young men of color are especially likely to serve time in jail or prison. In 2008 black males ages sixteen to twenty-five were more than twice as likely as Hispanic males and seven times more likely than white males to be incarcerated in federal, state, and local correctional facilities (7 percent versus 3 percent and 1 percent, respectively) (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). If incarceration rates remain constant, one in three black males, one in six Hispanic males, and one in seventeen white males will go to prison at some time during their lifetime (Bonczar 2003). Research has documented that incarceration has direct long-term effects on health (Schnittker and John 2007; Wang et al. 2009). A large cohort study found a positive association between incarceration in young adulthood and onset of high blood pressure, independent of family income and substance use (Wang et al. 2009).

The high rate of incarceration of young men of color has implications for the overall health and well-being of their communities and families. When men who are incarcerated reenter their communities, their access to public or private housing, employment opportunities, voting rights, welfare- and food-assistance programs, health services, and financial support for higher education may be limited (Iguchi et al. 2005; Williams 2007). High rates of incarceration also negatively affect communities by decreasing the number of potential male partners available to women. When a parent is imprisoned, families often suffer from financial instability and social stigma, and are deprived of social and caregiving support of the incarcerated parent (Travis and Waul 2003). More than 50 percent of adults who are incarcerated in federal and state prisons are parents of children under age eighteen (Harrison and Beck 2002). Children with an incarcerated parent are at increased risk for social and emotional difficulties and for engaging in criminal behavior in the future (Travis and Waul 2003).

*Experiences of discrimination.* Racial discrimination is another determinant of health disparities in the United States. The health of children and adolescents can be affected by multiple forms of racism; racial discrimination can occur at the institutional level, within interpersonal interactions, or in the form of internalized racism—that is, a self-imposed stigma of inferiority based on negative racial stereotypes that are held by dominant social groups (Jones 2000). Recent studies of adolescent populations have found an association between perceived discrimination and a range of outcomes, including symptoms of depression, behavioral problems, and violence (Brody et al. 2006; Caldwell et al. 2004), as well as lower levels of academic achievement (Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff 2003). Moreover, stud-

ies using adult populations indicate that perceived discrimination is associated with a broad range of behavioral and physical outcomes (Williams and Mohammed 2009).

Discrimination can also affect health through its impact on socioeconomic attainment. For example, a recent experimental study found that in a pool of white, black, and Latino male job applicants with equivalent resumes in New York City, the black applicants were half as likely than equally qualified white applicants to receive a callback or job offer (Pager, Western, and Bonikowski 2009). The study also revealed that New York City employers were just as likely to call back or hire white applicants with a felony conviction as to call back or hire black and Latino applicants with no criminal record.

*Health insurance and quality of health services.* Access to medical care varies by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and can play a limited but important role in shaping the health of America's youth (McGinnis, Williams-Russo, and Knickman 2002). Health insurance enables individuals to obtain preventive as well as routine and emergency health care. Before the health-reform legislation that was passed on March 21, 2010, a high proportion of children in the United States were covered by health insurance. In 2007, 89 percent of children were covered for at least part of the year, either from a parent's private insurance plan or public insurance programs (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2009). However, nearly one in three young adults ages nineteen to twenty-six did not have insurance coverage (Holahan and Kenney 2008). Before the new legislation many adolescents and young adults lost the insurance they received from public insurance coverage or from their parent's insurance plan when they turned eighteen and did not have a job that offered an affordable health insurance option.

The new law, titled the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, specifies a variety of provisions to help adolescents, young adults, and low socioeconomic status individuals have greater access to health insurance. It will be critical to monitor the impact of this new law, not only regarding insurance coverage but also access to care and quality of care. Earlier research shows that minorities receive poorer-quality health care than whites, even after accounting for insurance status, socioeconomic status, and the severity of disease (Smedley, Stith, and Nelson 2003).

*Prevailing norms of masculinity.* Within American society there are cultural norms, expectations, and societal responses associated with stereotypical (heterosexual) masculine identity that can undermine men's health (Courtenay 2000). The stereotype of heterosexual male behavior is char-

acterized by aggressiveness, invulnerability, and independence (Moller-Leimkuhler 2003), which promotes behaviors that lead to crime, violence, car accidents, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption (Doyal 2001). Norms of “masculinity” discourage men from seeking help from either health professionals or individuals within their social network. For instance, national data show that young men are less likely than women to see a physician, dentist, or mental health professional in a given year (CDC 2009a). Strategies to promote positive health and longevity among young men and boys of color will need to confront gender-normative behaviors that are hazardous for male health.

## **PART 2: STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH**

Health disparities take a large toll on the national economy. Between 2003 and 2006 the cost of health disparities in the United States was in excess of \$1.24 trillion, as the result of preventable medical expenses, lost productivity, and premature death (LaVeist, Gaskin, and Richard 2009). This section of the chapter focuses on promising approaches to reduce health disparities and to promote health among young men and boys in the United States. We review examples of targeted initiatives designed to influence specific health outcomes or behaviors as well as broader initiatives designed to address social factors that impact multiple health outcomes. Given that racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities in health develop from conception onward, interventions at multiple stages of the life course are discussed. We focus on evidence-based strategies and provide peer-reviewed evaluation information whenever possible.

### **Interventions Targeting Specific Health Behaviors and Outcomes**

Researchers, policymakers, and community organizers have developed a variety of interventions to address specific health behaviors and outcomes. Below we review promising strategies to reduce violence and substance use and to improve physical activity, nutrition, mental health, and reproductive health.

*Violence.* Over the past several decades there has been growing recognition that violence is preventable (WHO 2009). Youth-violence prevention requires an integrated set of programs and policies at local and state levels. Interventions that successfully reduce youth violence include school-based programming to address behaviors (Hahn et al. 2007; Park-Higerson et

al. 2008) as well as interventions that make changes to the broader social context in which violence occurs (Braga et al. 2001).

Operation CeaseFire has received national recognition as one of the most effective programs to prevent youth violence (National League of Cities 2009). It began in Boston in the mid-1990s and conceptualizes violence as an infectious disease that must be contained (Braga et al. 2001). Operation Ceasefire requires coordination among city, county, state, and federal law-enforcement agencies as well as service providers and city agencies, community and religious leaders, street workers, and researchers. The program relies heavily on street outreach in high-violence neighborhoods and recruits former offenders to reach out to youths involved in criminal activities and gangs. Outreach workers impress upon gang members that violence will not be tolerated. They also mentor and counsel at-risk youths, direct them toward nonviolent alternatives for diffusing conflict, and support their efforts to resist gang involvement. Outreach workers help clients seeking access to education, jobs, and services, including drug treatment (Skogan et al. 2009). Local community and religious groups participate by organizing marches, rallies, and prayer vigils to reinforce the community's commitment to nonviolence. A three-year study of Chicago's Operation Ceasefire funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (*ibid.*) found a decline in shootings ranging from 41 percent to 73 percent across the seven participating neighborhoods. Crime maps indicated that the geographic size and intensity of shooting hotspots decreased as a result of the program in more than half of the sites. More than seventy-five cities have adapted or replicated some aspects of this program (National League of Cities 2009; Ritter 2009).

*Physical activity and nutrition.* To prevent and control weight gain and obesity among children and adolescents in the United States, there is an urgent need for interventions that make environmental changes to promote physical activity and healthy dietary habits (Sallis and Glanz 2009). Children and adolescents face an overwhelming number of obesity-promoting factors in their daily lives. There is a potential for intervention within nearly every social context, including the household, schools, medical clinics, work sites, and communities. Accordingly, we need effective social policies on issues ranging from food advertising directed at youth to fast-food zoning regulations (Katz 2009). Evidence suggests that environmental and policy changes to improve access to affordable healthy food and opportunities to engage in regular physical activity hold promise for addressing child and adolescent obesity (Institute of Medicine 2005).

Schools are an obvious setting for obesity interventions targeting youth.

A recent review of the evidence on school-based interventions concluded there is “hopeful evidence” that school-based interventions can have a significant effect on students’ weight, although more research is needed to identify optimal school-based strategies (Katz 2009: 267). Numerous policies can be implemented in the school setting, including removal of junk foods and sugar-sweetened beverages in cafeterias and vending machines, increased availability of fresh fruits and vegetables, daily physical activity requirements, and lessons to teach students and families the principles of a healthy diet and how to interpret nutrition labels (*ibid.*).

The School Nutrition Policy Initiative is one example of a multicomponent, school-based intervention that has been evaluated in a randomized control trial. The initiative shows promise as an effective approach to obesity prevention (Foster et al. 2008). The trial enrolled Philadelphia students in grades 4 through 6 from ten urban schools with mainly minority and low socioeconomic status student populations. The intervention included school-environment improvements, nutrition policies, social marketing, nutrition education, and outreach to parents and guardians. Over a two-year period the intervention resulted in a 50 percent reduction in likelihood of becoming overweight: 7.5 percent of children in the intervention schools became overweight, as compared with 14.9 percent in the control schools.

Outside the school context policymakers and health officials should help low-income communities increase the availability of healthy affordable foods and increase opportunities for physical activity. The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative is an outstanding example of a public-private partnership to increase access to fresh foods in underserved communities across the state (Giang et al. 2008). This initiative provides grants and loans to help supermarkets and other fresh-food markets operate within communities where market owners require assistance beyond conventional loans. The stores have succeeded in providing low-income families greater access to affordable fresh foods while improving community-level economic vitality by creating jobs for community members and encouraging additional economic investment in local retail environments (Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative 2009; Giang et al. 2008).

Research shows that physical and social neighborhood characteristics may affect levels of physical activity (Franzini et al. 2009; McDonald, Deakin, and Aalborg 2009) and body weight among youth (Jerrett et al. 2010). Interventions to improve neighborhood safety and provide access to parks and other recreational facilities may therefore help individuals to meet the recommended daily level of physical activity and lower the risk of being overweight. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a promising

federal initiative (Wendel and Dannenberg 2009), launched in 2005, that aims to increase physical activity among children and youth. This program provides resources for state and local governments to increase the safety and convenience of walking and biking. Evaluations of early forms of this program show that it can be effective in increasing the number of students who walk or bike to school (Staunton, Hubsmith, and Kallins 2003).

*Mental health.* To address the mental-health needs of young men and boys in the United States, we must (1) reframe mental-health disorders to reduce stigma, (2) expand access to mental-health care, and (3) utilize interventions to identify problems early, before they progress into more serious disorders. Stigma associated with mental disorders in the United States has been identified as a large barrier to mental-health treatment (Satcher 2003). Evidence suggests that stigma is particularly high among men of color (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001). To date, there is limited knowledge about the impact and effectiveness of public-awareness campaigns to combat the stigma associated with mental illnesses (Dumesnil and Verger 2009). Culturally informed community-based campaigns should be designed and evaluated on their effectiveness in changing perceptions of mental-health disorders, and for their ability to encourage men and boys of color to use mental-health services with the same frequency as their white counterparts.

Schools are a natural site for mental-health prevention programs for children and adolescents, and programs may focus on either prevention of disorders in the general student body or provision of mental-health treatment for students at high risk for developing mental-health disorders or in need of ongoing mental health services. There have been some promising interventions for preventing behavior problems, anxiety, and depression, using approaches that target the general student population, as well as programs that target high-risk students (Waddell et al. 2007). Experts have recognized Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) as an effective early intervention to prevent serious mental-health disorders (RAND Corporation 2005) among students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds who have undergone a traumatic experience. CBITS is a skill-based intervention that was initially developed for ethnic minority and immigrant low-income youth in Los Angeles. Randomized control trials have demonstrated that youth who participate in CBITS show a significant reduction in posttraumatic stress and symptoms of depression in comparison to youth assigned to a control condition (Ngo et al. 2008).

*Substance use.* Childhood and adolescent use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs can be addressed using school-based prevention programs as

well as community-based and federal policies that reduce the availability of harmful substances. Reviews of school-based programs to prevent substance use suggest that the most effective school-level interventions are interactive; correct misperceptions that substance use is normative and acceptable; and include social skill training to increase a student's ability to refuse or resist harmful substances (Faggiano et al. 2008; Botvin and Griffin 2007). Research indicates that programs may be especially effective among racial and ethnic minority adolescents when culturally specific risk and protective factors (for example, racial identity, acculturation stress) are integrated into programs (Szapocznik et al. 2007; Prado et al. 2008).

It is also important to consider strategies that address the social context outside the school setting. There is evidence that both community campaigns and policy changes can establish zoning restrictions on tobacco and alcohol retail outlets (Ashe et al. 2003; Aboelata et al. 2004), which have the potential to reduce cigarette and alcohol advertising and sales to minors. The South Los Angeles Community Coalition provides an example of a successful community campaign to reduce the number of liquor stores, which community members perceived as a threat to the health and well-being of the community (Aboelata et al. 2004). In its first three years the community-based coalition shut down nearly two hundred operating liquor stores, and research indicates an average 27 percent reduction in violent crimes and felonies and drug-related felonies within a four-block radius of each store that closed.

The U.S. government enacted the Synar Amendment in 1992, requiring states to institute and enforce prohibitions on sales of tobacco to minors. This federal policy has shown to be effective in significantly reducing youth smoking, which emphasizes the importance of enforcing this law. A national study conducted between 1997 and 2003 estimated that a 21 percent reduction in the odds of smoking among tenth graders can be attributed to improved merchant compliance with laws prohibiting tobacco sales to minors (DiFranza, Savageau, and Fletcher 2009).

*Reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections.* A variety of school-based curricula and clinic-based interventions have demonstrated a positive impact on sexual-risk behaviors among the general population and among racial and ethnic minorities in particular (Darbes et al. 2008; Jemmott, Jemmott, and Fong 2010). Here we focus on community-based interventions that aim to reduce sexually transmitted infections among minority and low-income adolescents and young adults. Seen on da Streets, a Minneapolis-based intervention, was designed to increase STI testing among black males ages fifteen to twenty-four living in low-income neigh-



borhoods (Johnson, Harrison, and Sidebottom 2009). Seen on da Streets uses peer street-outreach workers to encourage men to practice safe sex and to improve detection and treatment of existing STIs. After Seen on da Streets had operated for just one year, the number of men seeking STI testing at community health centers affiliated with the project doubled (*ibid.*). In the first three years of the project, chlamydia rates increased by only 4 percent in Minneapolis, in comparison with 65 percent in other parts of the state; gonorrhea declined 2.2 percent in Minneapolis, while it increased by more than 50 percent elsewhere in Minnesota (Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support 2010).

Studies have also shown that low-income housing developments may be an effective context for reducing risky sexual behavior. Using an experimental design, researchers randomly assigned fifteen low-income housing developments in five cities around the United States to one of two conditions; half of the housing developments received a health intervention to reduce high-risk sexual behaviors, while the other half did not receive this intervention (Sikkema et al. 2005). The intervention targeted adolescents ages twelve to seventeen and included skills training and neighborhood-based HIV prevention activities. Approximately 1.5 years after the intervention began, adolescents who lived in housing developments that received the community intervention were more likely to delay first sexual intercourse, and to report using a condom at last intercourse, than adolescents in housing developments without this intervention.

Given that poverty is widely recognized as a social risk factor for HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS-prevention interventions that address poverty may be effective in reducing frequency of infection. There has been emerging interest in microfinance programs as an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy in the United States (Stratford et al. 2008); such programs are designed to reduce poverty by providing access to credit and business skills. To date, there is a limited evidence base for the effectiveness of microfinance programs. One small study in Baltimore, Maryland, the JEWEL Project (Jewelry Education for Women Empowering Their Lives), involved fifty women who used illicit drugs and were involved in prostitution (Sherman et al. 2006). The intervention included educational HIV risk-reduction seminars as well as instruction on how to make, market, and sell jewelry. Three months after the intervention, there was a significant reduction in reports of engaging in sex for drugs or money, median number of sex-trade partners per month, and drug use. Future research is needed to evaluate whether economic empowerment through microfinance programs can have a positive impact on sexual-risk behaviors among men.

### **Interventions with Potential to Affect a Broad Set of Health Outcomes**

It is also important to consider broad strategies that have the potential to improve multiple health outcomes. Below we review interventions that address aspects of the social and physical environment that contribute to healthy development for young men and boys of color.

*Family socioeconomic status.* Policies to improve family economic success can translate into improved health outcomes for children. Strong evidence for the positive impact of additional family income on child well-being has been documented within a prospective study of children in North Carolina (Costello et al. 2003). Four years after the study began, a casino opened on the Indian reservation where the American Indian study participants lived, and provided all American Indian families with additional income supplements per tribal law. After four years of income supplementation, children whose family incomes rose above the poverty level had lower symptoms of behavior problems (such as oppositional defiant and conduct disorders) than those children whose family incomes remained below the poverty line. Moreover, their symptom level was equal to the level observed for children who had never been poor.

The New Hope Random Assignment Experiment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, examined the effect of income supplementation using a randomized study design (Huston et al. 2005). Researchers assigned low-income parents to an intervention or a control group to examine the effectiveness of a program designed to increase employment and reduce family poverty. The program also included childcare assistance and health-care subsidies. Five years after the program began, researchers documented that the program had positive effects on school achievement and social behavior, although the positive effects were largely present only for boys. The study investigators were not able to identify reasons for these gender differences.

The New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) is a noteworthy example of a comprehensive and evidence-based effort to combat urban poverty by helping families become economically self-sufficient. Established in 2006, the CEO is an ambitious public-private task force that tackles issues of chronic unemployment and poverty in New York City, with a focus on individuals and communities in greatest need of help (National League of Cities 2009). The CEO has invested in the design, implementation, funding, and evaluation of a range of programs to help families become economically independent. For instance, the city Depart-

ment of Finance used federal tax information to distribute pre-populated tax returns to individuals who were eligible for the earned-income tax credit but had not claimed it in the prior year. This strategy disseminated approximately \$3.6 million to forty-two hundred individuals. The CEO also includes programs to improve access to healthy foods in high-poverty neighborhoods. Programs have led to increased enforcement of a local living wage, free one-on-one financial coaching for all city residents, a childcare tax credit for low- to moderate-income working families, and a community-based outreach program to help people in poor neighborhoods get jobs (National League of Cities 2009).

Initiatives that help low-income youth earn a college degree provide an important pathway to their economic stability and independence. Several programs have documented successful outcomes, including some that provide a transition between high school and college and others that begin after high school graduation. For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Early College High School Initiative is a program that compresses the amount of time it takes to complete high school and the first two years of college (Nodine 2009). This program rests on the notion that "most high school students—including students with average and below-average academic records—can succeed in college courses during their junior or senior years of high school" as students who follow an advanced placement or international baccalaureate program do (*ibid.*: 3).

Students enrolled in early college programs earn one or two years of college-transferable credits free of tuition. They become part of a rigorous and supportive environment that develops both the academic and social skills required for success. Since 2002, this initiative has founded or redesigned more than two hundred schools within twenty-four states, targeting students who are underrepresented in higher education, including low-income youth, students of color, immigrant youth, and first-generation college students. In 2008 early college schools that had been open for four or more years had a 92 percent graduation rate, with 40 percent of graduates earning at least one year of college credit.

Another example, the City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), is an initiative that intervenes once students have graduated from high school. It is designed to provide substantial support to low-income students and to help them earn degrees as quickly as possible. The program provides resources including free tuition, transportation assistance, consolidated course schedules, and comprehensive advising. Follow-up from the first two years shows that the program is effective in improving two-year graduation rates for participating students

compared with students not enrolled in the program (30.1 percent versus 11.4 percent) (Linderman and Kolenovic 2009).

*Early childhood interventions.* Early childhood interventions are programs to serve children from birth until school entry (typically age five); these programs are designed to increase children's exposure to stimulating environments and nurturing relationships and to support the health and well-being of children and parents over time. Early childhood interventions have a variety of formats and funding sources (such as public and private funding). Economic analyses have identified investment in disadvantaged children as "a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large" (Heckman 2006: 1,902). Early childhood interventions can occur within the medical-care system, with such programs as the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program (Olds 2006), or outside the medical-care system, including preschool programs (Barnett and Masse 2007).

The NFP is an evidence-based, validated intervention for low-income first-time mothers; it is designed to improve maternal and child health and consequently improve life outcomes for both the mothers and their children. NFP nurses visit women in their homes during their prenatal and early childhood period, helping them nurture and care for their own children and improving their economic self-sufficiency by helping women to succeed in the workforce (Olds 2006). The NFP's approach to delivering care maintains a broad perspective on a mother's life and addresses factors that are not typically considered within the domain of health care. Three separate, large randomized control trials in different contexts indicate that these programs positively affect a number of child and parent health and socioeconomic outcomes (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon 2005). Among mothers, nurse home-visiting programs were associated with less smoking during pregnancy, increased workforce participation, fewer subsequent pregnancies, reduced use of public assistance programs, and lower rates of child abuse and neglect. For children these programs were associated with a reduction in childhood injuries, juvenile crime, and substance use (Olds 2006 and 2008). An independent cost analysis that summarized the effects of the three NFP trials estimated that the program saves approximately \$18,054 per family (Lee, Aos, and Miller 2008).

School-based early childhood intervention programs have also been shown to have a lasting positive impact on disadvantaged children and are associated with a wide range of positive educational and social development outcomes well into adulthood (Reynolds et al. 2007; Muennig et al. 2009). For instance, the Perry Preschool Program was a two-year

experimental intervention for African American children ages three to four from a disadvantaged community; this program included morning sessions at school as well as afternoon visits from the teacher to the child's home (Muennig et al. 2009). At age ten children who attended the Perry Preschool did not have significantly higher IQ scores than children in the control condition. However, they did have higher achievement test scores, which is attributed to greater motivation for learning (Heckman 2006). These individuals have been followed up to age forty, and in comparison to children in the control condition, Perry Preschool participants have higher incomes as well as higher rates of high school and college graduation, health insurance coverage, and home ownership, plus lower rates of arrest, out-of-wedlock births, and welfare assistance (Muennig et al. 2009).

Additional evidence for the long-term benefits of early childhood education comes from the Abecedarian program, a randomized trial of early child education with follow-up into young adulthood. At age twenty-one individuals who were assigned to participate in the education program exhibited fewer symptoms of depression, lower marijuana use, a more active lifestyle, and significant educational and vocational benefits in comparison to individuals who were not assigned to the early education program (Campbell et al. 2008; McLaughlin et al. 2007). Economic analyses have shown that investment in educational programs in the early years of a child's life lead to reduced societal costs related to special education, crime, social-welfare programs, and increases in income-tax revenues. A comprehensive analysis of a variety of early childhood programs estimated the total return per one dollar invested ranges from three to seventeen dollars (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon 2005).

*Out-of-school and after-school programs.* The time between the end of the school day and the time parents return home from work is recognized as a high-risk period for healthy child and adolescent development (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008). A substantial amount of youth crime and victimization—as well as experimentation with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and sexual activity—occurs during this window of time (Cohen et al. 2002; Flannery, Williams, and Vazsonyi 1999). Since the late 1990s, funding for after-school programs for children and youth has increased. These programs support working families by getting children and adolescents into safe, supervised activities and by providing youth with academic enrichment and opportunities for healthy development. Reviews of studies that have examined the effect of after-school programs show that these programs have the potential to produce consistent benefits across a range of outcomes, including (1) academic achievement, such as school

engagement, performance, graduation, and future aspirations; (2) social and developmental outcomes, such as behavior problems, communications skills, depression and anxiety, and self-esteem; (3) prevention outcomes, such as delinquency and violence, drug and alcohol use, and sexual activity; and (4) health knowledge and habits, such as knowledge about nutrition, physical activity, body mass index, and blood pressure (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008; Durlak and Weissberg 2007).

The Yale Study of Children's Afterschool Time examined the academic and health benefits of participation in after-school programming for a population of predominantly poor and African American and Hispanic children. At the end of one school year some indicators of academic success and motivation were higher among after-school participants, even after adjusting for family socioeconomic status and baseline child characteristics, including academic adjustment, motivation, and expectations for success (Mahoney, Lord, and Carryl 2005b). Furthermore, over a two-year period the prevalence of obesity was significantly lower for students who participated in after-school programs (21 percent) compared with nonparticipants (33 percent) (Mahoney, Lord, and Carryl 2005a).

LA's BEST after-school enrichment is a nationally recognized model for high-quality after-school programming. An analysis commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice found that LA's BEST participants were 30 percent less likely to commit a crime compared with nonparticipants and 20 percent less likely to drop out of school. This effect on dropouts was especially pronounced for low-income students (Goldschmidt, Huang, and Chinen 2007). The analysis also found that for each dollar spent, there was a \$2.50 return in savings related to the criminal justice system.

After-school activities may also provide an opportunity for youth to explore career directions and develop workplace skills. Chicago's After School Matters offers paid internships in arts, technology, communications, and sports to students in some of the city's most underserved schools (Halpern 2006). In the 2009–10 academic year After School Matters provided more than twenty-five thousand program slots within over seven hundred programs for youth ages fourteen to twenty-one. Researchers report that students who participated in After School Matters had better rates of class attendance, lower rates of course failures, and higher rates of graduation than nonparticipants (Goerge et al. 2007). There is limited research using randomized control designs to examine the effectiveness and cost returns for after-school interventions in the adolescent years, making this an important area for further study.

*Youth mentoring.* Youth mentoring programs such as Big Brothers Big

Sisters have received a great deal of public attention since the late 1990s (Rhodes and DuBois 2008). An estimated three million youth currently participate in formal one-on-one mentorship programs, a sixfold increase in ten years (ibid.; Rhodes 2008). There has been a substantial amount of research on the effectiveness of youth-mentoring programs. A meta-analysis of fifty-five programs found positive effects of mentoring programs on emotional, educational, and behavioral outcomes; however, the magnitudes of the associations were very small, indicating that the programs provide only a small benefit to the average participant (DuBois et al. 2002).

Several randomized studies of Big Brothers Big Sisters have reported positive associations between programs and such outcomes as improved academic performance; delay in use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs; and not engaging in violent behavior or displaying serious conduct problems (Grossman and Tierney 1998; Herrera et al. 2007; Tierney, Grossman, and Resch 1995). However, across these studies findings for each of the outcomes are not consistent, and there are substantial limitations that weaken the conclusions (Roberts et al. 2004). The mentoring field currently lacks strong evidence to inform policy and practice decisions about mentoring programs (Rhodes and DuBois 2008), and more research is required to identify who is most likely to benefit from mentoring, in what type of program, under what circumstances, and for what outcomes (Roberts et al. 2004). Since 2004, the federal government has provided one hundred million dollars in annual congressional appropriations for mentoring programs, so there is an urgent need to determine the extent to which mentorship can be effectively used to address disparities in healthy development by race and ethnicity.

*Criminal justice system.* One important strategy to protect the health of young men and boys of color is to reform criminal justice policy to provide maximal help and cause minimal harm for youth who become involved with crime. New policies should be designed to (1) prevent incarceration whenever possible, (2) provide intensive therapy to offenders (and their families) to help them reach their educational and occupational goals and avoid further involvement with crime, and (3) enhance postincarceration programs to improve opportunities for successful reintegration into society.

A variety of therapeutic programs have successfully reduced criminal involvement while proving cost-effective in comparison to incarceration and continued detention. Experts have recognized multisystem therapy (MST), an intensive, family-based treatment, as an effective intervention for young offenders. MST is based on the social ecological model, which views the family, school, peers, and community as interconnected systems

that influence the behavior of youth and family members (Schaeffer and Borduin 2005). Rigorous controlled evaluations show that MST is effective in producing long-term reductions in emotional and behavioral problems, improvements in family relationships, and reductions in criminal activity, violence, drug-related arrests, and incarceration (Curtis, Ronan, and Borduin 2004). A four-year follow-up study found that youths who had participated in MST were significantly less likely to be arrested in comparison with individuals in the control group (26 percent versus 71 percent) (Borduin et al. 1995).

Postincarceration programs may also provide an important avenue for addressing the needs of court-involved adolescents and young adults. Youth Options Unlimited Boston Transitional Employment Service Program is a nationally recognized program to support court-involved or gang-involved youth by connecting at-risk youth to a paying job, intensive case management, and inclusive support services, including academic programming. This program helps youth to develop positive references to support future job applications, transition into unsubsidized jobs, and obtain a high school degree or enroll in college (National League of Cities 2009). We have been unable to locate any randomized experiments testing the long-term benefits of this type of program and believe this to be an important subject for research.

*Housing and neighborhoods.* As discussed throughout this chapter, where children and adolescents live affects nearly every aspect of their health and social development. Efforts to address health inequities by race and class must focus on improving both indoor and outdoor environments for low-income families and families of color (Krieger and Higgins 2002; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). A variety of initiatives are helping individuals and communities improve housing conditions, including (1) the development and enforcement of housing codes related to lead, mold, and pests (Krieger and Higgins 2002); (2) programs to help families improve their indoor air quality (Krieger et al. 2005); and (3) advocacy programs to ensure that individuals and communities have access to healthy and affordable housing (Freudenberg 1990).

The Seattle-King County Healthy Homes Project is an effective intervention to improve housing conditions for low-income families. Community-outreach teams work with household members to develop a tailored intervention plan, support efforts to improve the safety and quality of their homes, and reduce asthma triggers (Krieger and Higgins 2002). A randomized study of low-income families with asthmatic children found this program to be effective in reducing asthma symptoms and emergency health



care use among children, and in improving quality-of-life among caregivers (Krieger et al. 2005). This approach has been used as a model for Chicago- and Harlem-based programs, which have also achieved positive outcomes (Spielman et al. 2006; Martin et al. 2009).

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) stands out as an example of a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization effort that targets many interrelated social factors affecting the health of children and families, including high-quality early education, after-school programming, access to health services, violence-prevention efforts, and a range of other community-level factors (Tough 2008). To date, the HCZ has demonstrated successful results in terms of academic achievement, housing conditions, and childhood asthma outcomes (Spielman et al. 2006; Dobbie and Fryer 2009). Based on the early success of this program, the HCZ will serve as a model within the Obama Promise Neighborhood Initiative, a new federal initiative to support the development of twenty similar "promise neighborhoods" around the United States.

*Health care and health insurance.* Multiple strategies must be implemented to address disparities in quality of and access to health care for minority populations in the United States. For children and adolescents school-based health centers (SBHCs) can be a valuable source of primary care, preventive care, and health education, particularly for underserved youth (Gustafson 2005). SBHCs help underserved youth overcome barriers to care (such as transportation or physician shortages) and thus can effectively improve health care access and quality for low-income and uninsured adolescents (Allison et al. 2007). Across the United States there are approximately two thousand SBHCs that have been established with support from the federal government, health-insurance providers, foundations, and Medicaid (National Assembly on School-Based Health Care 2010). Research suggests that SBHCs may have the greatest impact on health-related quality of life among children of low socioeconomic status who may not receive care from another source (Wade et al. 2008). Moreover, research shows that use of SBHCs is associated with a student's academic improvement over time (Walker et al. 2010).

Both national and cross-national research shows that primary care is associated with greater health equity at the population level and that morbidity and mortality outcomes are influenced by the availability of primary-care doctors (Starfield, Shi, and Macinko 2005). A greater supply of primary-care physicians in the United States may lower costs of health care and contribute to more equitable population health by improving access to prevention-oriented services, as well as early detection and

management of existing health problems. Research shows that black and Latino primary-care doctors disproportionately provide care to poor and minority underserved populations (Komaromy et al. 1996). In recognition of the important role that minority physicians play in caring for underserved communities, there is a need for racial and ethnic diversity within the medical profession (Schlueter 2006) as well as purposeful recruitment of medical students with a desire to improve health equity (Drake 2009).

The University of California Programs in Medical Education is an example of a medical-education program designed to create leaders who have the knowledge and skills to advance health-care delivery, policies, and research in low-income communities and communities of color (Manetta et al. 2007). Each of the affiliated medical schools has a specialized curriculum on an underserved community, and medical students are trained to comprehensively address the health needs of a specific population, including the Spanish-speaking Latino community, rural populations, and urban underserved communities.

Finally, the newly passed health care legislation aims to achieve near universal health insurance coverage and therefore is expected to benefit many young men and boys of color. The law contains several provisions that will help young adults and low socioeconomic status individuals to access health insurance. For example, beginning in September 2010, the law specifies that adolescents must be eligible to stay on their parents' health insurance until age twenty-six. Beginning in 2014, the law expands the eligibility criteria for Medicaid to include all individuals with incomes below 133 percent of the federal poverty line. In addition, it creates health insurance exchanges that will enable individuals with low and moderate income to purchase affordable coverage. It is currently unclear what the full impact of the legislation will be on reducing disparities in insurance coverage, access to physicians, quality of health care, and actual health outcomes for young men and boys of color. Therefore, it will be important to carefully evaluate the effect of the new law on disparities for each of these domains.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The health of young men and boys of color in the United States is embedded within social and environmental contexts that shape their health and well-being throughout their lives. To effectively address health disparities and promote opportunities for healthy development, policymakers must prioritize comprehensive strategies to improve the physical, social, educational, and economic conditions within disadvantaged neighborhoods

(that is, place-based strategies) (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). Public-health strategies to improve the health of young men and boys of color must confront the underlying causes of health inequalities, which will require attention to topics that fall outside of what is conventionally considered to be the health sector. There is ample evidence that social and economic policies can be designed to improve the health and life chances of young men and boys of color in the United States. We must now embark on the challenging task of taking several of these evidence-based interventions to scale in a manner that will (a) maintain fidelity to the evidence-based programs and (b) reach the communities and families that will benefit the most. There is also an immediate need for rigorous evaluations of several of the initiatives presented in this chapter.

Two relevant topics not covered in this review merit further research and innovation. A substantial body of research has documented that religious youths are more likely to engage in positive health behaviors and less likely to engage in risky behaviors (Sinha, Cnaan, and Gelles 2007). It is possible that an enriched understanding of the components of religion that promote health can be applied within interventions to improve adolescent health. There is also a need for dedicated research on the effectiveness of programs to support young low-income and minority fathers. Although a limited number of evaluation studies have taken place (Raikes and Bellotti 2006), programs to support young fathers could positively affect the development of children while contributing significantly to the well-being of young men.

To achieve meaningful improvements in the health of young men and boys of color, greater attention must be given to the design and evaluation of strategies that are explicitly designed to reduce and eliminate socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic inequities in the places where families spend most of their time: homes, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and religious institutions (Williams et al. 2008). Now is the time for leaders from multiple sectors of society to join forces to address the pressing needs of young men and boys of color, as well as their communities, in coordinated and systematic ways.

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## TWELVE

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF OPPORTUNITY

#### *A Framework for Child Development*

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia,  
Lindsay E. Rosenfeld, Nancy McArdle,  
and Theresa L. Osypuk

#### ABSTRACT

As they develop, children are influenced not only by their immediate family environment but also by their neighborhood and school environment. These three environments—family, neighborhoods, and schools—offer children opportunities and challenges for healthy development. This framework of multiple influences on child development, though, is missing distributional aspects—specifically, that there is a geography of opportunity structure that systematically patterns how children of various racial and ethnic groups come to reside in different family, neighborhood, and school environments. This chapter links the research on child development with research on how neighborhoods and schools affect child health and development, with attention to these distributional questions. We examine how processes of residential and school segregation result in systematic racial and ethnic differences in this child opportunity structure. The chapter concludes with an examination of the available policy options for addressing racial and ethnic inequity in the child opportunity structure.

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When Natercia Dias picked up her 5-year-old son at his school bus stop in Dorchester [a predominantly black neighborhood in Boston] late Tuesday afternoon, she noticed a second young boy standing alone on the sidewalk. . . . The boy was quiet and calm, said Dias. He did not appear frightened and he did not resist when she started rifling through his backpack in search of any information that could identify him, she said. As it turned out, the kindergartner was miles from his Wellesley [a predominantly white suburb] home. . . . Thanks to Dias and other parents at the bus stop, the black kindergartner—who had been mistaken for a student in the Metco desegregation program, put on a Metco bus at the end of his after-school program in Wellesley, and dropped off in Dorchester—found his way back to his family. . . . Metco’s executive director, Jean McGuire, said this is not the first time that a minority student from the suburbs has been ushered onto Metco buses. . . . “If you assume that nobody black lives in your town, this is what’s going to happen, and it happens every year,” McGuire said.

Meghan Tench, *Boston Globe*, September 6, 2003

A black kindergarten student who lives in Wellesley was mistakenly put on a Metco bus and dropped off in Boston last fall because of “certain unconscious assumptions about race,” according to a report released last week by a committee that investigated the incident. . . . But the committee convened by the director of the Wellesley Community Children’s Center found no evidence of deliberate racial discrimination in the busing mix-up, according to its facilitator, Elizabeth Lemons.

Jenna Russell, *Boston Globe*, February 1, 2004

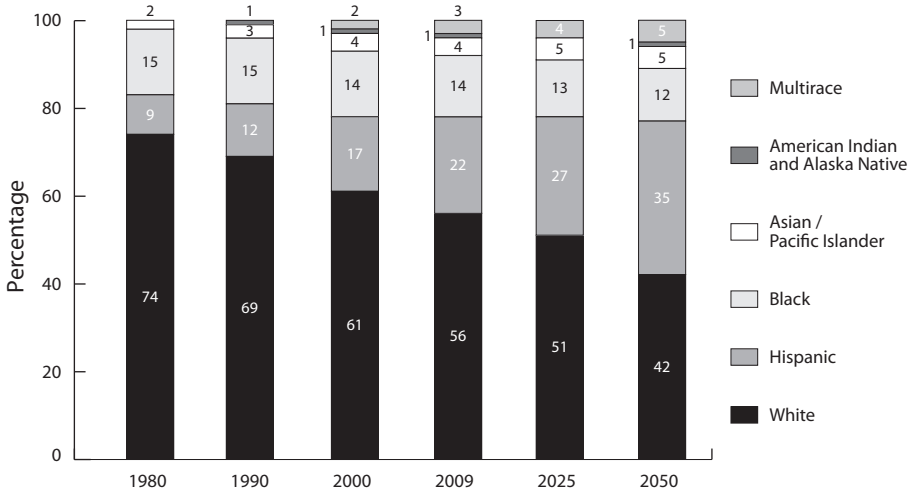
## INTRODUCTION

There is a set of assumptions about where people live—or should live—that led someone to bus this young boy to a *place* where they assumed he *belonged*. For example, a five-year-old African American boy in the Boston metropolitan area should live in Dorchester (or Roxbury or Mattapan, which are all predominantly black neighborhoods in Boston), but not in Wellesley (a predominantly white suburb in the Boston metropolitan area). And if he happens to attend school in Wellesley, it must be because he participates in Metco—an interdistrict school racial desegregation program

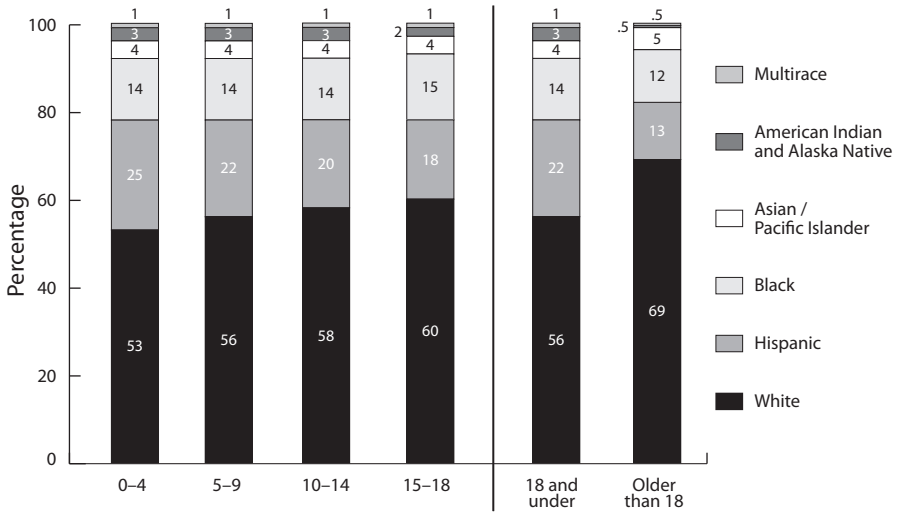
created in the 1960s. Those “certain unconscious assumptions about race” are that a white child belongs in a place where schools offer him or her a wealth of opportunities to learn and develop, but a minority child does not. And if he or she attends an opportunity-rich school, the minority student must be a transplant from another place.

A few facts about Dorchester and Wellesley provide the background for these racialized assumptions about the developmental contexts of children—that is, the places where children live, play, learn, and grow. In 2000, Dorchester was 68.7 percent minority with a poverty rate of 18.4 percent, while Wellesley was 88.3 percent non-Hispanic white (and 7.2 percent Asian) with a poverty rate of 3.8 percent. During the 2004–05 school year, 73.5 percent of Boston Public School students were low-income, compared with just 3.6 percent of Wellesley public school students. During that same year Boston fourth graders’ score on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Math Composite Performance Index—a 100-point scale that measures the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency—was 59, compared with 90 in Wellesley. It is also significant that despite its value for both the children who are enrolled and the suburban schools they attend, because of the relatively small number of children who participate in the program, Metco cannot address the racial, socioeconomic, or academic imbalance among school districts in the Boston area. Approximately 3,165 Boston children are enrolled in Metco—while more than 15,000 are on the waiting list. These 3,165 children represent only about 5.7 percent of the total number of children enrolled in Boston Public Schools.

At the same time that racialized assumptions about the developmental contexts of children remain strong and pervasive, the U.S. population is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, and the child population is becoming even more diverse than the general population. The proportion of racial or ethnic minority children in the total child population increased from 26 percent in 1980 to 44 percent in 2009. Especially dramatic is the growth in the Latino child population from 9 percent to 22 percent (figure 12.1). Among children under five, 47 percent are minority, and Latino children comprise 25 percent (figure 12.2). In some geographic areas the proportion of the child population that is minority is even larger than the national figure. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) for 2005 to 2007, minority children are already half or more of the population in nine states and thirty-one metro areas. In 2008 eight of the ten largest metropolitan areas had majority-minority child populations—that is, the majority of the population was made up of children



**Figure 12.1.** Racial and ethnic composition of the child population, 1980–2050. *Note:* Hispanics may be of any race. Racial groups include only non-Hispanic members. Multirace data not available before 2000. *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau estimates and projections. Projections use Constant Net International Migration Series.



**Figure 12.2.** Racial and ethnic composition of the child population by age, 2008. *Note:* Hispanics may be of any race. Racial groups include only non-Hispanic members. *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau.

from what are traditionally called “minority” backgrounds (for example, black/African American, Latino, Asian, Native American). Among those ten largest metro areas, the proportion of racial and ethnic minority children ranged from 28.4 percent in Boston to 77.3 percent in Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup>

Racial and ethnic disparities in the health, development, and well-being of U.S. children are large and have been persistent over time (Satcher et al. 2005). The black-white disparity in infant mortality, birth weight, and premature birth is a stark example (Osypuk and Acevedo-Garcia 2008).<sup>2</sup> Racial and ethnic disparities in child development (in cognitive and social outcomes, for example) and school readiness emerge at young ages (Farkas 2002; Rock and Stenner 2005). Racial differences in academic readiness emerge before school entry (Rock and Stenner 2005). Although racial and ethnic disparities among children are not new, such disparities affect an increasing number and proportion of U.S. children as a result of the demographic trends highlighted earlier.

Disparities in birth outcomes (such as low birth weight and infant mortality) are dramatic between black and white children but not between Latino and white children. However, some studies indicate that the initial health advantage of Latino children is eroded by age two. Although favorable early health outcomes (such as low rates of low birth weight) among Latino children are a robust finding across studies, some evidence suggests that this initial health advantage does not appear to sustain favorable cognitive development outcomes by age two (Fuller 2009; Fuller et al. 2009). The favorable birth outcomes among Latino children are partly a function of the large proportion of immigrants in this group and the fact that immigrants tend to have a better health profile than their U.S.-born counterparts (Acevedo-Garcia and Bates 2007; Acevedo-Garcia, Soobader, and Berkman 2005 and 2007). However, second-generation Latinos (that is, U.S.-born) are now contributing most of the growth of the Latino population, and by 2020 the second-generation Latino population will be larger than the first generation (that is, Latino immigrants) (Suro and Passel 2003). This may result in an erosion of health status among the Latino population, because health outcomes tend to be better among the first generation than among the second generation.

Many inequality patterns suggest similarities between the experience of Latino children and that of black children. For example, both black and Latino children experience high levels of residential and school segregation (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2007; Acevedo-Garcia, Osypuk, and McArdle 2009; Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). Contextual factors—including disadvantaged family, housing, neighborhood, and school conditions—may help

explain the erosion of the initial health advantage (low rates of low birth weight) among Latino children. We therefore enter the next decade as a society in which blacks and Latinos are a substantial proportion of the child population, patterns of black-white inequality persist, and patterns of Latino-white inequality parallel those of black-white inequality.

Disparities in child health and development reflect a pattern of large racial and ethnic inequalities in the developmental contexts of children—that is, the environments in which children grow and develop. These environments include the family but also larger social contexts such as neighborhoods and schools as well as childcare, preschool, and after-school settings. The inequalities in neighborhood and school environment arise largely from a racially and ethnically unequal geography of opportunity (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2007; Acevedo-Garcia, Osypuk, and McArdle 2009; Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). The central premise of a “geography of opportunity” framework is that residents of a metropolitan area are situated within a context of neighborhood-based opportunities that shape their quality of life, including their health and development (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008; de Souza Briggs 2005; Iannotta, Ross, and National Research Council 2002; powell 2005). The location of housing is a powerful impediment to or vehicle for accessing these opportunities. High levels of neighborhood (that is, residential) and school segregation are associated with large disparities in children’s exposure to high levels of neighborhood and school poverty, which is one indicator of low opportunity.

Although the literature has developed several compelling theories for explaining child development, these models fall short of explaining racial and ethnic developmental disparities because they are not situated within a larger structural framework. For example, ecological models of child development address the conditions and processes that govern human development within the actual environments in which human beings live (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Such ecological models emphasize the importance of multiple contexts (for example, family, neighborhood, childcare, school) in which children grow and develop (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Complementarily, the child-resilience literature has focused on the ability of children and families to withstand highly disadvantaged environments. More recently, the research on children’s biological sensitivity has addressed the interaction between children’s responses to stress (their stress reactivity) and low- and high-adversity developmental contexts (Obradovic et al. 2010). Yet what is missing from these approaches is the explicit recognition that the distribution of developmental contexts differs sharply by race and ethnicity; this omission arises partly from the focus of these approaches on

the development of individual children instead of on population patterns of child development. The extensive sociological and demographic research on segregation and the geography of opportunity does not address how unequal contexts affect developmental processes. Nor does it offer a definition of “opportunity” specific to child development.

To understand the developmental trajectories of U.S. children and how those trajectories vary by race and ethnicity, we need an integrative approach that combines insights from the literature on child development with the sociological and demographic literature on segregation and the geography of opportunity. The demographic trends discussed earlier suggest that the development and future of minority children will have large effects on the country in general and on certain regions in particular. Research about and policies to promote child development should recognize the centrality of the developmental trajectories of racial and ethnic minority children and should therefore examine the implications of a racially and ethnically unequal geography of opportunity.

#### A DEFINITION OF CHILD HEALTH

According to the Institute of Medicine’s report *Children’s Health: The Nation’s Wealth*: “Children’s health is the extent to which individual children or groups of children are able or enabled to (a) develop and realize their potential, (b) satisfy their needs, and (c) develop the capacities that allow them to interact successfully with their biological, physical, and social environments” (IOM 2004: 302). Although by a narrow definition of health—that is, the absence of physical or mental disease—the majority of U.S. children are healthy, the rate of chronic health conditions (obesity, asthma, other physical conditions, and behavior or learning problems) among children has increased from 12.8 percent in 1994 to 26.6 percent in 2006 (Van Cleave, Gortmaker, and Perrin 2010).

A growing body of evidence suggests that foundations of adult health, productivity, and socioeconomic attainment are established in childhood (Case and Paxson 2006; Palloni 2006). Therefore, broad definitions of child health, such as the one from the Institute of Medicine, emphasize the ability of children to develop their potential. This definition of child health refers both to individual children and “groups of children”; it addresses both the individual and population levels. The population-health aspect provides a link between child-development research and social-science research on inequality. The ability of some groups of children, including black and Latino children, to develop their potential is constrained by a

racially and ethnically unequal distribution of supportive developmental contexts, or constrained by a limited geography of opportunity.

We define the geography of child opportunity as the context of neighborhood-based opportunities that influence children's health and development, including whether they fully realize their potential. These opportunities include services that support child development (such as good-quality schools), healthy and safe physical environments (safe playgrounds), and healthy and safe social environments (safe, positive peer influences). A geography of opportunity framework is place-based (that is, neighborhood-based), but it also has a focus on equity (the relative position of neighborhoods in a metropolitan area). The neighborhood-based opportunities available to a child in his or her neighborhood matter in an absolute sense (for example, whether a high-quality school is available in that neighborhood). They also matter in a relative sense (whether the child lives in a neighborhood that has good opportunities for child development compared with other neighborhoods). The relative position of a neighborhood may be indicative of structural constraints in the metropolitan area (for example, limited availability of affordable housing in areas with high-quality public schools).

It is also a marker of its reputation in the metropolitan area (that is, how the neighborhood is perceived by residents, planners, and investors), which may influence, for instance, the willingness of families to move into certain neighborhoods. Children may have access to opportunities beyond their neighborhood, but such access depends on family resources as well as on policies that create links between neighborhoods in the region. For example, a child residing in a neighborhood with a low-quality public school may be able to attend a private school or to participate in a school integration program that allows him or her to go to a high-quality public school in another neighborhood. However, in the absence of family resources or regional policies, the neighborhood where a child lives is critical in determining his or her access to opportunity for healthy development.

The third element in this definition of child health articulated by the IOM is the ability of children to adapt successfully to their environments, including the neighborhood opportunity structure. But the IOM definition does not integrate information about racial and ethnic inequality in the environments in which children grow and develop. However, an unequal geography of opportunity leads some groups of children to face greater challenges adapting to their environments, because those environments have fewer resources to promote healthy child development. For such children positive health and developmental outcomes are less likely. In other

words, at the population level, racial and ethnic minority children face a greater challenge in adapting successfully to their environment than non-Hispanic white children.

### **SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTIONS OF SUPPORTIVE DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXTS**

Black and Latino children experience high levels of residential and school segregation, accompanied by higher exposure to poverty in neighborhoods and schools (Acevedo-Garcia, Osypuk, and McArdle 2009; Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008; Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008). Although a large body of social-science research has documented pervasive patterns of contextual inequality (Logan 2002a and 2002b; Logan et al. 2001; Massey 2001, 2004, and 2008; Massey, Condran, and Denton 1987; Massey and Fischer 2000), this evidence is not often presented in a way that captures what we believe is a central issue for those interested in child development: the extent to which access to supportive developmental contexts is unequal. To address this gap, we have quantified the magnitude of racial and ethnic inequality in the child distributions of neighborhood and school poverty. At the population level we have observed that not only are the average values of indicators of the quality of developmental contexts worse for black and Latino children than for white children, but the entire distribution or spectrum of neighborhood quality is worse for minority children than for white children. For example, not only is the average neighborhood poverty higher for minority children than for white children, but in many metropolitan areas even the neighborhoods with low poverty rates for minority children are poorer than the neighborhoods with relatively high poverty rates for white children.

#### **Limited Overlap in Neighborhood Context**

In addition to large disparities in indicators that capture average values such as the index of neighborhood exposure to poverty, there is limited overlap in the entire distribution of neighborhood poverty between minority children on the one hand and white children on the other hand (Osypuk et al. 2009). The neighborhood poverty rate is the proportion of the neighborhood population whose income is below the federal poverty line. By limited overlap we mean that in metropolitan areas, black and Latino children are concentrated at the worst end of the neighborhood-quality distribution (that is, they live in neighborhoods with the highest



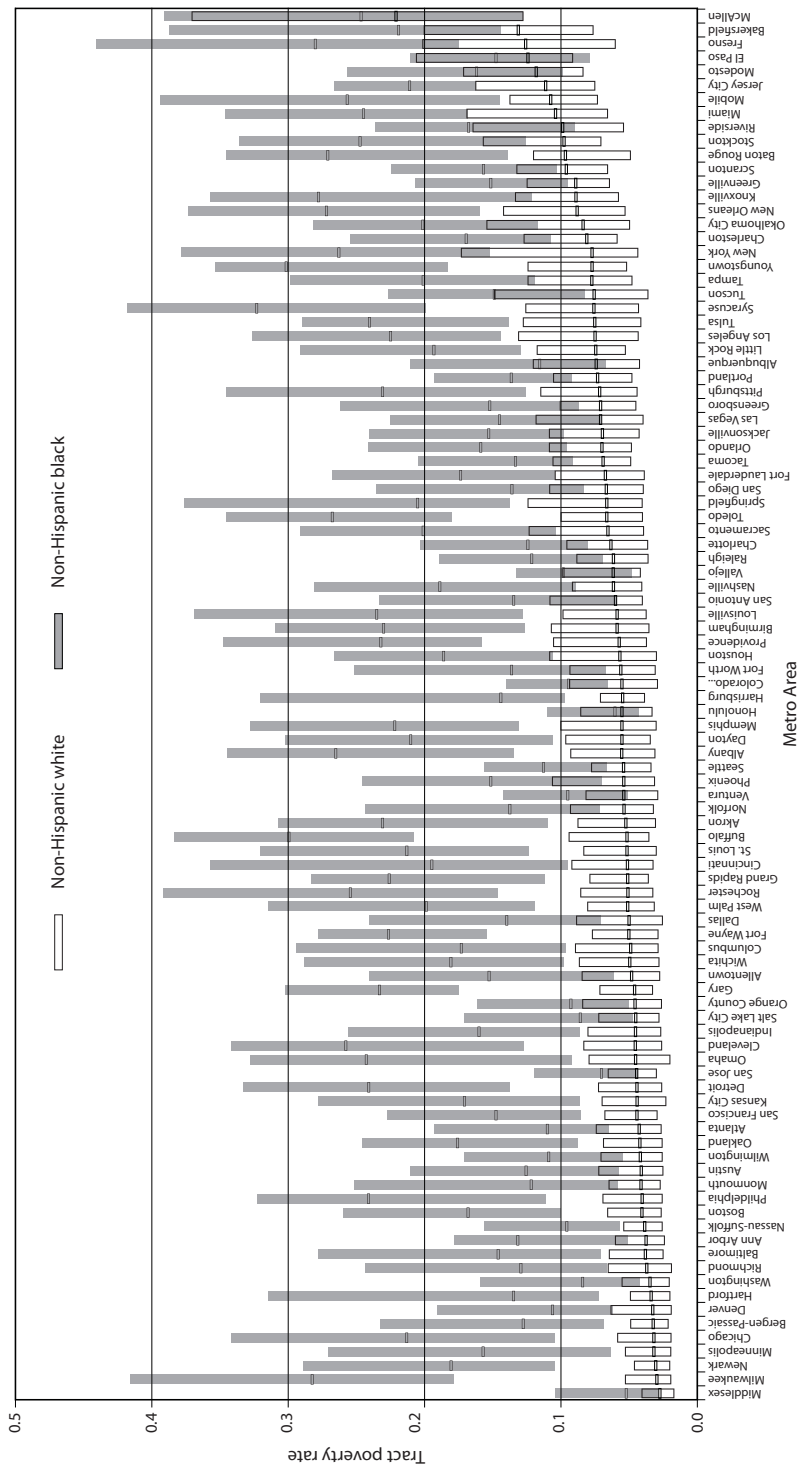
poverty rates), while white children are concentrated at the best end of the neighborhood-quality distribution (in neighborhoods with the lowest poverty rates) (Acevedo-Garcia and Bates 2007; Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008).

Here we examine the extent of overlap in the race- and ethnicity-specific distributions of neighborhood poverty. The interquartile range (IQR) is the distance between the twenty-fifth percentile and the seventy-fifth percentile of neighborhood poverty—the range of the middle 50 percent of the data. Because it uses the middle 50 percent, the IQR is not affected by outliers or extreme values. Using 2000 data—the most recent available at the neighborhood level—for the hundred largest metropolitan areas, we subtracted the minority first quartile from the white third quartile to determine the amount of IQR overlap between two metropolitan-area race-specific distributions of neighborhood poverty for children. Figures 12.3 and 12.4 show respectively the overlap between white and black children in neighborhood poverty, and the overlap between white and Latino children. The first and third quartiles of race- and ethnic-specific distributions of neighborhood poverty correspond to the bottom and top lines of each boxplot—gray boxplots for black and Latino children and clear boxplots for white children, respectively. The median of neighborhood poverty for each group is marked by a heavy line in the center of the box. It is immediately apparent that there is limited overlap between the boxplots for black and Latino children on the one hand and white children on the other.

In the hundred metropolitan areas with the largest child populations in 2000, 76 percent of black and 69 percent of Latino children lived in poorer neighborhoods than the neighborhoods of the worst-off non-Latino white children. We defined the neighborhoods of the worst-off white children as those occupied by the 25 percent of white children living in the poorest neighborhoods for white children within those metro areas. This racial and ethnic disparity in neighborhood poverty is not accounted for by racial and ethnic differences in the distribution of family poverty—where a poor family is defined as one whose income is below the federal poverty line. When the analysis is limited to children living in poor families, 74 percent of poor black children and 60 percent of poor Latino children live in poorer neighborhoods than those of the worst-off poor white children (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008).

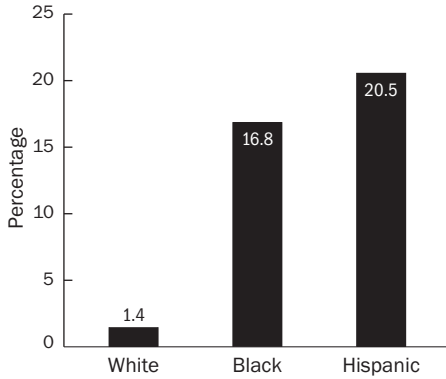
### **Double Jeopardy: Challenging Developmental Contexts at Multiple Levels**

In addition to looking at separateness and inequality in the distribution of developmental contexts, we have examined disparities with regard to the



**Figure 12.3.** White and black children overlap for neighborhood poverty, 2000. *Source:* Calculations by <http://DiversityData.org> from 2000 Decennial Census, Summary Files 2 and 3.

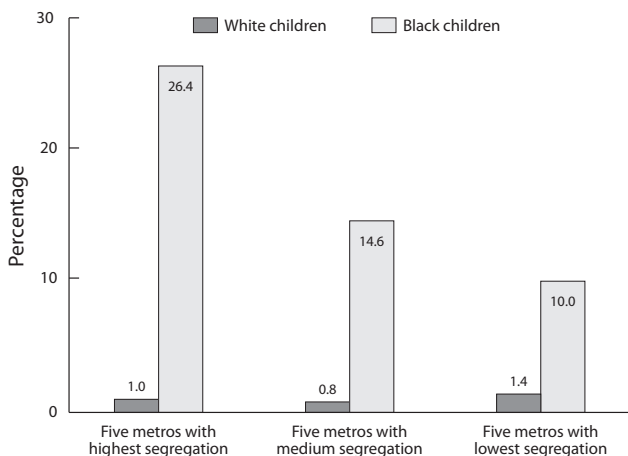




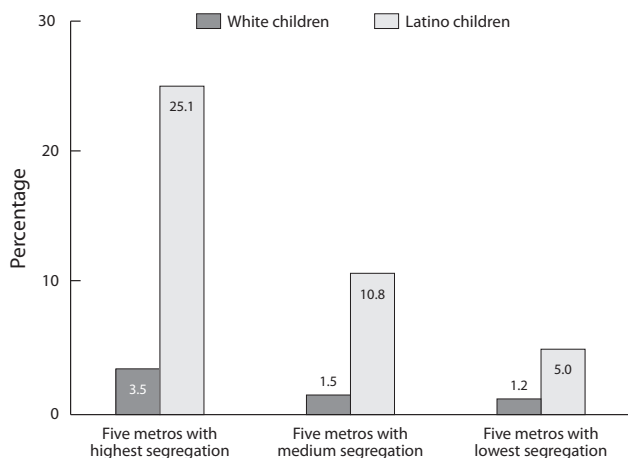
**Figure 12.5.** Percentage of children who experience double jeopardy (live in both poor families and poor neighborhoods). *Note:* Poor neighborhoods are those with poverty rates over 20 percent. Double jeopardy refers to the share of children living in poor families and in neighborhoods with poverty rates over 20 percent. Includes one hundred metropolitan areas with the largest child populations. *Source:* Tabulations by <http://DiversityData.org> of 2000 U.S. Census.

extent to which children experience challenging developmental contexts at multiple levels simultaneously. There is a misconception that minority children are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods than white children because their families are more likely to be poor, and poor families are more likely to reside in poor neighborhoods. Significantly, inequalities in neighborhood environment are not fully explained by family income. Poor white children are much less likely to experience disadvantaged neighborhoods than poor black and Latino children. In one analysis we looked at the proportion of children who live in a poor family *and also* in a poor neighborhood, defined as a neighborhood in which at least 20 percent of the population lives in poverty. We called this “double jeopardy.”

Figure 12.5 shows the proportion of white, black, and Latino children who experience double jeopardy in the hundred largest metropolitan areas. The magnitude of the disparity is striking. Only 1 percent of poor white children live in poor neighborhoods. In contrast, about 17 percent of poor black children and about 21 percent of poor Latino children live in poor neighborhoods. Figures 12.6 and 12.7 show that the extent of the racial and ethnic disparity in the experience of double jeopardy is significantly shaped by the level of residential segregation (low, medium, and high) between



**Figure 12.6.** Percentage of black and white children experiencing double jeopardy, by metro segregation. *Note:* “Double jeopardy” refers to the share of children living in poor families and in neighborhoods with poverty rates over 20 percent. Metros drawn from the one hundred largest according to child population. Excludes those metros with less than five thousand of the specified minority child population. Segregation was measured using the Isolation Index for black children. Medium segregation metros were defined as the median segregation value, and the two metros above and the two below the median segregation value. *Source:* Tabulations by <http://DiversityData.org> of 2000 U.S. Census.



**Figure 12.7.** Percentage of Latino and white children experiencing double jeopardy, by metro segregation. *Note:* “Double jeopardy” refers to the share of children living in poor families and in neighborhoods with poverty rates over 20 percent. Metros drawn from the one hundred largest according to child population. Excludes those metros with less than five thousand of the specified minority child population. Segregation was measured using the Isolation Index for Latino children. Medium segregation metros were defined as the median segregation value, and the two metros above and the two below the median segregation value. *Source:* Tabulations by <http://DiversityData.org> of 2000 U.S. Census.

minority and white children; in other words, the disparity is larger in areas with the highest level of residential segregation between minority children and white children. We return to the concept of double jeopardy later in the discussion of the literature on child resilience.

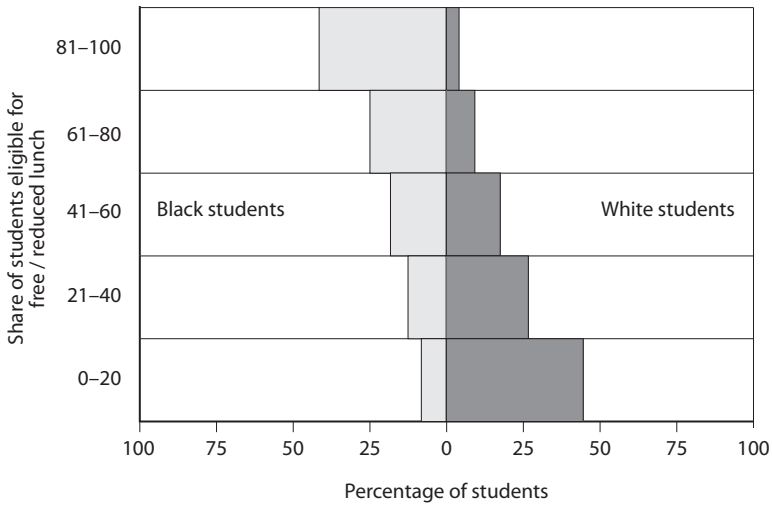
### **Triple Jeopardy: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in School Context**

In the United States attendance at most public elementary schools is neighborhood-based, and the level of neighborhood (that is, residential) segregation is high (Iceland et al. 2002). Therefore, vast racial and ethnic disparities in neighborhood poverty go hand-in-hand with vast racial and ethnic disparities in school poverty, underscoring a strong structural link between neighborhood and school context (Logan 2002a). This means that not only are black and Latino children more likely than white children to experience double jeopardy, but they are also more likely to experience “triple jeopardy”: to face challenging developmental contexts in their families, their neighborhoods, and their schools—all at the same time. These challenges at multiple levels may compromise the resilience of black and Latino children.

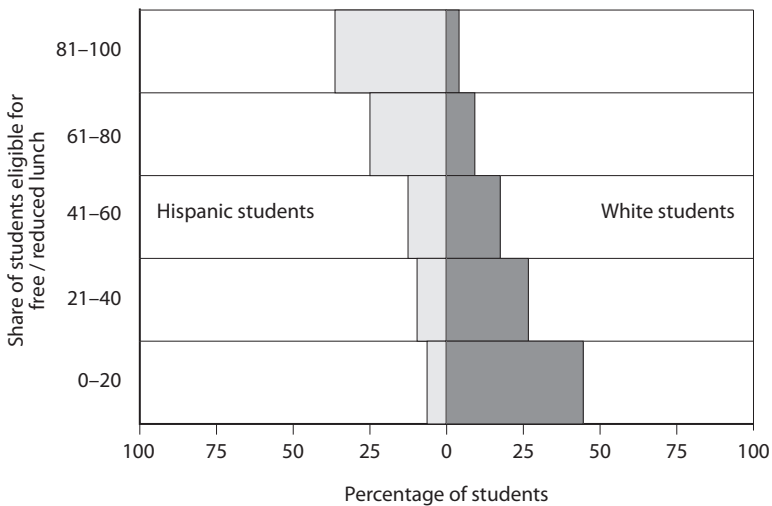
Figures 12.8 and 12.9 show the unequal school context experienced by U.S. elementary-school children across the largest metropolitan areas in 2007 and 2008. These include those eighty-eight metro areas of the largest hundred in which at least 90 percent of students attend schools reporting valid data on free or reduced lunch eligibility. While 45 percent of white children attend schools in which less than 20 percent of the student population is poor, only 7 percent of black students and 8 percent of Latino students attend schools with such low levels of poverty. In contrast, 39 percent of black and 40 percent of Latino students attend schools where more than 80 percent of the student population is poor, while only 4 percent of white students attend such highly disadvantaged schools. In many metropolitan areas the disparities are even greater than the national figures (McArdle and Acevedo-Garcia 2010).

### **Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Access to Other Developmental Settings**

In addition to documenting disparities in neighborhoods and schools, research has revealed significant disparities in access to other supportive developmental contexts, such as high-quality preschool programs. Black children are more likely than white children to participate in preschool



**Figure 12.8.** Percentage of black and white students attending schools by free and reduced lunch eligibility, 2007-08. *Note:* Includes those eighty-eight of the one hundred largest metro areas that report valid free and reduced lunch data for at least 90 percent of students. Low-income students defined as those eligible for free or reduced lunch. *Source:* Calculations by <http://DiversityData.org> of the National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2007-08.



**Figure 12.9.** Percentage of Hispanic and white students attending schools by free and reduced lunch eligibility, 2007-08. *Note:* Includes those eighty-eight of the one hundred largest metro areas that report valid free and reduced lunch data for at least 90 percent of students. Low-income students defined as those eligible for free or reduced lunch. *Source:* Calculations by <http://DiversityData.org> of the National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2007-08.

education, while Latino children are less likely: 23 percent of Latino three-year-olds were enrolled in preschool in 2000, compared with 49 percent and 43 percent of their black and white peers, respectively. However, the preschool programs to which black and Latino children have access are of lower quality than those available to white children (Magnuson and Waldfogel 2005). We do not know the extent to which disparities in preschool education arise from high levels of residential segregation and an unequal geography of opportunity, as data are not available on whether children enrolled in preschool attend programs in their neighborhood of residence. However, we do know that black and Latino children are more likely to attend public preschool programs such as Head Start; such programs may be more likely to be neighborhood-based than other programs.

### **ECOLOGICAL MODELS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT: WHERE IS RACIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY?**

Although there is a vast and rich literature on contextual influences on child development, the majority of this work does not discuss the implications of population patterns of inequality in the supportive developmental contexts highlighted earlier in this chapter. In most instances even when racial and ethnic differences are addressed in the literature, the implications of limited overlap in developmental contexts, and the ways in which environments disadvantage minority children, are not.

In *The Ecology of Human Development*, researcher Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained the importance of nested ecological levels for human development—for example, the individual, family, school, and neighborhood levels. As they develop, children are influenced not only by their immediate family but also by other more distant environments. For instance, the enactment of a federal early childhood education policy may influence a local early childhood education program, which in turn influences a child. Although the research on child development focuses largely on the context of the family unit, and while most empirical evidence relates to the influence of this context, Bronfenbrenner stressed that “whether parents can perform effectively in their child-rearing roles within the family depends on role demands, stresses, and supports emanating from other settings” (ibid.: 7). Bronfenbrenner notes that acknowledging that child development depends on both individual-level characteristics and environmental influences is not remarkable per se. However, actual theoretical developments and empirical research exploring the interplay between the individual and the environment are scarce.



Bronfenbrenner's work provides a lens for examining contextual influences on developmental processes. He defined the *exosystem* as contexts in which the child is not directly involved but that can nevertheless influence the child's development, such as policies that affect parental working conditions, which in turn influence the amount and quality of parent-child interaction (*ibid.*). He examined the ways in which power, particularly functioning within social networks, affects the exosystem, which in turn influences children. Bronfenbrenner hypothesized that the developmental potential of the family setting is enhanced by supportive links with external settings, specifically those that can offer access to resources. These two concepts (exosystem and supportive links) are important for understanding the implications of double—and triple—jeopardy, which may result in more limited supportive links between minority families and other settings and thus diminish the developmental potential of minority families.

Although most ecological models of child development do not discuss explicitly that there is a racially and ethnically unequal distribution of the supportive contexts that allow children to achieve positive developmental outcomes, there are important exceptions, a sample of which we discuss here (García Coll et al. 1996; Chase-Lansdale and Gordon 1996; Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008). In 1996 researcher Cynthia García Coll (García Coll et al. 1996: 1,893) stated that “there is no theoretical or empirical reason to assume that individual primary development processes operate differently for children of color than for Caucasian children in Western society. . . . However, developmental differentiation, beyond that related to constitutionally based individual differences, is largely a function of the dynamic interaction between the child and both proximal and distal ecologies.” She articulated the need to include social stratification into ecological models because “most of the prevalent conceptual frameworks [of child development] do not emphasize the social stratification system, or the social positions that comprise the scaffolding or structure of the system (i.e., social class, ethnicity, and race) and the processes and consequences that these relative positions engender for a child's development” (*ibid.*: 1,892).

It is surprising that today, more than a decade later, García Coll's assessment of the child development literature still holds true; this speaks to the ongoing need for conceptual integration. García Coll also suggested that some measures of child cognitive and social development may be biased, as they ignore that racial and ethnic minority children may successfully adapt to their more challenging environments by displaying behaviors that are not typically considered “adaptive.” In a similar vein the researcher

Michael Ungar (Ungar et al. 2008) noted that young people who are racially marginalized may have their own distinct ways to gain access to the resources needed to ensure their psychosocial development. Another example is researcher Edward Morris's ethnography of black girls' experiences in schools (Morris 2007). This account described how black girls were expected to conform to behavior that ignored their racialized position in society. For example, black girls' "loud" or "assertive" behavior, for which they are often criticized by their teachers, may be a result of learning to defend themselves against negative stereotypes about black women.

One implication of these studies is that processes of child development may vary by race and ethnicity, because developmental contexts are unequally distributed by race and ethnicity. For example, whether child behaviors are adaptive or not may depend on the quality of developmental contexts. In his account of growing up as a white Irish Catholic boy in the Southie neighborhood of Boston, Michael Patrick MacDonald (1999) relates a story of contextual adversity that we have come to associate with young men of color—another example of racialized assumptions about developmental contexts. The book illustrates a couple of important points. First, young white men exposed to adverse contexts (including violence and poverty) also tend to have poor developmental outcomes; being the victim of street violence is one extreme example. Second, as a society, we regard young white men growing up in such developmental contexts as an exception, while growing up in such environments is considered the norm for young men of color.

The extent of inequality in developmental contexts is so great that it presents methodological challenges for understanding the effect of contextual influences on children of different racial or ethnic groups (Acevedo-Garcia and Osypuk 2008). In his study of children in Chicago, researcher Robert J. Sampson argued that distributions of neighborhood poverty are so unequal by race that it would not be methodologically sound to compare the effect of neighborhood environment on developmental outcomes among black and white children (Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008). Sampson and his colleagues examined several definitions of concentrated disadvantage, varying the level of neighborhood exposure to poverty for an initial sample of 2,226 children. When they defined concentrated disadvantage based on the bottom quartile of neighborhood poverty based on the national distribution of neighborhoods, some white and Latino children were indeed exposed but almost all black children were exposed (97 percent). When the definition of concentrated disadvantage was made more stringent (that is, living in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 30

percent or higher), only 5 percent of whites were exposed to concentrated disadvantage. It was only by using a lower threshold for poverty that these authors might have included whites and even most Latinos in their sample, but at that point nearly all blacks would have been at risk of exposure to concentrated disadvantage. The researchers therefore focused solely on black children “to gain the advantage of eliminating the differences between racial groups in the process of selection into disadvantaged neighborhoods while still being able to study the full distribution of neighborhood environments that blacks experience” (ibid.: 849).

The large racial and ethnic inequality in child developmental context has at least two research implications. First, to overcome the problem of limited overlap in developmental contexts, we may need to stratify analyses by race and ethnicity to estimate contextual effects (ibid.). Second, we may need to develop measures of child development that reflect adaptive processes in the racialized contexts that children face (García Coll et al. 1996). Bronfenbrenner (1979) has emphasized the transactional, or interactive, nature of development, noting that social contexts are not only a static setting for development. There are bidirectional influences between the child and his or her environments, and those environments can influence each other. For example, not only is a child affected by the quality of care he or she receives, but also a child may impact the behavior of his or her caregivers. Bronfenbrenner also noted that the majority of research describes contexts only in broad strokes but does not specify the processes through which children adapt to such contexts.

Research may contrast cognitive outcomes between children in black and white families, but the developmental context and processes are not specified. Although these two approaches would improve our understanding of child development, they are not sufficient because the population-level effect of the unequal distributions of developmental contexts is not estimated. For example, studies often sample children from a limited range of the distribution of a particular developmental context (such as high-risk neighborhoods), resulting in an incomplete picture of racial and ethnic inequality and its consequences (Acevedo-Garcia and Osypuk 2008). Before we turn to the implications of an unequal geography of opportunity, we examine what is known about contextual influences on child development.

### CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

This section highlights examples of well-established contextual influences on child development—for comprehensive reviews of the literature, see

the work of Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993) and Tama Leventhal (2000). After reviewing the findings, we discuss the extent to which this important body of research addresses the effect of racial and ethnic inequality in developmental contexts. The majority of empirical research in this area focuses on the family as the main developmental context of children (Cooper et al. 2005; Bernat and Resnick 2006; Henrich, Brookmeyer, and Shahar 2005; Bradley and Corwyn 2002; Klebanov et al. 1998; Whiteside-Mansell et al. 2009; Eamon 2002). The family environment is often defined as family socioeconomic status (for example, poverty) and household interpersonal relations (such as conflict between the parents).

There is increasing research on the development of the brain in early childhood and on the negative effects of stressors on brain development (Hackman and Farah 2009). In this work the child's context is understood as his or her family environment, mediated by the parent or the caregiver. Researcher Leanne Whiteside-Mansell (Whiteside-Mansell et al. 2009) has described the degree to which maternal warmth (including physical responsiveness like hugging as well as emotional responsiveness like talking to the child) and harsh discipline practices (including excessive use of spanking, yelling, scolding) toward the child might explain the link between interpartner conflict (conflictual relations between the parents) and young children's social development in a large nonclinical sample of racially diverse preschoolers. This study showed that harsh discipline acts as a mediator between interpartner conflict and child-behavior problems (externalizing and internalizing behavior) on the one hand and deficits in social skills on the other.

There is less empirical evidence on more distal contexts of child development, such as schools (Bernat and Resnick 2006; Henrich, Brookmeyer, and Shahar 2005; Bradley and Corwyn 2002) and neighborhoods (McLoyd 1998; Attar, Guerra, and Tolan 1994; Bradley and Corwyn 2002; Caughy and O'Campo 2006; Klebanov et al. 1998; Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993). However, a large body of work has documented the effects of neighborhood and school context above and beyond the effect of family factors.

### **Neighborhood Effects**

In their review of neighborhood and child and adolescent outcomes, the researchers Tama Leventhal and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (2000) have suggested links between neighborhood socioeconomic status and residential stability with academic achievement, behavior problems, juvenile delin-

quency, and to a lesser extent teenage sexuality and childbearing. The researcher Robert J. Sampson (Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008) found that, on average, living in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood reduced the verbal ability of black children (measured by the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children vocabulary test and the Wide Range Achievement Test reading examination) by about four points, a magnitude that is similar to the effect of missing a year or more of schooling. Children were followed for up to seven years after the initial assessment. Similarly, researcher Dafna E. Kohen (2002) has found that children's verbal ability scores (the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–Revised) were negatively associated with residing in neighborhoods with poor residents and with low social cohesion. The researcher Margaret O'Brien Caughy (Caughy and O'Campo 2006: 148) has found that both social capital and neighborhood poverty were related (positively and negatively, respectively) to preschoolers' cognitive development (using the Kaufman-Assessment Battery for Children Simultaneous Processing score).

Coauthors Margaret Caughy, Saundra Nettles, and Patricia O'Campo (2008) have showed that both neighborhood socioeconomic impoverishment and negative social climate (for example, physical and social disorder in the neighborhood) contribute to child-behavior problems. The researchers concluded that there is increasing evidence that "child behavior problems are not only a function of processes at the individual and family level but are also influenced by characteristics of the neighborhoods in which children live" (*ibid.*: 47).<sup>3</sup> Some neighborhood studies have shown an effect of neighborhood poverty over and above the influence of positive parental involvement—that is, parenting (as an intervening variable) does not mediate or explain the relationship between neighborhood poverty and child behavior problems. Caughy (Caughy and O'Campo 2006) has showed that parental eliciting behavior (defined by willingness to answer questions, being sensitive to the child's feelings, and talking to the child about his or her interests), parental engagement in joint activities, and engaging in routine daily activities with the child all differed significantly by neighborhood. When they explored neighborhood impoverishment and parent-child joint activities, researchers found that both factors importantly contributed to differences in the problem-solving skills of African American children between three and four-and-a-half years-old: a lower level of neighborhood impoverishment and more parental engagement in joint activities were both related to better problem-solving skills.

The body of research on neighborhood effects, discussed earlier in relation to child development, continues to grow. However, most of the empiri-

cal evidence in this area comes from nonexperimental, cross-sectional studies, and thus causality between neighborhood influences and developmental outcomes cannot be adequately established (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). These methodological limitations are also true of most of the research on school effects that we address in the next section. One experimental study, *Moving to Opportunity*, has shown positive effects of moving from high- to low-poverty neighborhoods on both women's and girls' mental health (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development et al. 2003; Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2004; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003). A significant puzzle emerged from the *Moving to Opportunity* research: although girls benefited from moving to lower-poverty neighborhoods, boys did not. Qualitative research conducted by the Urban Institute suggests that girls are particularly vulnerable in high-poverty neighborhoods, due largely to pressures for early sexual initiation and other forms of gender-based harassment and violence (Popkin, Leventhal, and Weismann 2010).

Although the neighborhood-effects literature addresses contextual influences, it often ignores the implications of large racial and ethnic disparities in the populationwide distributions of developmental contexts. Individual neighborhoods are nested within and influenced by the larger economic and social context (including residential segregation and an unequal geography of opportunity) of a larger metropolitan area. This metropolitan context has been well documented in demography and urban studies, but the child development literature remains focused on the effects of individual neighborhoods. There are several implications of decontextualizing neighborhoods from their metropolitan areas. Of particular concern are sampling frames of extant neighborhood studies. In instances in which the sample is exclusively from the central cities (for example, the *Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods*), the study may underestimate racial and ethnic health disparities. For example, analyzing neighborhood effects only in a large city excludes suburban neighborhoods, where whites and higher socioeconomic status residents live in disproportionate numbers and may therefore underestimate racial and ethnic disparity, since the most advantaged part of the neighborhood distribution is not included in the analysis (Acevedo-Garcia and Osypuk 2008).

A main research question in the neighborhood effects literature is whether neighborhood context exerts an independent influence on child development—that is, an effect above and beyond family influences. However, wide racial and ethnic differences in neighborhood environments may have significant effects on disparities in child development, and this

is regardless of whether the effect of neighborhood context is independent of family factors (that is, above and beyond family factors) or mediated by family factors.

### School Effects

Unlike the literature on neighborhood effects, the literature on academic achievement is explicit about the racial gap, as well as about racial and ethnic inequality in school contexts and its effects on the developmental trajectories of children of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. In a review of the issue, researcher George Farkas (2002) observed that racial and ethnic minority students typically attend racially isolated, low-performing elementary schools, which also sets them up to enroll in lower-track courses within lower-performing middle and high schools with less challenging academic climates. In other words students who fall behind early tend to fall farther behind as they reach higher grade levels. Racial and ethnic minority students have fewer opportunities to learn—whether in the classroom, via student-teacher interactions, over the summer through parent-student or student-peer interactions, or via teachers' expectations, which drive student effort and behavior.

Farkas (*ibid.*: 20) reported that “other things being equal, both white and black students in high minority schools show lower academic performance than those in schools with lower concentrations of black students.” Consequently, lesser school-readiness development in the preschool period, combined with racially and economically isolated elementary schools, leads to lesser skill development during the elementary school period. This in turn leads to lower-level placement in lower-performing middle and high schools and to a flatter achievement trajectory from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Farkas points to a number of factors that contribute to this trajectory: inferior school resources, including lower teacher skills (where teachers with higher skills are drawn to more organized and higher-performing work environments), lower teacher expectations of students, higher student and teacher turnover, placement into lower ability groups and special education, grade retention, summer fallback (losing over the summer what was gained during the school year, often because of few enrichment activities), placement into lower-track courses in middle and high school, and weaker academic climates in schools.

Previous analyses of the well-known Equality of Educational Opportunity study suggested that a student's family background is more important than school social composition and school resources for understanding

student outcomes. However, researchers Geoffrey Borman and Maritza Dowling's (2010) recent reanalysis, which uses a different statistical technique to separate the effects of school environment and family background, arrives at a different conclusion. These authors found that attending a high-poverty school or a highly segregated black school had a significant negative effect on student achievement outcomes, above and beyond the effect of individual poverty or minority status. Specifically, both the racial and ethnic and socioeconomic composition of a school were 1.75 times more important than a student's individual race and ethnicity or social class for understanding educational outcomes.

An ecological framework would suggest that developmental risks increase with exposure to multiple contexts that provide limited resources to support child development. As Gary Evans (2004: 1) has stated: "The accumulation of multiple environmental risks rather than singular risk exposure may be an especially pathogenic aspect of childhood poverty." Some studies offer insights into the effects of double jeopardy. For example, in a review of the relationship between socioeconomic status and child development, coauthors Robert Bradley and Robert Corwyn (2002) have summarized the literature on teachers' negative attitudes and low expectations regarding low socioeconomic status, students' abilities, academic achievement, and behavior. They showed that those attitudes and expectations often become self-fulfilling prophecies, because children from low socioeconomic status families have less exposure to cognitively stimulating materials and experiences at home *coupled with* low teacher expectations and interactions, resulting in low performance and disruptive behavior. From scholarly work on the academic achievement gap, we can derive two important lessons for research on racial and ethnic inequality in other developmental contexts: (1) greater specificity about school context and processes, beyond broad-stroke depictions of school poverty, and (2) an emphasis on developmental trajectories beyond looking at outcomes at one point in time.

### **RESILIENCE: CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN HIGH-RISK CONTEXTS**

The study of positive development does not inherently account for development under stress. In contrast, the related concept of child resilience is reserved for populations in which successful development is beyond what would be expected given the challenges of social interaction (Ungar and Lerner 2008). The research on resilience may therefore be relevant



to the experiences of minority children. However, as a result of its focus on children in high-risk contexts, the resilience literature does not fully consider the range of developmental experiences for minority children and especially for white children. The researcher Ann S. Masten (1990) has defined resilience in childhood as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.” Each individual possesses the potential for resilience, but it is the delicate interplay of individual characteristics and the broader environment that determines one’s level of resilience (Tusaie and Dyer 2004). Resilience is not measured directly but by comparing two constructs: risk and positive adaptation (Luthar and Zelazo 2003; Luthar and Zigler 1991). The researcher Suniya Luthar has noted that positive adaptation is more likely to occur when protective factors are present. Protective factors can be present at the level of the child (for example, the IQ), the parent (maternal depression, educational attainment), the family (family cohesion), the neighborhood (poverty), and the school (school attachment). A child’s development and health are more likely to be compromised if he or she experiences challenges at multiple levels (Resnick et al. 1997). For example, a child living in a family with limited resources to support his or her development may have a more difficult experience if his or her other developmental contexts, such as the neighborhood and school, also offer limited resources.

Let us refer back to the third element of the definition of child health by the Institute of Medicine and to the disparities in family, neighborhood, and school environment discussed earlier. From the definition and the racial and ethnic disparities in developmental contexts, it follows that unless the underlying distributions of positive adaptation (or protective factors) varied by race and ethnicity and significantly favored minority children—which we have no reason to assume—minority children would have lower chances of successfully adapting to their environments, because those environments are riskier than those of white children.

A few studies have shown that resilient children living in challenging neighborhoods underscored the positive aspects of their neighborhoods and were able to navigate the neighborhood stressors, unlike nonresilient children (Eiseman, Cove, and Popkin 2005). Although aware of neighborhood dangers, resilient children appeared to manage those dangers by taking precautions, such as going indoors at night or avoiding certain areas. However, some nonresilient children seemed overwhelmed by neighborhood pressures and chose to remain inside and to stay away from their neighbors (*ibid.*). Although the resilience literature is helpful in understanding which factors allow some children to navigate risky neighborhood envi-

ronments, it is also essential to recognize which children are more likely to live in those environments. For instance, the 2005 National Survey of Children's Health showed that although about 92 percent of white parents reported living in neighborhoods where they usually or always felt safe, only about 69 percent of black and Latino parents did. Furthermore, some evidence suggests that racial and ethnic disparities in *perceptions* of neighborhood environment underestimate disparities in objective neighborhood conditions, including poverty levels (Osypuk and Acevedo-Garcia 2009).

The literature on resilience discusses a range of protective factors, some of which seem amenable to policy interventions. The researcher Michael D. Resnick (Resnick et al. 1997) has explored the role of risk and protective factors for four domains of adolescent health (grades 7 through 12). In that study, perceived school connectedness (for example, students' perceptions that teachers treat students fairly, that they are close to people at school, and that they feel part of their school) was protective against emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, violence, use of three substances (cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana), and young age of first sexual experience. Luthar (2003) has recounted Edward Zigler's (Zigler, Finn-Stevenson, and Stern 1997) work examining school factors that may promote resilience, measured by better adaptation on eight dimensions of social competence by age fifteen. These protective factors included prior participation in a preschool program, prevention of mental health problems among elementary school children who show early signs of maladjustment, and reorganization of adult school-time responsibilities to provide additional support to children who need it.

In sum, because of its focus on high-risk environments, and given the unequal distributions of developmental contexts, the resilience literature speaks disproportionately to the experience of racial and ethnic minority children. However, this racialized and unequal context is often not discussed. The resilience literature considers "community" as context as well as an agent of change (Chaskin 2008). The community-as-context perspective focuses on communities as local environments providing a set of both risk and protective factors that promote or inhibit, enhance or diminish resilience and well-being *within* communities (ibid.). The second perspective focuses on communities not just in terms of their influences on individuals and families, but as *actors* that respond to adversity (ibid.).

Both aspects of community are critical for understanding the developmental context of racial and ethnic minority children. We want to document whether minority children are differentially exposed to communities where contextual risks outweigh protective factors, and also under what

circumstances minority communities develop effective responses to adversity. For example, if “school connectedness” is a protective factor, is it a resource that is equally available to minority and white children across school contexts? If it is not—for example, if it is less available to minority children in segregated, high-poverty schools—then what are the population-level effects of differential exposure to high-risk contexts coupled with differential availability of protective factors? Or, how do minority communities respond to contextual adversity to protect children, and how does this affect their ability to “mitigate, resist, or undo” structural inequality, to paraphrase the researcher Arline Geronimus (2000)?

### **A CHILD DEVELOPMENT–SPECIFIC DEFINITION OF THE GEOGRAPHY OF OPPORTUNITY**

There has been limited intersection—and cross-fertilization—of the child development and racial and ethnic stratification literature. As a result, we have limited information on the implications of unequal distributions of supportive developmental contexts. In Bronfenbrenner’s terms (1979), we have comprehensive broad-stroke information on racial and ethnic differences in developmental contexts (e.g., neighborhood poverty and school poverty), but more limited information on racial and ethnic differences in specific resources that foster child development (such as high-quality after-school programs)—and even less information on the processes through which children adapt to such contexts.

Most of the literature on neighborhood effects has used neighborhood poverty as a proxy for neighborhood environment (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993; Attar, Guerra, and Tolan 1994; McLoyd 1998; Klebanov et al. 1998; Bradley and Corwyn 2002; Caughy and O’Campo 2006). Although poverty is a good indicator of neighborhood environment and the neighborhood-opportunity structure (Galster and Killen 1995), it does not capture explicitly the availability of resources and stressors related to child development. Neighborhood poverty matters, but so do other neighborhood conditions such as public safety, the level of trust among neighbors, availability of safe recreational spaces, and access to affordable, healthy food. These aspects of neighborhood environment have all been shown to influence child health and development (Acevedo-García et al. 2008). However, because of logistical and cost limitations, nuanced contextual descriptions are often limited to a few neighborhoods or to one or a couple of cities.

Moving away from a focus on neighborhood poverty, Sampson has argued that “to consider only neighborhood poverty as the causal treat-

ment of interest is too narrow, because poverty is strongly associated with other ecological characteristics, such as percentage of single-parent families, percentage of family members on welfare and unemployed, and racial segregation” (Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008: 846). Sampson therefore measured concentrated disadvantage by focusing on six neighborhood characteristics: welfare receipt, poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, racial composition (percentage black), and proportion of children (percentage of children under age eighteen). We depart from Sampson’s work regarding the use of a measure of disadvantage that conflates racial composition (that is, percentage black) with indicators of disadvantage or lack of opportunity. We prefer the approach developed by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University, which has created an opportunity index that does not include race. This racially neutral opportunity index can then be correlated with neighborhood racial composition to show which racial and ethnic groups have—and do not have—access to opportunity.

As discussed earlier, the central premise of a geography-of-opportunity framework is that residents of a metropolitan area are situated within a context of neighborhood-based opportunities that shape their quality of life (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008; de Souza Briggs 2005; Iannotta, Ross, and National Research Council 2002; powell 2005). We have defined “opportunity neighborhoods” as neighborhoods that support healthy child development (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2008). Characterizing opportunity neighborhoods requires selecting variables that are indicative of high (or low) opportunity. Indicators could either be impediments to opportunity (negative neighborhood factors include high neighborhood poverty) or conduits to opportunity (positive factors include an abundance of jobs). The various opportunity indicators are analyzed relative to the other neighborhoods within the region by standardizing through the use of z-scores, which indicate how far and in what direction a particular value of the indicator deviates from its distribution’s mean, expressed in units of its distribution’s standard deviation. This allows data for a neighborhood to be measured based on its relative distance from the data average for the entire region.

The final “opportunity index” for each neighborhood is based on the average of all z-scores for all indicators by category (for example, education [see Kirp 2007], economic mobility and transportation, health and environment, and neighborhood quality). The corresponding level of opportunity (very low, low, moderate, high, very high) is determined by sorting all neighborhoods into quintiles (that is, five equal segments) based on their opportunity-index scores ordered from low to high values. Thus

the neighborhoods identified as “very high” opportunity represent the top 20 percent of scores. Conversely, neighborhoods identified as “very low” opportunity represent the bottom 20 percent of scores.

An approach similar to the Kirwan Institute’s can be applied to building an opportunity index specific to child development. This approach would allow depiction of the entire neighborhood distribution in a given region; this would include identification of neighborhoods across the spectrum of resources for healthy child development as well as racial and ethnic disparities in access to supportive developmental contexts. Alternatively, the index could also be constructed from data on a group of metropolitan areas to show differences in developmental contexts of children across regions. An index of place-based opportunity specific to child development should incorporate indicators of the availability and quality of institutional resources and services (such as early childhood education, schools, and after-school programs), social environment (youth victimization rates), social capital (levels of trust, action, and network interaction within a community), collective efficacy (levels of mutual trust, common willingness to intervene for the common good [indicating informal social control], and sense of connectedness [social cohesion] among a community), built environment (safe parks and playgrounds and open spaces), and mainstream commercial establishments (grocery stores and supermarkets, banks) (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Gallagher 2006, 2007, and 2010; Cradock et al. 2005).

Although there is value in combining indicators into a single opportunity index, it would also be important to look at the different components separately to understand their effects on specific aspects of child health and development. For example, if we were examining neighborhood resources for families with children under age three, we would look at availability of early childhood programs, Head Start, and home visitation programs for at-risk parents. If we were interested in whether neighborhoods offer resources to prevent childhood obesity, we would look at another subset of indicators, including safety, availability of safe parks and playgrounds, and food deserts (that is, geographic areas that have no or sparsely located mainstream grocery stores and thus may have limited or no access to fresh and affordable foods).

Although there is value in collecting information on neighborhood processes (such as whether neighbors take responsibility for supervising children’s behavior as they play and interact outside the home), a child neighborhood-opportunity index should be constructed from indicators available from public-use data sources, covering a large number of areas.

Only this type of data and coverage would allow us to monitor disparities in opportunity within metropolitan areas across neighborhoods and also to compare disparities in opportunity across metropolitan areas. While case studies of certain metropolitan areas can add indicators available locally, a standard index would allow a better assessment of racial and ethnic equity in children's access to opportunity neighborhoods and allow for comparison by neighborhood. The child-development literature can inform an opportunity index specific to the resources and risk that most matter to children. Such an index can be used both for monitoring racial and ethnic disparities in developmental contexts and for examining the effects of supportive (or challenging, for example, resource poor) contexts on child outcomes.

#### **A GEOGRAPHY-OF-OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

The data presented earlier suggest that at the population level, the risk-protective factor set discussed in the resilience literature is heavily weighted toward risks for black and Latino children. In the mid-1990s the researcher George Galster (Galster and Killen 1995; Galster and Mikelsons 1995) provided a framework for understanding the implications of distributional issues by applying the constructs of "neighborhood opportunity structure" and "geography of opportunity" to examining youth development outcomes. However, his conceptual work was published in the housing-studies literature and has not been widely used in studies of child development. As mentioned earlier, child development studies often focus on children in a small number of neighborhoods or neighborhoods in a particular section of a metropolitan area, such as the central city. These studies of neighborhood effects do not allow us to compare developmental outcomes across space—that is, across urban and suburban neighborhoods with vastly different opportunity structures.

One important result of an unequal geography of opportunity is the existence of racial and ethnic disparities in objective conditions within developmental contexts, such as high-poverty neighborhoods and schools. In addition to highlighting this result, Galster's work connected the geography of opportunity concept with individual-level psychological processes such as decision making (Galster and Killen 1995; Galster and Mikelsons 1995). In the case of child development, the decision-making processes of both parents and children are important, as both parents and children may affect developmental outcomes, and segregation and an unequal geography

of opportunity affect decision making at different levels. First, even if parents are interested in choosing a supportive context for their children (for example, a safe neighborhood or a high-quality school), minority parents choose neighborhoods and schools from a far more limited set of options than white parents.

In the case of neighborhoods, constraints arise from the operation of housing markets. Coauthors David Harris and Nancy McArdle (2004) showed that in the Boston area, housing affordability alone did not explain the residential choices of black and Latino households. Other factors that contribute to explaining segregation patterns include housing discrimination, hostility, and preferences (for example, minority avoidance of white areas). Although the relative importance of these factors is not known, the indisputable fact is that Latino and black families face more limited options when choosing a neighborhood. In addition to constraining neighborhood and school choices across metropolitan areas, an unequal geography of opportunity also influences parental and youth decision making at the neighborhood level. Galster (Galster and Killen 1995) has proposed that through their peer networks, minority youth perceive a glass ceiling created by an unequal metropolitan opportunity structure. He writes that youth make decisions on the basis of perceived opportunities (Galster and Killen 1995: 8). These perceptions reflect objective structural constraints, such as housing discrimination. Facing a restricted choice set predisposes minority youth to adopt decision-making methods characterized by a short-term focus and less consideration of the long-term consequences. For instance, youths who face restricted educational and employment opportunities may decide to drop out of school or participate in activities that put them at risk (for example, gang activity).

### **Racial and Ethnic Inequality in Developmental-context Choice Sets**

Galster's (*ibid.*) framework constitutes a rare example of how to combine an inequality perspective on the neighborhood and metropolitan opportunity structure (a perspective informed by social stratification theory and empirical work) and child and youth development processes at the individual level. We reviewed the literature for integrative work similar to Galster's and found only a few studies.<sup>4</sup>

Based on interviews with forty-eight urban, Midwestern parents during the nine months before, during, and after they selected a new school for their children entering the sixth or ninth grade, the scholar Courtney

Bell (2009) found that differences in the choice *process* did not explain why some parents chose failing schools. Instead, *differences in choice sets* explained, in part, why parents chose the schools they did. Parents of different social class backgrounds were not choosing from the same sets of schools. Middle-class parents' choice sets contained, on average, a greater percentage of nonfailing (65 percent versus 38 percent), selective (71 percent versus 37 percent), and tuition-based schools (50 percent versus 14 percent) than did poor and working-class parents' choice sets. In addition, just 16 percent of poor and working-class parents had at least two nonfailing schools in their choice sets, as compared with 58 percent of middle-class parents. These differences were statistically significant and consistent with the pattern of parents' final school selections. Like Galster and Killen (1995), Bell (2009) found that social networks play an important role in decision making.

Middle-class parents' social networks put them in contact with a higher proportion of nonfailing, selective, and tuition-based schools than did poor and working-class parents' networks. The differential contact provided by social networks was not trivial given the large proportion of schools nominated by social connections. Class-based choice-set differences are likely to have implications for children. For example, many poor and working-class families may not even consider schools that would give their children an educational advantage. The status quo (or default) choices vary considerably by class. Across social classes, parents selected schools in the "customary enrollment patterns," defined as the expected sequence of schools (elementary, middle, and high) a child attends. The customary enrollment pattern is often related to a system of feeder schools and provides a set of "ready-made next school(s)" for most parents.

Across social classes, parents selected schools in the customary school enrollment pattern at similar rates: 52 percent of middle-class parents and 56 percent of poor and working-class parents. Customary enrollment patterns, though, provided access to very different schools. Poor and working-class parents' customary enrollment patterns provided little access to nonfailing, selective, and tuition-based schools. Of the schools within their customary enrollment patterns, only 44 percent were nonfailing, 23 percent were selective, and 10 percent were tuition-based, while middle-class customary enrollment patterns were made up of schools that were 57 percent nonfailing, 73 percent selective, and 50 percent tuition-based. Parents used similar *processes*—social networks and customary attendance patterns—to develop their choice sets. *But these similar processes did not yield the same results.* Middle-class parents' social networks and

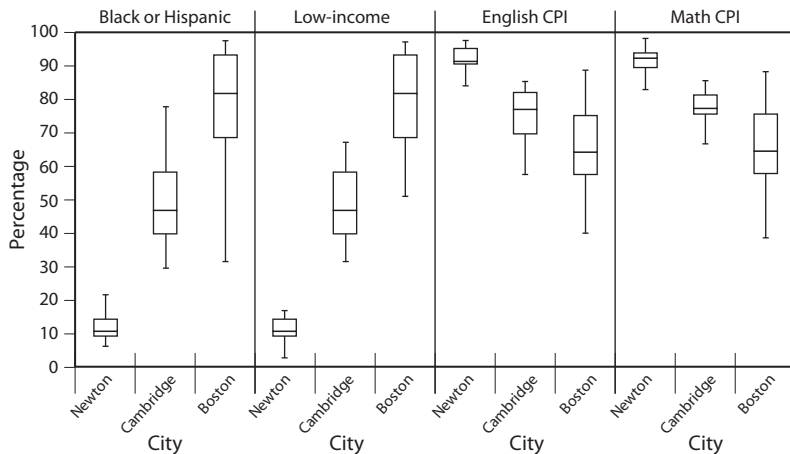


customary enrollment patterns provided greater contact with nonfailing, selective, and tuition-based schools than did poor and working-class parents' networks and enrollment patterns.

Bell (2009) then considered the racial and ethnic and geographic dimensions of differences in school-choice sets. Not surprisingly, in her sample the majority of parents in city schools were from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds and their children attended schools that were predominantly minority. Most suburban parents were white and their children attended predominantly white schools. Therefore, although many parents expressed a preference for more racially and ethnically diverse schools, those schools simply did not exist in their school-choice sets. The data discussed earlier show vastly different distributions of school social environment (for example, school poverty by race and ethnicity), which provides another indication of the more constrained school-choice sets facing black and Latino children as compared with white children.

Figure 12.10 helps us quantify the extent of school-choice set overlap for children of different groups using the example of the Boston metropolitan area. We examine school characteristics for Boston Public Schools to illustrate that the choice sets of children in Boston proper (who are disproportionately of minority background compared with the rest of the metropolitan area) are more constrained than the choice sets of children in adjacent suburbs. The boxplots portray the 2008–09 school year distributions (maximum, seventy-fifth percentile, median, twenty-fifth percentile, and minimum) of four characteristics of public elementary schools that contain a fourth grade in the Boston Public Schools and in the neighboring communities of Newton (a primarily white suburb) and Cambridge (a racially diverse city that is part of the central-city portion of the Boston metropolitan area).

Characteristics include school's combined black and Latino percentage of enrollment; percentage of enrollment that is eligible for free or reduced lunch; and fourth-grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Composite Performance Indices (CPI), which measure the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency in English language arts and mathematics. A CPI of 100 in a given content area means that all students have reached proficiency. For all characteristics the distributions of school districts (the choice sets) are markedly different, with Newton exhibiting much lower shares of black and Latino and low-income students and much higher MCAS scores than Boston schools, and Cambridge falling somewhere in between.<sup>5</sup> For the two demographic characteristics and for the math MCAS, the interquartile range (the percentages or scores that



**Figure 12.10.** Distribution of schools with fourth grades: Percentage of black or Hispanic, percentage low-income, and English and math MCAS Composite Performance Indices, 2008–09. *Note:* “Low-income” refers to free/reduced lunch eligibility. A Composite Performance Index (CPI) of one hundred means that all students have reached proficiency. Excludes charter and private schools. *Source:* Tabulations by <http://DiversityData.org> of data from Boston Public Schools and Massachusetts Department of Education.

make up the middle 50 percent of the distribution) for each district does not overlap at all with the other districts. For the English MCAS, the interquartile range overlaps only between the Cambridge and Boston schools.

By severely limiting the choice sets of supportive developmental contexts for minority families, an unequal geography of opportunity creates racially and ethnically segmented pathways for child development. However, as the researcher Cynthia García Coll has stated, and as we discussed earlier, even highly contextualized models of child development have not adequately incorporated this inequality framework (García Coll et al. 1996).

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS: IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOOD AND SCHOOL-CHOICE SETS FOR ALL CHILDREN**

From the 2005 *Carmen Thompson v. HUD* decision: “Geographic considerations, economic limitations, population shifts, etc. have rendered it impossible to effect a meaningful degree of desegregation of public housing by redistributing the public housing population of Baltimore City within the City limits. . . . In sum, the Court finds that HUD failed to consider

regionally-oriented desegregation and integration policies, despite the fact that Baltimore City is contiguous to, and linked by public transportation and roads to, Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties and in close proximity to the other counties in the Baltimore Region.<sup>96</sup> The 2005 Court decision found the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development responsible for housing discrimination against minority families living in public housing in Baltimore (powell 2005). Of special relevance to this chapter is the Court's view that HUD failed to consider housing options for these families *across the entire Baltimore region*—another expression of racialized assumptions about where people should live. Similarly, other housing and education policy choices that affect the development of children are predicated on assumptions that the developmental contexts of minority children should be limited to some parts of the metropolitan area, instead of considering the full spectrum of neighborhood and school choices across the entire region.

The majority of children attend a school in their neighborhood or school district of residence, while programs that allow children to go to schools outside their residential area (for example, district or interdistrict school integration programs) include only a small proportion of children. For example, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 73 percent of students in grades 1 through 12 in 2007 attended public schools to which parents report the student was assigned; 16 percent attended public schools where parents reported that the student's school was chosen (such as magnet schools, charter schools and inter- and intradistrict choice programs); and 12 percent attended private schools (Grady and Bielick 2010).

An important push for improving the developmental contexts of children comes from the research and policy advocacy on early childhood education. The available evidence suggests that early childhood education and family-support programs for children at risk (that is, children who experience challenging developmental contexts such as family poverty) are successful as well as cost-effective (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Consequently, a strong policy recommendation from child development experts is the expansion of early childhood education programs (Kirp 2007). Another set of policy recommendations might reduce the exposure of young children to double and triple jeopardy (defined as exposure to challenging contexts at multiple levels, such as family poverty coupled with neighborhood and school poverty).

Several policy solutions exist for correcting the limited access to opportunity neighborhoods and schools facing black and Latino children. Some of these policy areas, such as housing, are not traditionally considered part

of policy that affects children. However, an ecological perspective suggests that broader social policies that affect children's exosystems also influence child development (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Policies to correct or alleviate an unequal geography of opportunity have been characterized as people- and place-based policies (Katz 2004; de Souza Briggs 2005). The goal of people-based policies is to expand and improve neighborhood and school choices for people across entire regions or metropolitan areas. Place-based policies focus on improving the physical and social infrastructure of highly disadvantaged neighborhoods (through economic development and housing revitalization, for example) or intervening in highly disadvantaged (that is, underperforming) schools (Katz 2004).

In addition to explicitly addressing and quantifying resources for healthy child development, an opportunity framework is helpful because addressing racial and ethnic segregation per se is difficult in a policy environment in which race-based solutions are being challenged. For example, a 2007 Supreme Court decision ruled against school-integration programs that seek to improve access of minority children to quality schools by assigning individual students based on their race (United States Supreme Court 2007). Although limited in scope given the small number of children they affect, school-integration programs are one of very few policy tools based on the premise that residential segregation is at the root of disparities affecting children. In the future, policy remedies to correct racial and ethnic disparities will increasingly have to invoke principles other than racial integration. Even school-integration programs that rely on socioeconomic status—and not on race—as an assignment criterion are at risk, as illustrated by a recent North Carolina court decision to dismantle an income-based busing policy (Brown 2010).

People-based neighborhood policies are dedicated to improving the ability of minority families to find housing (and possibly as a corollary, schools) in better-off suburban neighborhoods. People-based policies include those that improve the neighborhood choices of families across the entire metropolitan area. Those policies include increasing rental and affordable housing in the suburbs and strengthening enforcement of housing antidiscrimination laws. There is empirical evidence that housing policies influence access to better neighborhoods. Policies with demonstrated positive effects on neighborhood choices include housing vouchers for rental assistance (versus traditional public-housing projects) (Turner 1998); “housing mobility”—that is, housing-search counseling and support in rental assistance (versus providing only a housing subsidy or voucher) (Goering and Feins 2003); and inclusionary land-use regulations (versus

regulations that limit high-density or multifamily housing) (Pendall, Puentes, and Martin 2006).

Certain housing policies such as the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program have been shown to improve families' ability to find housing in better neighborhoods. For example, on average, families on Section 8 are able to find housing in neighborhoods with lower poverty rates than families living in traditional place-based public housing developments (Turner 1998). However, black and Latino families are not as successful in finding housing in low-poverty neighborhoods as white families, presumably because of more limited information about housing choices and discrimination by landlords in suburban communities (*ibid.*). Therefore, policies to improve neighborhood choices for minority families should incorporate proactive assistance to find housing in better neighborhoods. Evidence from Moving to Opportunity (MTO) and other housing programs indicates that housing-search counseling improves neighborhood choices (Acevedo-Garcia et al. 2004; Tegeler, Cunningham, and Turner 2005). This piece is particularly relevant in helping families find neighborhoods that offer better opportunities for their children. As discussed earlier, an unequal geography of opportunity effectively limits the neighborhood choice set of minority families as well as the scope of their choice making generally (for example, choosing schools) (Galster and Killen 1995; Bell 2009).

For a better neighborhood (one with a low level of poverty) to offer improved opportunities to children, two things are necessary. First, in addition to a general indicator such as low poverty, the neighborhood should have institutional and social resources to foster healthy child development. The development of an opportunity-index specific to child development may help identify such child-friendly communities within a metropolitan region or help to identify communities that need improvement in this regard. Second, even if families move into neighborhoods with opportunities for children, residing in such communities needs to go hand-in-hand with links to institutional and social resources. Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity study referenced earlier has shown that some families who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods did not always have access to better schools, primarily because most families (about 70 percent) stayed in the same school district (Ferryman et al. 2008).<sup>7</sup> This evidence provides support for the need to link housing choices to actual opportunities for children by, for example, using measures of school quality and social environment (such as percentile rank on state exams, poverty rate, and exposure to white classmates and students with limited English proficiency) to define neighborhoods of opportunity and provide information and counseling

to assist families in moving to those communities. The aim of housing policy should be to improve the choice sets of developmental contexts for all children.

An example of a place-based intervention that has received great attention for its effects on children is the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). The Department of Education has recently developed a neighborhood-based initiative, called Promise Neighborhoods, modeled after the HCZ.<sup>8</sup> Although some elements of Promise Neighborhoods replicate those found in previous community-development initiatives, two elements are novel: a strong focus on a pipeline approach to child development (addressing the needs of children and parents from "cradle to college") and a commitment to serving a large number of families to have a communitywide impact (PolicyLink 2009). Although by definition a place-based initiative like the HCZ does not seek to improve neighborhood or school choices beyond the community, the program is considering equity of opportunity in a regional sense. Its evaluation framework indicates that Promise Neighborhoods sites will be asked to analyze not only their neighborhood data, but also data for the larger jurisdictions (cities and school districts) and the regions within which they are located, and set targets related to closing the gaps in health and academic success between children within Promise Neighborhoods and children in the region (Jean-Louis et al. 2010).

Although people-based policies are often compared to place-based policies, housing-policy experts increasingly agree that both people- and place-based policies are needed (Katz 2004). As coauthors Deborah L. McKoy, Jeffrey M. Vincent, and Ariel H. Bierbaum show in chapter 16 in this volume, there is increasing awareness that housing and school policies should be connected. For example, families on housing assistance should be encouraged to use their housing subsidies in areas with high-performing schools. Some housing interventions, such as a housing desegregation program in Baltimore (powell 2005) and a recent initiative to build affordable housing in Massachusetts, have used the Kirwan Institute opportunity index to identify and help direct families and new housing to high-opportunity areas (Massachusetts Housing Partnership 2009).<sup>9</sup> An opportunity index specific to child and youth development could have similar policy applications. Public policy should therefore link families to neighborhoods and schools with resources to support healthy child development. An opportunity framework specific to child development may inform policies aimed at improving neighborhood and school choices for all children. An opportunity framework is more tenable from a legal and policy standpoint than a race-based framework and may also yield favorable results.

### CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this chapter we have argued for integration of the research on contextual influences on child development and child resilience and the research on racial and ethnic inequality (including child racial and ethnic neighborhood and school segregation, and unequal geography of opportunity). The main elements of this integrative approach are the following:

- Processes of residential and school segregation result in systematic racial and ethnic differences in the quality of the developmental contexts of children (for example, neighborhood and school environments).
- Processes of residential and school segregation result in racial and ethnic differences in simultaneous exposure to challenging (that is, high-risk) developmental contexts (including double and triple jeopardy), which may result in racial and ethnic differences in child resilience.
- Both limited overlap between the distributions of developmental contexts and racial and ethnic differences in double or triple jeopardy may lead to racially and ethnically segmented trajectories of child development.
- The geography of opportunity structure may constrain decision making related to child and youth development by limiting the choice sets of supportive developmental contexts available to minority families.
- To the extent that the developmental contexts of children are place-based (that is, linked to their neighborhood of residence), an unequal geography of opportunity may result in larger racial and ethnic disparities in access to other high-quality developmental contexts (for example, childcare, early childhood education, after-school programs).
- Public policies should expand and improve the choice sets of developmental contexts facing racial and ethnic minority families (for example, neighborhood and school choices).

Research on child development would benefit from the geography-of-opportunity focus articulated throughout this chapter. Such a direction explicitly highlights racial and ethnic inequity in the developmental contexts that children experience, concentrates our data collection and analy-

ses on documenting both population-level disparities and the effects of unequal contexts on developmental processes, and identifies policies that hold promise for improving and equalizing the developmental contexts of all children.

## NOTES

*Epigraphs:* Meghan Tench, “Questions Follow Lapse on Wellesley Metco Bus,” *Boston Globe*, September 6, 2003; and Jenna Russell, “Report on METCO Bus Mix-up Faults ‘Assumptions’ on Race,” *Boston Globe*, February 1, 2004.

1. These tabulations of the American Community Survey are available online at <http://www.DiversityData.org>; data not shown.

2. The persistent racial disparity in birth outcomes—including low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams), preterm birth (babies born before thirty-seven weeks of gestation), and infant mortality (death during the first year of life)—is one of the most startling health trends in the United States. Low birth weight and preterm birth are strong predictors of infant mortality. For these three health indicators there is a large racial disparity disfavoring blacks. For example, infants born to black women are 260 grams lighter on average, are over 50 percent more likely to be born preterm as infants born to non-Hispanic white women, and more than twice as likely to die in the first year of life (Martin et al. 2006; Mathews and MacDorman 2007).

3. In a national sample of Canadian preschoolers Dafna E. Kohen (2002) also found that behavior problems were more common when children lived in neighborhoods that had fewer affluent residents, high unemployment rates, and low cohesion (akin to social capital).

4. In their book *Nudge*, coauthors Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (2008) have discussed how the context in which individuals make choices (that is, their choice set and how it is ordered) influences decision making. Most of the examples used in the book are not specific to children. However, their chapter on improving school choices is relevant. Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, if a child is attending an “underperforming school,” parents have the right to request a school transfer or supportive services. There is evidence that very few parents do so, however. The authors attributed this to “status quo bias” as well as school districts’ practice of providing limited information on the school choices available and the cumbersome process of applying for a transfer. In addition to the cognitive biases described by the authors, a major structural constraint they do not factor in is that NCLB only allows children to transfer *within* their own school district, which severely limits their choice set.

5. In fact, Newton schools with the maximum share of black and Hispanic or low-income students have lower shares of those students than do the Cambridge and Boston schools with the minimum shares of black and Hispanic or low-income students.

6. This is from the Memorandum of Decision from the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland’s 2005 *Carmen Thompson v. HUD* case, pages 11 and 13.

7. In contrast to MTO, an earlier housing-desegregation program (Gautreaux), which resulted from a court-mandated desegregation decision in Chicago in the



1970s and was thus based explicitly on neighborhood racial-composition criteria (instead of on neighborhood poverty criteria), did provide access to better schools: about 88 percent of children who moved to the suburbs attended schools with above-average levels of academic achievement (Rosenbaum and DeLuca 2009).

8. To become a Promise Neighborhood, an applicant would have to show that the proposed area has a childhood poverty rate of at least 30 percent, with additional indicators of childhood disadvantage, or a childhood poverty rate of at least 40 percent.

9. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) has committed five million dollars in zero-percent-interest second-mortgage financing to support the development of affordable rental housing in suburban and high-opportunity communities. The new Neighborhood Rental Initiative Program (NRI) is targeted toward 225 communities characterized by such factors as good schools, proximity to jobs, higher housing costs, and a shortage of affordable housing. This initiative followed the 2009 report by the Kirwan Institute on the state of opportunity across Massachusetts (Reece et al. 2009).

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**THIRTEEN****APPROACHING THE HEALTH AND  
WELL-BEING OF BOYS AND MEN OF COLOR  
THROUGH TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE**

Theodore Corbin, Sandra L. Bloom,  
Ann Wilson, Linda Rich, and John A. Rich

**ABSTRACT**

This chapter deals with trauma-informed approaches to the health of boys and men of color. We begin with an overview of what we know about the health of this population, with a life course perspective understanding the health issues that affect boys, adolescents, and men. We pay particular attention to the social conditions of trauma and adversity and provide critical data about the incidence and prevalence of these conditions. The chapter then shifts to a focus on trauma theory, wherein we describe the evidence that there is a relationship between physical and psychological health and early childhood adversity and trauma. Foundational to this discussion is the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, which demonstrates the profound fact that early life adversity has an effect on future chronic disease.

Next we apply trauma theory to a number of systems that serve boys and men of color. In particular, we focus on the health and public health system and its response to interpersonal violence. This focus provides an example of the overlap of multiple systems that are critical to determining the health of traumatized men. We describe the literature suggesting that violence is a chronic recurrent problem, exacerbated by the hostile social context in which many young men of color live. We then outline the dearth of literature that depicts posttraumatic stress disorder in urban male populations. We illustrate these points by tracing a hypothetical young man through systems

Based on this description, we apply trauma-informed principles to the systems cited earlier. We describe existing efforts throughout the United States that serve as promising practices that incorporate trauma-informed principles into the care and development of boys and men of color. The chapter concludes by describing how a trauma-informed system would serve boys and men of color throughout their lives.

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## INTRODUCTION

Men of color are disproportionately affected by ill health and social inequality. Men of color are also disproportionately victims of violence. This results in higher rates of death by homicide than any other group of males as well as higher rates of nonfatal injury. Nonfatal injury itself carries with it the risk of reinjury and death. Less often recognized are the psychological wounds of violence, trauma, and adversity, which may lead to intrusive symptoms of posttraumatic stress and depression and may predispose them to substance use and further violence.

Recognition of the effects of violence and trauma among combat veterans and victims of sexual assault has provided insight into the damaging effects of trauma. However, these lessons are seldom applied to the experiences of men of color. Recent approaches to trauma-informed care show that by understanding how violence has affected the lives of men of color through racism, rejection, and poverty and applying emerging trauma-informed frameworks, we can more effectively serve the needs of this population. The alternative to the disconnected, traumatized, and traumatizing systems that young men and boys of color encounter is a trauma-informed health and human service delivery system. More specifically, trauma-informed efforts to decrease violent injury in health-care settings, and efforts to interrupt the cycle of violence in the community demonstrate the promise of trauma-informed approaches to the health of boys and men of color.

## DATA AND BACKGROUND

Young African American males (ages fifteen through twenty-nine) have a death rate from all causes that is 1.5 times the rate for young white males (Kaiser 2006). Young African American males die from homicide at a rate that is nineteen times higher than white males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four (CDC 2008). HIV death rates for African American men between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four are more than seven times

higher than the HIV death rate for white men. Despite these health disparities, more than a third of African American men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine lack health insurance (Kaiser 2006). With regard to social impact on health outcomes in 2005, the percentage of African American men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine who were in prison was nearly seven times that of their white male counterparts (Kaiser 2006). Also in that year, nearly 20 percent of African American men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five were unemployed, compared with 8 percent of white men. In November 2009 the *Washington Post* reported: “Joblessness for 16-to-24 year old Black men reached Great Depression proportions—34.5 percent in October, more than three times the rate for the general U.S. population” (Haynes 2009).

The homicide rate for Latino males ages fifteen to twenty-four is six times higher than the rate for similarly aged white males. Latino males have almost three times the AIDS rate as white males and are 2.5 times as likely to die from HIV/AIDS as white males (Heron 2010). Despite these health problems, 56 percent of Latino males ages eighteen to twenty-nine lack health insurance, more than any racial or ethnic group in this age range (Kaiser 2006). In examining the social impact on health for Latino males, only 61 percent have a high school diploma, which is the lowest high school graduation percentage of any racial or ethnic group. The percentage of young Latino men ages eighteen to twenty-nine who are in prison is more than twice the percentage of white men in the same age group (Kaiser 2006).

These data show that African American men and Latino men have poorer health status and social position. Violence in particular disproportionately affects men and boys of color. According to national statistics on violence among ten- to twenty-four-year-old males, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans, and the second-leading cause of death for Latinos. Young African American men have a firearm-related death rate 10.1 times that of young white men; young Latino men have a rate that is 3.3 times greater (CDC 2008). Nonfatal violence disproportionately affects men and boys of color as well. In 2008 more than 518,000 males ages ten to twenty-four were treated in emergency departments for nonfatal violent injuries (ibid.). Although these statistics represent all young males between ten and twenty-four, 25 percent of those violently injured were African American, despite making up only 16 percent of the population in this age group. Forty-four percent of patients with a penetrating injury suffer another penetrating injury within the following five years, and 20 percent are dead (Sims et al. 1989).

Research shows that boys and men of color are two times more likely than white boys and men to have witnessed domestic violence and to have been exposed to other forms of violence. African American children and youth are nearly three times as likely to witness a shooting, bombing, or riot. Similarly, Latino children and youth in the state are just over two times more likely to witness a shooting, bombing, or riot than white children and youth. The odds that an African American child or youth will have someone close to him murdered is 7.8 times higher than for a white child or youth; a Latino child's odds are 7.4 times higher than for a white child or youth (Finkelhor et al. 2005).

A child's exposure to violence can have dire consequences for his development. Children exposed to violence are more likely to have behavior problems (Peled, Jaffe, and Edleson 1995). Children who witness violence are at increased risk for becoming victims themselves, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, abusing alcohol or drugs, running away from home, or engaging in criminal activity (McAlister-Groves 2002). Studies have found that males are more likely than females to be victims and witnesses of violent acts (Fitzpatrick and Boldizar 1993; Schwab-Stone et al. 1995; Singer et al. 1995; Selner-O'Hagan et al. 1998). Prevalence studies comparing adolescents who differed in ethnicity or social class found that exposure to violence was greater among ethnic minorities. Several studies have reported higher rates of exposure among African Americans or African American and Latino/Latina students combined than among white youth (Fitzpatrick and Boldizar 1993; Schwab-Stone et al. 1995; Singer et al. 1995; Selner-O'Hagan et al. 1998). Medical and public health literature supports the finding that trauma contributes to poor physical and psychological health. This literature provides insight into the mechanisms through which trauma does harm.

### DEFINING TRAUMA

We refer to psychological trauma as experiences that are emotionally painful and distressing and that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. Although there has been some debate about how to define a traumatic event, most definitions agree that when internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat, the experience is one of trauma. The powerlessness that a person experiences is a primary trait of traumatization (Van der Kolk 2005). Trauma has sometimes been defined to mean circumstances that are outside normal human experience. This definition does not hold true with the boys and young men of color who are the focus

of this project, however. For this group and for others, trauma can occur often and become part of the common human experience. Besides violence, assault, and other traumatic events, we assert that subtler and more insidious forms of trauma—such as discrimination, racism, oppression, and poverty, which are often experienced by African American and Latino males—are pervasive. When experienced chronically, these events have a cumulative impact that can be life-altering. Such traumas are directly related to chronic fear and anxiety, with serious long-term effects on health and other life outcomes for males of color.

We do not yet fully understand the multiple ways in which repetitive and multigenerational exposure to violence, oppression, neglect, discrimination, criminalization, and poverty can affect individuals and entire communities. This work focuses on boys and young men of color who have experienced and are still experiencing such forms of structural and systemic violence. The term (or trauma-related term) “adversity” helps to clarify what people of color experience in the United States. It includes not just experiences outside usual human experience, but those that have become all too common a part of everyday existence.

### **Trauma Theory**

“Trauma theory” is a relatively recent concept that emerged in the health-care environment during the 1970s, mostly in connection with studies of Vietnam veterans and other survivor groups (including Holocaust survivors, abused women and children, disaster survivors, refugees, and victims of sexual assault). In 1980 the now common syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder was added as a new category in the American Psychiatric Association’s official manual of mental disorders. Trauma theory represents a fundamental shift in thinking from the supposition that those who have experienced psychological trauma are either “sick” or deficient in moral character to the notion that they are “injured” and in need of healing. To make this shift regarding boys and men of color, it is critical to understand the effects of trauma on the brain and the body over the course of a lifetime.

### **Brain Development in Children**

The human brain develops from the bottom up—or more precisely from the simplest functions to the most complex. The brain stem houses the most basic functions needed for survival (heart rate, body temperature, and blood

pressure). From there the midbrain develops, controlling the functions of sleep, appetite, digestion, and arousal. Next to develop is the limbic brain, the seat of emotions and memory. The last portion to develop is the cortex, which houses the highest functions of the brain—abstract thinking, reasoning, and other complex thought processes needed for problem solving, judgment, impulse control, and emotional regulation. It is important to note that the lower, more primitive parts of the brain are less plastic (that is, they are less able to rewire and change). Plasticity increases with higher brain functions, with the cortex being the most adaptive to change and rewiring.

The spinal cord and brain stem of a newborn child are almost fully developed, ready to help the newborn achieve its only biologically determined goal: survival. Otherwise, the brain of the newborn from the midbrain through the cortex is primitive and highly underdeveloped. The brain is designed for continued growth of these higher functions through touch, movement, and interaction—experiences that all serve to wire the brain for growth and more advanced functioning. The quality of this brain development is directly linked to the quality of these early childhood experiences. The window from birth to age three is critical to forming the basic mental processes that children rely on throughout their lives. We now have a wide body of research indicating that the brains of children who are exposed to chronic trauma and stress are wired differently from those of children whose experiences have been more secure. Two key developmental processes are adversely affected by exposure to trauma: neurodevelopment (the physical and biological growth of the brain) and psychosocial development (personality development, capacity for relationships, development of moral values and social conduct).

When experiencing stress or threat, the brain's fight-or-flight response is activated through increased production of the hormone cortisol. Although cortisol production can be protective in emergencies, its level is toxic in situations of chronic stress and can damage or kill neurons in critical regions of the brain. Especially damaging is the experience of stressors that occur in an unpredictable fashion (for example, when an individual is confronted with community violence or domestic violence). In extreme cases chronic exposure to trauma causes a state of hyperarousal or dissociation. Hyperarousal is characterized by an elevated heart rate, slightly elevated body temperature, and constant anxiety. Dissociation involves an internalized response in which the child shuts down, detaches, or "freezes" as a maladaptive way of managing overwhelming emotions or situations. The younger the child is, the more likely he or she will respond with dissocia-

tion. Children are more susceptible to posttraumatic stress because in most situations they are helpless and incapable of either fight or flight. Through the repeated experience of overwhelming stress, children may abandon the notion that they can affect the course of their lives in a positive way. The result is a state of learned helplessness. When trauma or neglect happens early in life and is left untreated, the injuries sustained reverberate at all ensuing developmental stages.

### **Effects of Trauma into Adulthood**

The relationship between traumatic childhood experiences and physical and emotional health outcomes in adult life is at the core of the landmark Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (hereafter known as “the ACE study”), a collaborative effort of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Kaiser Health Plan’s Department of Preventative Medicine in San Diego, California. The results of the study were first published in 1998. The ACE study involved the participation of more than seventeen thousand middle-aged (the average age was fifty-seven), middle-class Americans who agreed to help researchers examine the following nine categories of childhood abuse and household dysfunction:

- Recurrent physical abuse
- Recurrent emotional abuse
- Contact sexual abuse
- An alcohol or drug abuser in the household
- An incarcerated household member
- A household member who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal
- The mother is treated violently
- One or no parents are in the household
- Emotional or physical neglect

Each participant received an ACE score between zero and nine, reflecting the number of the above experiences he or she can claim (for example, a score of three indicates that a participant experienced three of the above ACEs). Nearly two-thirds of ACE study participants reported at least one ACE, and more than one in five reported three or more. The higher the ACE score, the greater the likelihood of chronic disease in adulthood.

The study claims two major findings. The first is that ACEs are much more common than anticipated or recognized, even in the middle-class population that participated in the study, all of whom received health care via a large HMO. It is reasonable to presume that the prevalence of ACEs is significantly higher among young African American and Latino males, many of whom live with chronic stress and do not have a regular source of health care. The study's second major finding is that ACEs have a powerful correlation to health outcomes later in life. As the ACE score increases, so does the risk of an array of social and health problems, including social, emotional, and cognitive impairment; the adoption of health-risk behaviors; disease, disability, and social problems; and early death. ACEs have a strong influence on rates of teen pregnancy, likelihood of smoking or substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, the risk of revictimization, performance in the work force, and the stability of relationships. The higher the ACE score, the greater the risk of heart disease, lung disease, liver disease, suicide, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, and other leading causes of death (Felitti et al. 1998).

#### **TRAUMA AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH**

The researchers Clare Xanthos, Henrie Treadwell, and their colleagues (2010) have detailed data showing that men of color are disproportionately affected by adverse social factors, including poverty, lack of education, lack of social support, and lack of access to social capital when compared with other racial, ethnic, and gender groups in the United States. They are also disproportionately affected by other environmental issues, including living in unsafe neighborhoods with unstable economic and physical infrastructure. Attempts to address the health of boys and men of color must consider the impact that these social determinants have on health. From a trauma-informed perspective constant exposure to such negative factors in daily life constitutes a form of trauma. The epidemiologist Michael Marmot (2004), who has written extensively about the social determinants of health, argues that while material deprivation due to poverty may in itself predispose one to disease (for example, through lack of access to healthy foods or exposure to toxic environmental elements), a major way that poverty exerts its effect is through chronic stress.

Marmot and others have studied the effect not only of poverty but also of social position and inequality. His work suggests that African Americans, because of their position at the margins of U.S. society, suffer the most damaging effects. African Americans are lower on the social hierarchy



than any other group. This in turn limits their ability to develop a sense of empowerment and control over their lives. Constant bombardment with racism, discrimination, and lack of opportunity furthers this disempowerment. Marmot and others have argued that it is this adverse social position that creates conditions of chronic stress in the body. Chronic stress is characterized by ongoing activation of the fight-or-flight system that is normally activated only under acute self-protective stress. Over time this hyperactivation can lead to a range of chronic physical disease and behavioral maladaptations. Marmot's work has shown that even among employed workers, occupying a lower position in the social hierarchy is related to higher rates of death from cardiovascular disease (Marmot 2004).

Marmot's work also showed that social engagement—the ability to participate as a full member of society and the attendant self-esteem—is critical to positive health outcomes. This has particular relevance for the health of boys and men of color. As noted earlier, young African American men have remarkably high rates of unemployment and incarceration and low rates of college enrollment, even lower than those for African American women. As we consider the effects of stress on these men, we conclude that simply addressing poverty and education, for example, in the short run is not enough. Ultimately, through trauma-informed approaches, we can address the adverse effects of chronic stress that come from the social position of this population. Providers of care to this population should be versed in trauma-informed care to help address the issues faced by men and boys of color. These issues would normally go ignored when the young man puts on the mask of masculinity to avoid intimate details of his history of adversity. Uncovering this hidden trauma and focusing on healing is what is needed. Critical to any intervention that addresses the health of men of color is the improvement of systems that serve them and with which they interact. If denied opportunity by those systems, members of this population will face further health problems.

### **Understanding Masculinity in the Context of Improving Health Outcomes**

In attempting to understand the health of men of color, it is important to examine masculinity, both in its biological and social contexts. Levels of the hormone testosterone increase after puberty to amounts that are twenty times higher than in the prepubescent male. The presence of testosterone is related to aggressiveness and violence, although the social context

in which men live can largely either mitigate or exacerbate these biological effects (Zitzmann and Nieschlag 2001). The presence of testosterone predisposes adult males to a number of diseases, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer (like prostate cancer) that are sensitive to the presence of this hormone.

Perhaps more significant than the biological effects of maleness is the meaning of masculinity in American society. Masculinity is often associated with such qualities as aggressiveness, strength, independence, emotional distance, self-control, and hypersexuality. Many boys are socialized to understand the meaning of manhood both implicitly and explicitly based on images of masculinity in the media and in their day-to-day lives. In neighborhoods where parents feel that their children are likely to be assaulted or bullied, parents may teach their children that fighting back is part of “being a man,” rather than walking away or negotiating, which may be perceived as weak.

Studies have shown that men who hold traditional notions of what it means to “be a man,” such as the ones just described, are more likely to engage in high-risk behavior (Courtenay, McCreary, and Merighti 2002). These studies also find that African American men are more likely to hold these traditional ideas of masculinity. This tendency toward high-risk behavior accounts in part for the higher rates of accident-related illness among men. Men of color who see themselves as powerless may be more likely to try to assert their manhood through risky behaviors (Courtenay 2000; Courtenay and Keeling 2000). The psychologist Will Courtenay and others have argued that risk-taking behavior provides a way for marginalized males to prove themselves as men because they lack more productive ways to show power.

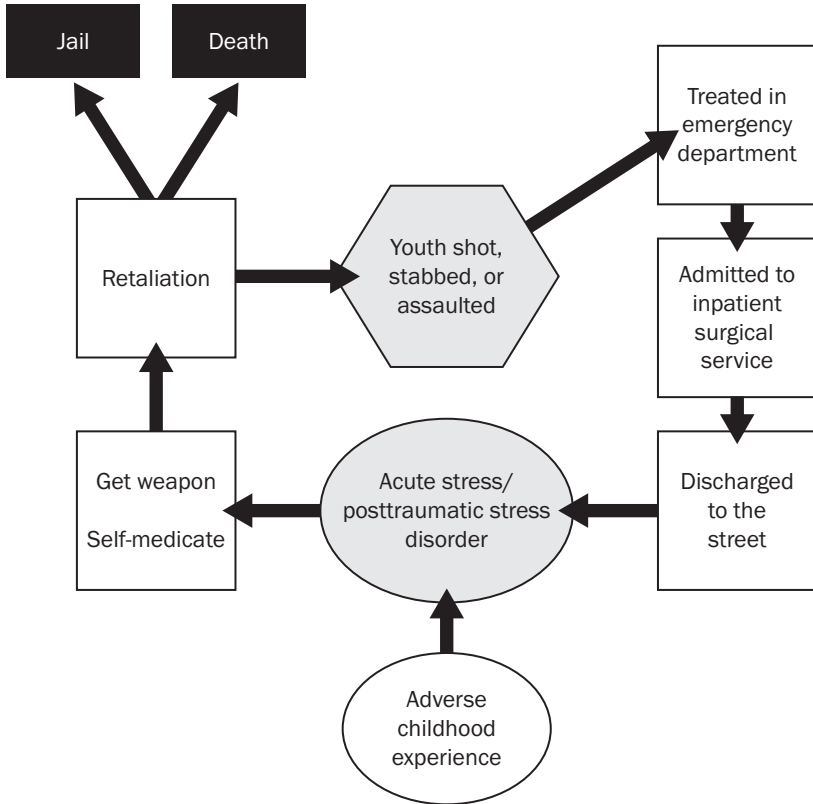
The powerful messages about what it means to be a man constrain the ways in which men talk about their trauma. Early in life, most boys are taught to be emotionally unexpressive, self-reliant, and to behave in stereotypically “masculine” ways. When they then face trauma in such forms as childhood physical abuse, childhood sexual abuse, witnessing violence against their mothers, seeing violence in their communities, or being victims of community violence, they may feel ashamed to display their pain or to seek comfort (Mejia 2005). The powerful overt and subliminal messages of masculinity make it difficult for men to acknowledge trauma and seek help. Many men perceive that they will be viewed as weak or “unmanly” if they acknowledge their physical and emotional pain. Unable to express their pain in a healthy way, men may self-medicate with alcohol or other drugs.

Other men externalize their pain by committing acts of violence in their communities or against their intimate partners. Thus the trauma experienced by boys and young men of color is often intertwined with coming to terms with their own masculinity and notions of masculinity in general.

Ideas about masculinity have an effect on how and when males access health care throughout their boyhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Social notions of masculinity often portray getting health care as weak and unmanly. For example, men may avoid seeking help from behavioral health services, as they often believe that any acknowledgment of depression or anxiety is a sign of weakness. They may also lack unemployment and health insurance. When they do find their way into medical settings, men often encounter providers who are unsympathetic or unfamiliar with the issues they face. More fundamentally, young adult black and Latino men may lack basic health insurance coverage. Until the recent passage of health-care reform in the United States, even young men covered under their parents' health insurance lost their coverage when they reached the age of nineteen. Fortunately, under the new health-care bill, this coverage is extended through the age of twenty-six.

### **The Problem of Violence as Related to Health**

As providers of medical and emergency care to young people in the inner city, we are able to describe the process of care for young victims of violence as well as the social and psychological factors that can lead to recurrent violence. Figure 13.1 represents the way in which many young people, particularly young men, interact with various systems. A young man is shot, stabbed, or assaulted. If his injuries are thought to be severe enough, he is brought to the emergency department. Depending on the extent of the injury, he might be discharged back into the hostile environment from which he came, or he might be admitted to the trauma in-patient service. In any of these scenarios the young man is eventually discharged. Few facilities are currently equipped to deal with the social and emotional aftereffects of the young man's injuries and medical treatment. He is not prepared for—nor may he be aware of—symptoms of acute or posttraumatic stress. Contributing to the trauma may be multiple adverse childhood experiences that heighten his anxiety, paranoia, and disdain. He gets a weapon and he smokes marijuana to alleviate some of his fears. In his traumatized and intoxicated state, he encounters the person or people who harmed him. He retaliates. He is then headed for reinjury, jail, or death. The cycle is not



**Figure 13.1.** Cycle of Recurrent Violence. *Source:* Author's rendering.

uncommon for boys and young men of color who suffer violence injury. Unfortunately, all too frequently there is no intervention to identify and intervene with these young men and boys. Most often, the young men are left to deal with the impact of the violent incident on their own.

The patient's experience of moving through this system of care is deeply influenced by his trauma experiences earlier in his life. Yet this critical history is routinely unavailable to health-care providers, either because they fail to ask or because the patient lacks sufficient trust in his health-care providers to disclose his history. Most commonly, the competing demands and incentives of care fail to leave space for this critical communication to take place. Consider the case of Eddie (see the sidebar), a patient who is a victim of urban violence.

### **THE CASE OF EDDIE: VICTIM OF URBAN VIOLENCE**

Eddie, a twenty-year-old man of color, arrives at the emergency department with ten gunshot wounds to the back, leg, chest, and arm. The doctors and nurses stabilize him in the emergency room and quickly transport him to the operating room. After surgery he is admitted to the surgical intensive-care unit. Eddie is in critical condition at first but improves after a few days and is transferred to a room on the regular surgical ward. A social worker talks with him and learns more about the night Eddie was shot: On that evening Eddie had gone to a birthday party for a friend. He met a young woman and began to dance with her. He did not realize that the woman had a boyfriend who was also at the party. The boyfriend confronted Eddie and they argued. After a brief scuffle, Eddie walked away, thinking that the argument was over. He went outside and was shot from behind ten times by the girl's boyfriend.

The social worker learns that two years earlier, Eddie had been treated in the emergency department for a stab wound. His wound had been cleaned and stitched up, but Eddie had not been admitted to the hospital because the knife did not penetrate any vital organs or joints. Instead, Eddie returned to the same neighborhood where he was stabbed. At that time no one asked him about whether he was safe, whether he felt fear or anger, or whether he planned to retaliate against the person who had stabbed him. Eddie had to manage on his own. During this time he did not feel safe. He had trouble sleeping and had nightmares about getting stabbed again. Because of these sleeping problems, Eddie started to smoke marijuana. He did this every night and found that it helped him sleep. Occasionally, thinking that more marijuana would help him sleep even better, Eddie smoked too much, which made him paranoid and anxious. His use of marijuana caused other problems as well. Eddie was stopped by police in his neighborhood and was arrested and jailed for possession of marijuana.

Now in the hospital with multiple gunshot wounds, Eddie tells the social worker that he is currently on probation. He also reveals that he has a four-year-old son, but that he and his child's mother do not get along. What the social worker does *not* learn is that as a child, Eddie was neglected by his own parents. When Eddie was two years old, his father went to jail for a gang-related crime, but before that arrest he abused Eddie's mother. Eddie witnessed each episode of violence against his mother. His mother suffered from depression and prescription drug abuse, which precipitated Eddie's removal from the

*(continued)*

**THE CASE OF EDDIE** *(continued)*

home. After six years in several foster homes, Eddie was ultimately returned to his mother. Just a year ago, he witnessed the fatal shooting of a cousin.

Eddie's symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder were never addressed when he was in foster care, in jail, or while on probation. During foster care he never had a chance to talk about the trauma of being separated from his parents or witnessing domestic violence. He had not received any counseling or mentorship while he was in jail, nor had he received referrals to any mental-health services after his release. Like most young men his age, Eddie has internalized strong notions about masculinity and what it means to "be a man." These ideas have influenced how he seeks (or does not seek) health care, how he raises his son, how he behaves when he is placed in danger, and how he reacts when he feels his masculinity is threatened in some way.

Since getting shot, Eddie has been going from system to system—getting health care, trying to get back into school, looking for a job—but none of these systems has helped him heal from his trauma. Each time Eddie has tried to get help, he tells his story all over again. Each time he feels a resurgence of stress and anxiety.

**Trauma as the Problem**

In Eddie's case he has been the recipient of multiple human services throughout his life, including the health care, child welfare and foster care, and juvenile justice systems. No clear picture of him emerges from the records of his interactions with these systems, however. It is not until the critical moment of injury—when he meets a hospital social worker to talk about his bill for medical services—that the picture of a traumatized young man emerges.

We know many young men like Eddie who have experienced trauma and adversity throughout their lives. Yet as they move through the array of systems assigned to help them, their histories of trauma are seldom explored. Even worse, these systems—schools, juvenile justice, courts, health care, mental health—often take a punitive rather than healing approach to these young men, interpreting their symptoms as a sign that they are delinquents or sociopaths rather than as signs of physical and emotional traumatic injury. The systems designed to help these young men thus traumatize them further. The alternative to the disconnected, traumatized,

and traumatizing systems that Eddie has encountered throughout his life is a trauma-informed health and human service delivery system.

Eddie would have benefitted in significant ways from a trauma-informed approach. Such a system would have called for intervention early in his mother's life. The child-protection system would have recognized that substance abuse, victimization, and depression are likely effects of early childhood trauma. A trauma-informed system would have recognized that when Eddie witnessed violence against his mother and ultimately lost his father to prison, Eddie's risk for trauma-related problems and posttraumatic stress would have increased. A trauma-informed system would have addressed the needs of the family as a unit and would have sought to provide healing to each member of this traumatized family to reunify them. For Eddie this would have meant placement in a stable foster home, where all members of the home would have received training to understand the early adversity in Eddie's life. The foster family and child protection staff would have had skills to address Eddie's trauma through therapy, arts, exercise, and other healing modalities. A trauma-informed school system would have worked closely with the foster-care and health-care systems to learn about the early trauma in Eddie's life and to provide trauma-informed learning support, healing after-school activities, safety, and a vision for the future.

A trauma-informed health system would have recognize that early adversity has the potential to promote risky behaviors and chronic disease. Eddie would have been connected to early pediatric care, where screening for trauma, substance abuse, and other risks would have taken place. A trauma-informed pediatric health-care system would have provided strong anticipatory guidance and counseling to Eddie's parents and foster parents about the potential impact of early trauma on their son. Such primary care would also have included education about the danger of keeping firearms in the home and would have supported the child's academic development by coordinating with the school system.

When Eddie had been arrested for possession of marijuana, a trauma-informed justice system would have screened for trauma and considered the possibility that Eddie's substance abuse was related to his past trauma. The most effective step would then have been to divert Eddie from incarceration and toward effective treatment for both his substance use and his past trauma. Trauma-informed rites of passage and mentoring programs that focus on ways to build a safe identity as a man would have been prioritized above imprisonment. A trauma-informed human services delivery system would have recognized that Eddie's past trauma places his own child at

risk as well. Such a system would have intervened actively with parenting services designed specifically for fathers like Eddie and would have considered the challenges that fathers face, along with the often marginalized role they have as parents because they are viewed only as “breadwinner” or “disciplinarian.” Trauma-informed parenting would have helped Eddie see how his early childhood adversity has shaped him and would have helped him avoid the same problems for his son.

Within each of these intersecting systems, staff would understand how their work is connected to the work of other agencies and community-based organizations. They would seek to create a culture of safety that would allow them to engage their traumatized clients and to work in full partnership with their colleagues. Incorporating trauma survivors as peer navigators would help to build meaningful connections with clients. Most important, as Eddie moves among the systems designed to help him and his family, he would be regarded as an individual with a unique history. He would not fear that his past trauma would be revisited each time he reaches out for help. Such a system would not remove Eddie’s own responsibility to make life choices that would expand rather than constrain his freedom. Rather, it would allow him to move from victim to full participant through a process of healing.

### **VIOLENCE PREVENTION AS HEALTH PROMOTION**

The various points of entry into the health-care system for boys and young men of color must be made sensitive to the impact that trauma has had on their lives when appropriate. Unfortunately, many boys and men of color use the emergency department as a source of primary care and are seen there because of nonfatal intentional injuries. Public health practitioners might argue that intervening in the emergency department is a form of tertiary care; however, in addressing trauma, these boys and men of color who are affected by adversity and violence would benefit from assessment and direction for healing past as well as current emotional wounds.

The various points of entry at which boys and young men enter the health-care system present opportunities to address the multiple levels of trauma that affect their daily lives. Trauma-informed practice in emergency departments, primary-care settings, and the justice system could help young men and boys of color choose healing over the more common path of retaliative violence, reinjury, jail, or death. A study by Dr. Joel Fein and colleagues found that “emergency department clinicians recognize the



need for evaluation of youth at risk for violence. They are able to identify violently injured youth, but less often perform risk assessment to guide patients to appropriate follow-up resources” (Fein et al. 2000: 495). Hence clinicians are able to identify violently injured youth but rarely able to delve into uncovering trauma. Emergency providers are especially taxed given the swell of emergency departments with patients and the need to provide speedy care.

At the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Medical Center, Dr. Carnell Cooper, trauma surgeon and director of the Violence Intervention Program, has showed that patients enrolled in their violence-intervention program were three times less likely to be arrested for a violent crime, two times less likely to be convicted of any crime and four times less likely to be convicted for a violent crime (Cooper, Eslinger and Stolley 2006). The violence-intervention program, although based in a health-care setting, has had an impact on the reduction of involvement with the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems (*ibid.*). A study conducted at two urban emergency departments found that “acute stress symptoms assessed in the emergency department in the immediate aftermath of traumatic injury are useful indicators of risk for later posttraumatic stress” (Fein et al. 2002: 836). This applies not only to acute-care settings but to primary-care settings as well.

Based on this evidence, we suggest that a trauma-informed approach to violence prevention that addresses the needs of African American and Latino boys and young men should consider the following:

- Offering trauma-informed training for professional development of judges, law-enforcement personnel, health-care providers, teachers, social-service providers, and other providers who encounter youth who are at risk of involvement in violence.
- Infusing trauma-informed training into the basic education of law, medicine, education, law enforcement, and social services.
- Interrupting the cycle of violence by providing services for victims of violence who are especially vulnerable to recurrent violence and retaliation. Emergency department and hospital-based interventions have the potential to accomplish this.
- Training peer health navigators and mentors in trauma-informed methods and employing them to help youth who are at risk for violence to heal and to navigate difficult systems and reconnect to school and work.

- Incorporating a deep understanding of masculinity and the meaning of respect into violence-prevention efforts at all levels.
- Enhancing violence-prevention curricula with trauma-informed knowledge and principles.
- Creating effective trauma-informed violence-prevention and male-development approaches—especially group-based strategies such as healing circles and trauma-recovery groups—that are acceptable and accessible to men and boys.

A number of models have been identified that embody elements of trauma-informed practice as it relates to boys and men of color. These include the following programs:

*Caught in the Crossfire (Oakland, California)*. The Caught in the Crossfire hospital-based peer intervention program hires young adults who have overcome violence in their own lives to work with youths who are recovering from violent injuries. These highly trained intervention specialists offer long-term case management, links to community services, mentorship through home visits, and follow-up assistance to violently injured youths. The program's mission is to promote positive alternatives to violence and to reduce retaliation, reinjury, and arrest.<sup>1</sup>

*The Wraparound Project (San Francisco General Hospital, San Francisco)*. The San Francisco Wraparound Project's mission is to prevent violent injury and break the cycle of violence in the most vulnerable communities by addressing root causes and risk factors with culturally competent case management and vital community resources. Although physical rehabilitation is provided to victims in the aftermath of injury, services to reduce or eliminate risk factors associated with violent injury are not traditionally offered upon hospital discharge. The Wraparound Project addresses this gap by serving as a vital point of entry. The program provides mentorship and links clients to essential risk-reduction resources. The goal is to reduce injury recidivism and criminal recidivism among San Francisco's most vulnerable citizens.<sup>2</sup>

*National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI) (Hombre Noble/Joven Noble, Los Angeles)*. The NLFFI offers a nationally recognized mentoring program focused on nurturing young fathers as they learn about the growth and development of their children and their responsibilities as fathers.<sup>3</sup> The institute also offers El Joven Noble, a program for young Latino men that seeks to instill positive values, behaviors, and acceptance of personal responsibility through educational and mentoring

activities. This work outlines many of the underlying traditions of Latino culture and blends them with strategies that have been found to encourage and support Latino men as they work to heal their personal pain and to strengthen and maintain their families. This work is deeply grounded in providing services in the context of the family (*la familia*) and endorses for men the notion of *un hombre noble* (a noble man who keeps his word). The National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute is a project of the National Compadres Network in collaboration with Bienvenidos, Inc. and Behavioral Assessment, Inc.

*Barrios Unidos (Santa Cruz, California)*. Barrios Unidos is rooted in the Chicano experience.<sup>4</sup> A central premise of the Barrios Unidos theory of change is the understanding that the identities of Latino and other socio-economically disadvantaged youths are shaped by political and economic forces with little regard for the best interests of this population. The focus of Barrios Unidos programs is to restore a sense of belonging to young people, their families, and communities. The organization is focused on three things: (1) running the Cesar E. Chavez School for Social Change (a charter school that seeks to empower youth to become positive role models of social change); (2) doing community outreach; and (3) encouraging community economic development. Barrios Unidos has developed alongside the work of Jerry Tello, an internationally recognized expert in the areas of family strengthening, community mobilization, and culturally based violence prevention and intervention issues. Tello has extensive experience in the treatment of victims and perpetrators of abuse and in addictive behaviors, with a specialization in working with multiethnic populations, to promote the healing properties of tradition in cultures. Barrios Unidos serves as one of the key community-action projects of the California Wellness Foundation's Public Health Initiative to Prevent Youth Violence.

*Healing Hurt People (Drexel University, Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice, Philadelphia)*. Healing Hurt People (HHP) is the cornerstone programmatic component of the Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice.<sup>5</sup> HHP is a community-focused, hospital-based program designed to reduce recidivism among youth ages twelve to thirty. The program is affiliated with the emergency department at Hahnemann University Hospital and the Drexel University College of Medicine. HHP staff work with youth in the emergency department in an effort to reduce patients' immediate and future need for retaliation and continued connection to violence and crime. When a patient is seen in the emergency department for intentional injury, the hospital staff contacts HHP after wounds are treated and the patient is cleared medically. The program's injury prevention coor-

dinator and community intervention specialist then assess and work with the patient to determine whether he or she would benefit from receiving assistance in bridging services, such as receiving psycho-social therapy or other posthospital care. Next, staff members make sure that the patient has a safe place to go upon discharge and they contact a referral service for him or her. Follow-up occurs through phone calls and scheduled home visits after discharge to confirm that the client has successfully connected to the referred support service. Scheduled home visits by the community intervention specialist or the injury prevention coordinator continue on a periodic basis to assure progress. In some instances HHP staff serves as the patient's navigator to various support services. Weekly reviews are conducted by the interdisciplinary team to ensure the program's effective functioning and to track management of difficult cases.

The stories and examples presented in this chapter suggest that although it will be fruitful to implement trauma-informed practices in health-care settings, a broader, system-level approach is ultimately the best strategy to improve health and decrease violence over the lifespan of boys and men of color. Their lives are touched by multiple systems: health care, juvenile justice, child welfare, and education. By implementing trauma-informed organizational approaches to transform these systems away from a punitive approach toward one that acknowledges and attends to the physical and psychological effects of violence, we will have a much better chance to improve the health and the social position of this critically underserved population.

## NOTES

1. Learn more about the Caught in the Crossfire project at <http://www.youthalive.org/cinc/>.
2. The Wraparound Project is at <http://violenceprevention.surgery.ucsf.edu/>.
3. Learn more about the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute at <http://www.nlffi.org/>.
4. See <http://www.barriosunidos.net/> for more information on the Barrios Unidos program.
5. Healing Hurt People, based at Drexel University's Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice, can be found at <http://www.healinghurtpeople.org>.

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## ON THE OUTSIDE

### *The Psychological and Practical Consequences of Parental Incarceration on Children*

Sarah Lawrence and Jennifer Lynn-Whaley

#### ABSTRACT

Growth in the nation's adult prison systems since the early 1980s has been nothing short of remarkable, and the number of children who have a parent behind bars is significantly higher than it has ever been. More than 1.7 million children under the age of eighteen have a parent in prison or jail. Nearly 7 percent of black children and roughly 2.5 percent of Hispanic children have a parent in prison, compared to 0.9 percent for white children (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). This chapter examines what is known about the circumstances and consequences of incarceration on young men and boys of color over three stages of impact. The first stage looks at the effect arrest and removal of a parent has on a child's life. Next, outcomes associated with the absence of a parent from a child's life during imprisonment are explored. And finally, the impact of reintegration into a child's life is reviewed. A few examples of the consequences of having an incarcerated parent include an increase in financial hardship for children, an increase in the chances of such emotional problems as aggression and feelings of abandonment, and potential stigma on a child from communities, schools, peers, social-service providers, and even family members. The chapter highlights current research to raise exposure to this understudied yet critical ramification of mass incarceration.

## INTRODUCTION

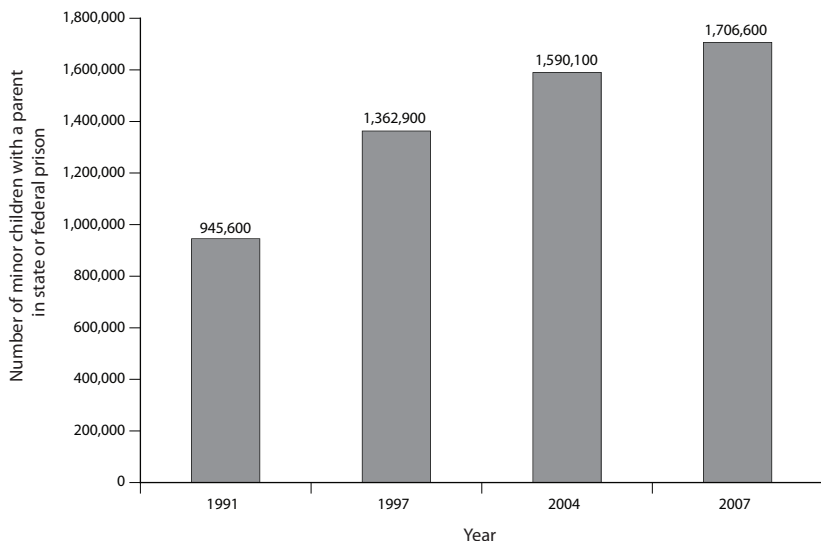
In 2007 more than 1.7 million minor children had a parent who was incarcerated in a state or federal prison (Glaze and Maruschak 2008).<sup>1</sup> The racial disparities among incarcerated parents are equally striking: one in fifteen black children, one in forty-two Hispanic children, and one in 111 white children has a parent in prison (Schirmer, Nellis, and Mauer 2009). Hundreds of thousands of boys of color have a father or mother in prison—and the numbers are growing at an unprecedented rate. The prevalence of this phenomena means that having a parent who is or has been in prison is a relatively common experience—particularly for African American and Hispanic youth.

This growth is reflected in the number of prisoners overall, which by the end of 2008 had topped just over 1.6 million people—a fivefold increase from the approximately 320,000 individuals incarcerated in a state or federal prison in 1980 (Glaze and Maruschak 2008).<sup>2</sup> The United States has by far the world's largest correctional system. The United States accounts for less than 5 percent of the world's population but almost a quarter of the world's prisoners (Liptak 2008). The “collateral consequences” of being convicted of a crime have also grown, as a wide range of laws and policies now stipulate restrictions for people with criminal convictions.<sup>3</sup> To add context and draw attention to the vast numbers of youths with incarcerated parents, it is noteworthy to observe that there are more minor children with an incarcerated parent than there are incarcerated individuals in the United States.

### A Profile of the Children

The number of children who have a parent in prison has increased as the prison population has soared. In 1991 approximately 950,000 children had incarcerated parents; this population grew by 80 percent as of 2007 (figure 14.1).<sup>4</sup> During this same period the number of minors with a mother in prison has more than doubled, representing an increase of 131 percent (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). What do we know about this vulnerable group? They are very young: about half the children with incarcerated parents are age nine or younger, and about a quarter are four or younger (*ibid.*). A surprising share of these children do not live with their parents before the parent's incarceration, and there are notable differences across gender. More than half of fathers in prison (58 percent) and 39 percent of mothers in prison were not living with their child before incarceration





**Figure 14.1** Number of minor children with a parent in state or federal prison (1991, 1997, 2004, and 2007). *Source:* Glaze and Maruschak 2008.

(*ibid.*). These children often come from families in which other family members have spent time in prison. For example, 50 percent of parents in state prison report that a family member—most frequently a brother—has been incarcerated

Children of color experience parental incarceration at significantly higher rates than white children. The primary driver behind this disparity is the overrepresentation of people of color in the criminal justice system. In 2008 the incarceration rate for white males was 487 per 100,000, compared with 1,200 for Hispanic males and an astonishing 3,161 for black males (Sabol, West, and Cooper 2009) (table 14.1). Framed another way, 6.7 percent of black children and 2.4 percent of Hispanic children have a parent in prison relative to 0.9 percent for white children (Glaze and Maruschak 2008).

### A Profile of the Parents

Approximately two-thirds of incarcerated parents are minorities (*ibid.*). Examining the characteristics of these parents helps us to understand the lives and experiences of their children. Black and Hispanic male prisoners are more likely than white prisoners to be parents (54 percent, 57 percent,

**Table 14.1** Incarceration rate per 100,000 (by race, Hispanic origin, and gender), 2008

	Male	Female
Total	952	62
White	487	50
Hispanic	1,200	75
Black	3,161	149

NOTE: Incarceration rates are the number of prisoners under state or federal jurisdiction sentenced to more than one year per 100,000 persons in the U.S. resident population in the referenced population group.

SOURCE: Sabol, West, and Cooper 2009.

and 45 percent, respectively) (*ibid.*). On average, incarcerated parents have more than one child, raising questions about the stability of sibling relationships during a period of imprisonment (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008; Mumola 2000). The average time away from a child—thirty-two months for state prisoners—is significant in the context of developmental years (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2004). Many parents cycle in and out of prison, meaning that some children experience several rounds of parental absence. Fathers are more likely than mothers to be incarcerated for violent offenses, and mothers are more likely than fathers to be incarcerated for drug-related offenses. Seventy-five percent of parents in state prisons have prior convictions, while 56 percent have previously been incarcerated (Mumola 2000).

Incarcerated parents suffer from relatively high rates of drug and alcohol abuse and mental-health problems. Twenty-five percent of incarcerated parents have a history of alcohol dependence, 59 percent used drugs in the month before their offense, and 14 percent suffer from mental illness (*ibid.*). Incarcerated parents are also more likely to have lower incomes and to struggle with maintaining employment. Approximately half of incarcerated parents reported less than a thousand dollars in income during the month before their arrest; 29 percent reported being unemployed. Parents in prison have relatively low educational levels: 40 percent did not complete high school or receive a GED (*ibid.*).

### CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CHILDREN

As one might expect, when a parent is sent to prison, the children and young adults who are left behind face a tremendous burden and often experience

trauma. Day-to-day life can be completely upended; where and with whom a child lives, contact with siblings, a source of financial support, and schooling may all be disrupted. Despite the gravity of these issues, remarkably little is known about the consequences for children, both in the short term and the long term, of parental incarceration. This group of children receives relatively little attention from legislators, corrections departments, social-service agencies, schools, or community-based organizations, although efforts to raise awareness are exemplified in such publications as Nell Bernstein's *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated* (2005).

Although quality research and data are lacking, it is clear that the consequences are many and complex. Research reveals that children of incarcerated parents are significantly more likely to be exposed to a range of risk factors, including extreme poverty, family violence, and parental substance abuse or mental illness relative to children whose parents are not involved with the criminal justice system (Phillips and Gleeson 2007). However, the absence of rigorous and empirical research precludes us from establishing causal relationships between these risk factors and a parent's incarceration. Observations made by researchers tell us that for the most part systems typically considered key sources of support for children have not instituted policies or practices that identify and address the needs of children who have a parent in prison or recently released from prison (Bloom and Steinhart 1993).

People across the political spectrum agree that healthy, stable families are a critical element of thriving communities and that social policies aimed at strengthening families should be supported. The exponential growth of the prison system, however, is inherently in conflict with the goal of improving the well-being of families (Travis 2005). Disparity in percentages of incarceration by race is alarming. Such stark inequality should motivate the many institutions that have some responsibility for children to view this as one of the top issues facing youth of color in the United States and to take action to address the inequality.

### **Impact of Separation and Abandonment**

Under most circumstances the removal of a parent from the home because of arrest and incarceration is an extremely disruptive event in a child's life. It can affect not only the child's relationship with that parent, but also the child's emotional and behavioral well-being as well as financial stability. Throughout the literature the arrest and incarceration of a parent is most often characterized as having a harmful and damaging impact on the lives

of the children left behind. In some circumstances, however, removal of a parent can bring about a positive change. Situations where the arrest of a parent may improve the quality of life for the child include when the parent is abusive (sexually, physically, or emotionally), or when the behavior of the arrested parent is unlawful and introduces dangerous elements into the household, such as with the abuse and sale of drugs (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009).

### **What We Know and What We Don't**

An expanding body of scholarship is beginning to address the circumstances of and consequences for children of incarcerated parents. Research has focused on profiles of incarcerated parents and on attempting to understand the short- and long-term impact of incarceration on the child left behind. Unfortunately, to date, there are few studies on incarcerated parents or their children that explore much beyond analysis of demographic data and that would provide a deeper understanding of the consequences of incarceration. For example, almost no research has analyzed data that has been collected directly from children (Hanlon et al. 2005). Existing demographic data by and large come from self-reported surveys of incarcerated parents. Designed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and administered every few years by the U.S. Census Bureau, these surveys serve as the primary statistical benchmark for these populations, and may not reflect accurate numbers. Indeed, social scientists agree that incarcerated parents significantly underreport information about their minor children by, for example, only revealing information about one child when they have more than one. Parents have a disincentive to disclose minor children to authorities—a topic covered in a later section of this chapter—and this factor is likely to contribute to undercounting in the data.

There is consensus that the incarceration of a parent has consequences for a child, and that most frequently those consequences are negative. Research suggests that multiple factors influence the experience, including the age and gender of the child, whether the incarcerated parent lived with the child prior to imprisonment, the quality of the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the child, and the frequency of contact with the parent during the period of incarceration. More practical factors that are presumed to influence how a child experiences the incarceration of a parent include changes to who provides primary care for the child, changes in financial stability, and where the child lives.

Research on the immediate impact of a parent's arrest and incarcera-

tion appears to be more rigorous than research on long-term ramifications. When exploring the short-term consequences of parental incarceration, researchers often rely on data from interviews with parents, caregivers, or children who have experienced the arrest and incarceration of a parent. Although such children frequently exhibit behaviors consistent with having experienced a recent trauma, it is not clear from the research that the event of parental incarceration is causally and independently related to these behaviors in the long term. Because most research on the long-term effects of parental incarceration cannot disentangle the role of other factors that existed before incarceration—such as child maltreatment, parental mental-health issues, parental alcohol substance abuse, or domestic violence—the findings are not empirically valid (Christian 2009; Hairston 2007).

As a result, claims that a direct, causal relationship exists between parental incarceration and long-term negative outcomes on children should be approached with caution. Beyond its failure to control for factors that existed before incarceration, the majority of research does not compare children's behavior over time to the behavior of children whose parents have not been incarcerated, nor do the studies determine the potential effect of gender or cultural differences in children or the incarcerated parents (Hairston 2007). It is worth noting that reviews of the literature dating back to the 1960s suggest that despite these methodological concerns, researchers agree in general terms about the form that these negative outcomes take (*ibid.*). Examples of common externalized behavior include defiance, aggression, and disobedience. Internalized behaviors are documented as depression, anxiety, and withdrawal.

### **The Parent-child Relationship**

The quality of a child's relationship with his or her incarcerated parent, and the impact that parents' absence has on the child depends, in part, on whether the child resided with the parent before incarceration. Although survey data reveal that roughly 50 percent of parents now in prison lived with their children prior to incarceration, more research is needed to understand more fully how the residential presence or absence of a parent before incarceration affects a child (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). One might expect that separation due to incarceration would have a more damaging affect on children than the incarceration of a nonresident parent, especially if the home environment is safe, with established routines and defined roles for family members.

If a positive bond existed between the incarcerated parent and his or

her child, the removal of that parent would have a more damaging effect than if there were little emotional connection. Under these conditions the arrest and removal of a parent can create chaos for a child. One factor that can alleviate this situation is the presence of extended family members residing in the house, such as a grandmother who would assume (or in some circumstances continue) the responsibility for caring for the child in the parent's absence. Alternately, the arrest and removal of a parent from a volatile home environment devoid of security and order may have less of an impact on the child. In these circumstances the parent may be the source of the volatility, and his or her incarceration could generate a sense of greater stability in the child's life.

As the survey data revealed, about 50 percent of parents resided with their children prior to incarceration, meaning there were around 50 percent who reported that they did not live with their children. Many of these children resided with nonparental caregivers before the incarceration of a parent (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). Some researchers question the viability of meaningful parent-child relationships with a nonresident parent (Furstenberg, Morgan, and Allison 1987; Garfinkel et al. 1998). Children who were not living with a parent before his or her incarceration may not experience the absence of that parent in the same way as children who did live with a parent who was incarcerated, especially if that parent has little contact or emotional connection with the child prior to incarceration. Other living situations before incarceration that might affect a child's experience involve a parent who cycles in and out of incarceration—either for longer periods in prison or shorter terms in jail. These parents' chronic recidivism may have established a history of being unpredictable and unavailable to their children, such that their status as incarcerated or released has little effect.

### **Impact of Circumstances of Arrest**

The circumstances under which a parent is arrested also influence the way a child experiences the removal of a parent. For example, significant numbers of children witness the arrest of a parent (Simmons 2000; Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009). Indeed, one in five children is present and witnesses a parent being taken away by law enforcement officers (Johnston 1991). The researcher Marcus Nieto (2002: 5) has described one salient case: "One boy, now 16, was nine years old when the police came to his door. They arrested his mother, who used drugs, but left him and his infant brother behind. (He speculates now that they must have thought there was

another adult in the house.) For two weeks, he took care of the baby and stayed inside, waiting for his mother to come back. Eventually, a neighbor stopped by and called the authorities and he and his brother went into separate foster homes. He didn't see his mother again until he was a teenager."

Interviews with children who were present when their parent was arrested reveal that the arresting officer handcuffed the parent in front of their children 67 percent of the time, and children witnessed the arresting officer draw a weapon 27 percent of the time (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009). In interviews thirty children who watched as their mothers were taken into custody report that they suffered from nightmares and had flashbacks to the arrest incident (Jose-Kampfner 1995). Sometimes a school-age child returns home to discover that a parent is gone. The child is unaware of the arrest of his or her parent and is often left with few resources to process what has happened (Fishman 1983). The majority of these children are younger than seven and are in the sole care of their mother. Indeed, the higher rates of sole maternal parenting led one researcher to observe that "while there are more children affected by a father's incarceration due to the overwhelming majority of men in prison, a child's stability appears to be most threatened by a mother's incarceration" (Moses 2006: 99-100).

Regardless of the intensity of the arrest experience and subsequent incarceration of the parent, the removal of a parent most often has an immediate, negative, and disruptive effect on a child. Researchers have equated the loss of a parent through incarceration to the grief experienced at the loss of parent because of death or diminished contact resulting from divorce (Lowenstein 1986, as cited in Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999). With a parent's death or divorce, however, family members and the community generally feel sympathy for a child; when a parent is arrested and incarcerated, there is frequently little support or understanding offered to the child. In place of compassion, a child and other family members often encounter condemnation and judgment from the community that can generate feelings of shame, embarrassment, and stigmatization (Hostetter and Jinnah 1993). Although the literature is limited regarding the extent to which stigma affects children, researchers have found that children of incarcerated parents are more likely than other children to be teased at school (Lowenstein 1986, as cited in Ziebert 2006).

The shame and stigma of incarceration can motivate family members to conceal the truth about an imprisoned parent from the child as well as the community (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008). Research has identified stigma associated with parental incarceration as one of the most destructive consequences—and one of the most difficult psychological issues—

with which children must contend (Hairston 2007). Although the body of theoretical research on how children adapt to the removal and incarceration of a parent is in nascent stages, well-known child-development theories appear to apply to the experiences of children in this population and may offer guidance on how children process these events and cope with the ramifications. These include theories about attachment and bonding as well as posttraumatic stress disorder, all of which are addressed later in this chapter.

### **Later-life Risks**

Children continue to experience the ramifications of a parent's removal well beyond the parent's return to the home (Hairston 2007). Children may have a difficult time coping with and sorting out feelings associated with the sudden absence of a parent. This inability to process these emotions—combined with a lack of support—may elicit behaviors that begin as temporary coping mechanisms to manage anger and confusion and then lead to long-term behavior patterns (Gabel and Johnston 1995). Although further research is needed, scholars theorize that children who experience the arrest and incarceration of a parent most likely suffer from separation anxiety as well as posttraumatic stress disorder (Hairston 2007).

Despite the lack of robust, empirical research findings, an expansive body of research addresses the behavioral and psychological issues experienced by children of incarcerated parents (Simmons 2000; Nieto 2002; La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008; Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002; Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009; Aaron and Dallaire 2009). The findings of studies on young children point toward internalized issues, which can include anxiety, guilt, shame, hypervigilance, and fear (Bloom and Steinhart 1993; Dressel et al. 1992). More clearly identifiable externalized behaviors include anger, aggression, and hostility toward siblings and caregivers (Fishman 1983; Gaudin 1984; Johnston 1995; Jose-Kampfner 1995; Sack, Seidler, and Thomas 1976). Research further suggests that school-age children are more likely to have academic problems and difficulty with peer relationships (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). The consequences of these behaviors can lead to higher suspension and drop-out rates (Trice 1997).

### **Intergenerational Delinquency and Incarceration**

Rather surprisingly, assertions linking parental incarceration to future delinquency and incarceration of children are abundant, despite the lack



of robust evidence in the literature. Most scholars agree that higher-quality research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of parental incarceration on the short- and long-term outcomes of children, as much of the research is inconclusive or has significant limitations that require the interpretation and application of findings to be treated with caution (Christian 2009; Hairston 2007). For example, one study asked a hundred incarcerated mothers in a Midwestern jail to match their oldest adolescent daughters to scales of antisocial behavior and delinquency. The mothers indicated that their daughters had low levels on both indices (Hairston 2007).

A second study obtained data from adolescents whose parents were incarcerated. Although the self-reported findings from this research revealed a high number of suspensions from school, the study did not reveal evidence of high levels of participation in antisocial behavior or delinquency. Unfortunately, neither of these studies compared their group of research subjects to a control group of students whose parents were not incarcerated. This means that although the reported rates of delinquency and antisocial behavior were low, it is unknown whether the rates were low in comparison to teens whose parents were not in prison (*ibid.*). Other methodological limitations prevalent in earlier research on this population include additional risk factors that could affect a child's delinquency or propensity toward incarceration separate from parental incarceration.

In most instances where comparison groups were used, either the impact of parental incarceration disappeared when other factors were controlled for (Kinner et al. 2007), or the findings were no more significant for the study group than for the control group (Phillips and Gleeson 2007). However, researchers Joseph Murray and David Farrington (2008) analyzed the results from five studies that employed representative sample comparison groups. Their analysis revealed that in three of the five studies, evidence was found of an independent, causal relationship between incarceration of a parent and its related behavioral and emotional outcomes for children. They discovered that after other risk factors had been controlled for, findings supported an independent effect of a parent's incarceration on children's negative emotional and behavioral outcomes (Murray, Janson, and Farrington 2007). Their analysis found that two studies suggested that parental incarceration could be causally linked to children's mental health, academic failure, substance abuse, and unemployment.

Additional research by scholars Lauren Aaron and Danielle Dallaire (2009) analyzed data over time and found that even when researchers controlled for other risk factors, a history of parental incarceration predicted

family victimization and delinquent behaviors of the children's older siblings as well as delinquency of the child participants. Although the impact of parental incarceration on children's delinquency disappears when family victimization and sibling delinquency are added to the model, the initial model holds. These findings represent a significant advancement in the literature by positing what appears to be a direct and causal connection between parental incarceration and the impact it has on the emotional and behavioral well-being of the children who experience that incarceration.

### **Impact Varies by Age and Gender**

Although evidence in the literature appears to suggest that parental incarceration has damaging effects on the children left behind, the research also suggests that children may experience parental loss differently depending on the child's age and gender (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002; Wright and Seymour 2000). Studies reveal that older children have different reactions than younger children (Poehlmann 2005; Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002); and that boys respond very differently than girls (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002; Amato 1994). While more research is necessary to determine the extent to which gender plays a role, scholars theorize that boys and girls are both negatively affected, but that their means of expressing grief is different. Boys tend to externalize their emotions more often, whereas girls are more likely to turn their emotions inward (Cowan, Powell, and Cowan 1998; Cummings, Davies, and Campbell 2000).

The gender of the arrested parent further influences these reactions (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). Because on average mothers are sentenced for shorter lengths of time than fathers—forty-four months for black mothers in state prison versus sixty-five months for black fathers, and forty-two months for white mothers in state prison versus sixty-one months for white fathers—researchers note that children may experience the short-term impact of maternal incarceration more keenly than that of paternal incarceration, which may have more acute long-term consequences (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2004; Gadsden and Rethemeyer 2001). Symptoms associated with short-term trauma include the more immediate impact of the parent's arrest and coping with how to explain a parent's absence, whereas long-term effects include those that adversely impact the quality and development of the child's attachment to the parent (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). To more fully understand the dynamics in play, additional research is needed that examines the multiple dimensions of children's age and gender relative to gender of the incarcerated parent.

### **The Impact of Law-enforcement and Child-welfare Agencies**

Although the removal of a parent can have a harmful effect on a child, a number of other actions can exacerbate an already injurious event. The majority of law-enforcement agencies have not established protocols to guide officers during arrests when children are present (Simmons 2000; Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009; Nieto 2002). A California study found that only one in eight law-enforcement agencies maintained policies that require an officer to question the arrestee as to whether he or she has minor children (Nieto 2002). Furthermore, the findings reveal a lack of coordination and inconsistent communication between law enforcement and child-protective services regarding custody and placement decisions (*ibid.*). In her research, Creasia Finney Hairston (1999) has observed that the protocol of child-welfare agencies was often “unresponsive, irrelevant, and/or ineffective.”

While officers have been shown to be inconsistent in asking arrestees about dependent children, arrestees have also reported being reluctant to reveal that they have dependent children. This reluctance most likely stems from their fear of losing custody of their child. Under state and federal policy parental rights may be terminated if a minor child resides in foster care for fifteen of the most recent twenty-two months, or for six months if the child is younger than three (Nieto 2002). Given that the average time served in state prisons is thirty-two months, there is a strong likelihood that the parent will lose custody (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2004).<sup>5</sup> The consequence is that arrested parents, in an attempt to retain custody and ostensibly to protect their children, often will not reveal the existence of minor children to law enforcement, opting instead to leave responsibility for their children’s care to relatives, friends, or neighbors. Unfortunately, these arrangements may not always be in the best interest of the child. One researcher has characterized the interchange between law enforcement and the arrested parent as “don’t ask, don’t tell,” in that both parties *de facto* avoid responsibility for the well-being of the child (Nieto 2002).

Despite the absence of protocol surrounding minor children at the time of arrest, the American Bar Association has determined that the legal responsibility for the welfare of children nonetheless resides with the officers. In 1979 the courts ruled that law enforcement has “a duty to reasonably ensure the safety of children left unattended following a caretaker’s arrest” (Simmons 2000).<sup>6</sup> Given the widespread lack of accountability on the part of law enforcement and the absence of coordination between law

enforcement and child-welfare agencies, this would appear to be an area ripe for additional research and reform efforts.

### AREAS OF CHRONIC INSTABILITY

The arrest and incarceration of a parent sets into motion a chain of events that can cause significant instability for the child left behind. This section of the chapter reviews the literature on what is known about the factors associated with this instability. Research reveals that factors shown to impact stability include shifts in family dynamics, changes in who provides primary care to the child and perhaps where the child lives, as well as uncertain financial footing (as most often the incarcerated parent was the primary source of income). After the parent is incarcerated, the nature and frequency of contact between the child and his or her incarcerated parent can also impact the stability of the child's life when the parent returns home.

#### Family Instability

Children of incarcerated parents are at 130 percent higher risk of experiencing family instability (such as forced separation of children from home or a new parent figure entering the household) than children without incarcerated parents (Phillips et al. 2006). A 2008 study by the Center for Research on Child Well-Being found that children exposed to paternal incarceration were 40 percent more likely to have a father who is unemployed, 34 percent less likely to reside with parents who are married, 25 percent more likely to experience material hardship, and four times more likely to come into contact with the child-welfare system (Center for Research on Child Well-being 2008). In many cases the parent who is arrested is the child's primary caregiver. The increased incarceration rate for mothers has a direct effect on the number of children who lose a primary caregiver (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008). Nationally, a majority of incarcerated mothers reside with their minor children, frequently in a single-parent household (Glaze and Maruschak 2008).

A California study that examined arrests of sole caretakers revealed that in more than 80 percent of cases, the caretaker was a woman (Nieto 2002). Unless someone already residing with the child assumes custody, the arrest of a sole parenting adult can signal changes in a child's care and housing—whether informally to a relative, friend, or neighbor; or through legal channels to a foster home, agency, or institution. It is not uncommon

for siblings to be separated in the placement process, further disrupting any positive sources of support the children might have (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008). In addition to these elements, a school-age child may be forced to transfer to another school, losing peer networks. Researchers Ross Parke and Alison Clarke-Stewart (2002) have reported that nearly 60 percent of children with incarcerated parents are ten years old or younger, with the mean age being eight. Changes in caregivers and housing are often accompanied by financial uncertainty. According to 2004 data, roughly half of all parents in state prison provided the primary financial support for their minor children before incarceration (mothers supplied 52 percent and fathers 54 percent) (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). These changes—in caregiving, housing, and financial status—account for the chronic instability that affects most children who lose a parent to incarceration. Each of these areas is discussed in more detail below.

### Changes in Caregivers

To understand the impact of a parent's incarceration on a child's sense of stability, we should begin with an assessment of the child's living arrangements and a consideration of how the parent's absence will affect who cares for the child. Many children reside with a nonparent caregiver prior to the incarceration of either parent (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). Analysis of U.S. Census 2000 data reveals that 4.4 million children under the age of eighteen, or 6 percent, resided with their grandparents (Lugaila and Overturf 2004). Close to 2 percent of children resided with a non-relative caregiver. Of that population, foster children comprised 23 percent (*ibid.*). Only 43 percent of parents in state prison and 57 percent in federal prison were residing with their children at the time of arrest, with mothers residing at a higher rate than fathers. Among mothers in state and federal prison, 64 percent and 84 percent, respectively, resided with their children, versus 44 percent of fathers in state prison and 55 percent in federal prison (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002).

In these instances a parent's incarceration would seem less likely to affect the caregiving responsibilities for the child, as an alternate arrangement is already in place (*ibid.*). For the roughly 50 percent of parents who *do* reside with their children, caregiver responsibilities need to be transferred to someone else at the time of the parent's incarceration. This transfer can cause disruption and a great deal of instability in the life of the child. In 84 percent of cases in which the primary caregiver is imprisoned, the other parent assumes the role of caretaker (Glaze and Maruschak

2008). However, when the mother is the one incarcerated, fathers assume caregiving responsibilities only about a third of the time (28 percent of state incarcerations and 31 percent of federal incarcerations); grandmothers are the most likely to take on the responsibility (53 percent for state and 45 percent for federally incarcerated mothers), followed by other relatives (26 percent of state incarcerations and 34 percent of federal incarcerations) (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). The number of caregivers related to the incarcerated parent who assume childcare responsibilities on behalf of incarcerated parents has risen 35 percent nationwide over the past decade (Nieto 2002). Friends are responsible in roughly 10 percent to 12 percent of the cases (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002), and 3 percent of respondents indicated that their minor children were in the care of a neighbor (Bloom and Steinhart 1993, as cited in Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999; Glaze and Maruschak 2008).

As these statistics reveal, many parents rely on informal networks, consisting of family, friends, and sometimes neighbors, to assume responsibility for their child's welfare (Nieto 2002). One reason may be the perception that the timelines for termination of parental rights set forth in the 1997 federal Adoption and Safe Families Act have increased the likelihood of parents losing custody when they identify their children to the authorities at the time of arrest.<sup>7</sup> As a result of parents' reluctance to identify their minor children, one might expect fewer children involved with child-welfare agencies or in foster care. Data from 2004 indicate that roughly 3 percent of parents in state prison relinquished their children to foster care (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). Given the informal nature of these childcare arrangements, and the fact that they are frequently made on the spur of the moment, it is not surprising that those who assume the responsibilities on behalf of incarcerated parents encounter challenges along the way.

### **Kinship Caregivers**

According to the Kinship Care Legal Research Center of the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law, "kinship care" refers to any "full-time care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, or other adults who have a family relationship to a child" (American Bar Association 2010). Kinship caregivers often assume childcare responsibilities blindly, with no sense of how long the incarcerated parent will be away and without access to the necessary support systems to help the child cope with the aftermath of the parent's absence (Katz 1998). Research on kinship caregivers reveals that they dif-

fer in substantive ways from nonrelative caregivers. On average, kinship caregivers tend to be older (Macomber, Geen, and Main 2003), have fewer financial resources (Ehrle and Geen 2002), and are more likely to be single and less educated than nonrelative caregivers (Ehrle, Geen, and Clark 2001). These deficits can exacerbate the challenges documented in the literature. These challenges include aiding the children in their emotional adjustment and providing support as the children confront the stigma of having an incarcerated parent (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009; Hairston 2002).

The loss of parental income places an enormous burden on the caregiver (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008). In some instances caregivers have been forced to quit their jobs or cut back on their hours (Harm and Thompson 1995, as cited in Phillips and Bloom 1998), or have drained retirement savings to provide adequate care for the children they are newly responsible for raising (Minkler and Roe 1993). Two-thirds of those who have assumed childcare responsibilities for incarcerated mothers report that they lack the financial resources necessary to support the child (Bloom and Steinhart 1993, as cited in Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999). Of children who reside with a grandmother, a third are without health insurance and a fourth live in poverty (Bryson and Casper 1999). Caregivers often experience additional financial strain when they subsidize transportation for visits to prison and cover the cost of collect calls from prison to allow children to have contact with their incarcerated parent (Hairston 2002).

The informal guardianship arrangement leaves many kinship caregivers ill-positioned to enroll children in school, access medical care (such as acquiring vaccinations), and obtain government services (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009). According to the Kinship Care Legal Research Center, twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation that allows caregivers related to the child without formal custody the ability to make legal decisions related to the child's medical, dental, surgical, and psychological needs. Twenty-one states have policies that allow a related caregiver the capacity to enroll a child in school or authorize cocurricular and extracurricular activities.<sup>8</sup> In the absence of these legislative provisions, the kinship caregiver must often resort to legal services to negotiate the provision of basic care (Simmons 2000).

Despite these challenges, evidence indicates that children placed in kinship care fare better and have more positive outcomes than children who are placed in nonkinship foster care (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009). Kinship-care youths appear to experience increased stability (Conway and Hutson 2007) and undergo less frequent placement changes than those children

who reside in nonkinship foster care (Testa 2001). Furthermore, research shows that there is a greater chance that siblings will remain together when placed in kinship care (Schlonsky, Webster, and Needell 2003) and that such placements result in stronger attachments to their caregivers and fewer behavioral and school problems (Chapman, Wall, and Barth 2004).

### **Nonkinship Foster Care**

Although the majority of caregiving responsibilities for children who reside with a parent prior to that parent's incarceration are assumed by family members, a small percentage of children are relocated to nonkinship foster-care environments. Among children in foster care in 2003, close to thirty thousand—or 6 percent—entered the system as a result of parental incarceration (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009). The likelihood that children of incarcerated parents will be placed in foster care varies according to the gender of the incarcerated parent: incarcerated mothers are more than five times as likely (at 11 percent) than fathers (at 2 percent) to turn over custody of their children to foster care as a result of their incarceration (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). This is perhaps due to the fact that incarcerated fathers rely most frequently on mothers to assume childcare responsibilities for their children.

Data on mothers who were incarcerated between 1990 and 2000 in Illinois state prisons and in Cook County jails reveal that in many instances, the incarceration of the mother was not the event that triggered the placement of the child in foster care (Moses 2006). In fact, in fully 75 percent of these cases, the child's placement in foster care preceded his or her mother's incarceration (*ibid.*). This is a significant finding, as it challenges the presumption that foster-care placements are prompted by the incarceration of the mother and suggests that a mother's incarceration may be just one of many traumatic events that occur in the life of that child. This same research identifies children who enter foster care as a result of an incarcerated mother as four times more likely to "age out" of the system than other children (*ibid.*). This means that children of incarcerated parents tend to remain in foster care longer than other children, and this frequently translates to a higher incidence of movement from one foster home to another.

Data from a smaller study of foster youth in rural North Carolina suggest that children with incarcerated parents who have been placed in foster care as result of parental substance abuse, mental illness, or child maltreatment—and especially those children who are placed with nonfamily caregivers—have an increased likelihood for multiple foster home placements



(Phillips et al. 2006). Not surprisingly, youth who remain in foster care for lengthy periods and experience multiple foster placements are at a higher risk for negative outcomes. Members of this subset of foster youth are associated with higher rates of school failure, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and unemployment (Christian and Eikman 2000).

Although research on family reunification suggests that roughly 70 percent of foster children leave the system and are reunited with their families or relatives (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2008), there is some evidence that foster youth are less likely to be reunited with their incarcerated parent than are other foster youth (Moses 2006). These findings underscore the additional challenges that children of incarcerated parents face in achieving stability in their lives.

### **Stability of Housing**

Often occurring hand-in-hand with changes in caregiving arrangements are shifts in living situations after a parent is incarcerated. Chronic relocation and movement from one caregiver to another disrupt children's lives and have been shown to be harmful (Rutter 1987). Only one in eleven older children of incarcerated parents had lived continuously with the same primary caregiver since birth (Simmons 2000). In other words, ten of eleven children experienced multiple changes in living situations, signaling a high rate of housing instability.

### **Financial Hardships**

When a parent is removed due to incarceration, the risk that the child will experience material hardship significantly increases. A study in rural North Carolina found that children who experience parental incarceration are 80 percent more likely to live in an economically strained household than children who have not experienced parental incarceration, even after controlling for other risk factors (Phillips et al. 2006). These findings are echoed by evidence that children with fathers who were incarcerated either before or after the child's birth had an increased risk of experiencing material hardship compared with youth whose fathers had never been incarcerated (Garfinkel, Geller, and Cooper 2007). Comparable findings exist for children whose mothers were incarcerated before their birth (*ibid.*). Not surprisingly, children who experienced the incarceration of both parents fared worse than did children who only had one parent incarcerated (*ibid.*).

Given that the incarcerated parent most often provided the primary

source of income for the child, financial circumstances for the child and the caregiver frequently become desperate upon a parent's imprisonment. According to the most recent data on employment, income, and financial support from incarcerated parents, about half of mothers (52 percent) and fathers (54 percent) in state prison, and nearly 70 percent for parents in federal prison (mothers at 68.5 percent and fathers at 67.1 percent) indicated that they provided the sole financial support for their family before their incarceration (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). This suggests that the financial strain created from incarceration is equally distributed among men and women.

To provide any kind of financial support to one's family while incarcerated is nearly impossible. Even those with jobs in prison earn as little as \$350 per year, or less than \$7 a week (Griswold and Pearson 2003). Without parental income, and without child-support payments, caregivers are often unable to match the level of financial resources available before the parent's incarceration. Not surprisingly, the loss of parental income because of incarceration disproportionately affects families that were already struggling financially.

### **Contact with Incarcerated Parents**

One of the ways to minimize the impact of a parent's absence—and to improve conditions upon that parent's reentry—is to sustain family ties during the period of incarceration (Hairston 2007; Women's Prison Association 1998). Children who have regular contact with an incarcerated parent—especially through in-person visits—are less likely to fear for their parent's welfare and less likely to worry about their parent's feelings for them (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008; Sack 1977). Furthermore, prisoners who had sustained connections with their families during their period of incarceration are less likely to recidivate after their release (Hairston 1998). Maintaining contact is especially beneficial for children whose parent had a significant presence in their life (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008). Means of communication can include in-person visits, phone calls, and exchange of mail. Some facilities have introduced new technology, such as television and video communication, that enables inmates and their children to see and talk to one another when geographic distance prevents in-person visiting (Hairston 2007).

Interestingly, research shows that the probability that incarcerated parents will maintain some connection with their child may be correlated to their race and gender (*ibid.*). Survey data from 1997 reveal that African

American parents are slightly more likely to stay in touch with their children than are Caucasian or Hispanic parents (*ibid.*).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, 24 percent of African American parents indicated that they had monthly contact with their child, compared with 21 percent of Caucasian parents and 20 percent of Hispanic parents. Furthermore, since their incarceration, 45 percent of African American parents reported having at least one in-person visit from their children, more than Hispanics and Caucasians, who reported 39 percent and 40 percent, respectively (*ibid.*). The researchers also found that mothers were more likely to stay connected to their child than were fathers, where 79 percent of mothers report having spoken to their children compared with fathers at 58 percent (*ibid.*).

Despite the potential benefits of staying in touch, maintaining contact can be challenging. Institutional, practical, and attitudinal barriers can inhibit in-person visitation with incarcerated parents. Barriers related to conditions at prisons include policies regarding hours of visitation and phone use, regulation of eligible visitors, the number of visitors permitted at any one time, absence of privacy, harsh treatment by correctional staff, and the unfriendly nature of the visiting room (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). These conditions can create a hostile and frightening environment, which has been shown to increase children's anxiety (Bloom and Steinhart 1993; Simon and Landis 1991). Prisons are frequently located a great distance from where families reside, creating the additional burden of long transit times and financial strain. Women's facilities are typically farther from inmates' homes; one researcher estimated that on average, women are imprisoned 160 miles farther from home than men (Coughenour 1995). In part because of these deterrents, more than half of incarcerated parents do not receive any visits from their children during their incarceration (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008).

Given the barrier of distance and the rigidity and unpleasantness of visiting a prison, staying connected through phone calls is an obvious and much easier choice. Although exchanging mail is the primary means of staying in touch, phone calls are the second most common method of communication: 54 percent of mothers and 42 percent of fathers use the phone to maintain monthly contact with their children (Hairston 2007). This method of communication has its own set of obstacles, however. Most prisons maintain a policy that bars family members from placing calls to inmates. This means that the imprisoned parent must place the call and creates a situation where children have little control over the frequency and timing of calls.

Calls made from prison are all collect. This places the burden of cov-

ering the costs of staying connected on the caretaker, who is frequently already struggling financially. As one caregiver explained,

You get so frustrated with the traveling, the costs of the calls. From Sussex, Virginia, it costs you 10 dollars for 10 minutes, so it's a dollar a minute. So with Chriselle's father I had to put my foot down, and I told him that he couldn't call for a while because it became too expensive for me. . . . Because it becomes so expensive, and the cost becomes so enormous that it takes away other things that you could be doing with your money. . . . I have to look out for my well-being and my children's well-being, because I'm the only source of income they have (Braman and Wood 2003, quoted in Travis and Waul 2004: 164).

Further complicating matters, the hours during which phone calls are permitted to be made often do not match the hours children are available. Prison policies, created to ensure safety, are not typically adjusted to accommodate the needs of families. Moreover, evidence suggests that phone companies often enter into contracts with prisons to charge unusually high rates for the long-distance collect calls that incarcerated parents make, creating additional financial strain for families. Analysis of these contracts reveals that phone companies generate considerable profits—as much as eighty-five million dollars—at the expense of those who are least able to afford it (Warren 2002). The phone companies pay the prisons a commission, which many claim to reinvest in programs for inmates (Travis, McBride, and Solomon 2005). Given the research on the benefits of keeping those incarcerated connected to their families, one could imagine a more prudent means of generating revenue for prison programs.

There are circumstances, however, in which encouraging or maintaining contact between a child and his or her incarcerated parent may not be in the best interest of the child (Hairston 2007; Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2002). These circumstances may include instances where the parent was responsible for physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of the child or in some other way caused harm to the child. Some members of society, as well as some social-service practitioners, believe that children should not be brought to prison for in-person visits because it is simply too traumatic or that such visits will normalize prison life in the eyes of the child or legitimize a criminal way of life (Hairston 2007). Ultimately, in circumstances where children are able to sustain or create healthy communication with an incarcerated parent, every effort should be made to facilitate that connection. Having that parent remain a presence in the life of the child creates benefits not only during the period of incarceration but also substantially improves a parent's transition back into the family and community.

### COMING HOME

A parent's return from prison generally presents a host of new challenges, and even less is known about the repercussions of the return of an incarcerated parent than about the separation during incarceration. In most cases neither the parents nor the children are adequately prepared for, or fully appreciate the challenges of, reunification. Before a parent's return, the expectations about reunification are high and can be unrealistic from both the perspective of the parent and the child (La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004). Of all of the family relationships that must be reestablished following a parent's return from prison, relationships with minor children are the most difficult to rekindle (Shollenberger 2009). Reconnecting with children and reclaiming a day-to-day parental role are just two of the many significant issues with which recently released prisoners struggle; these include obtaining housing, finding a job, and gaining access to health care. Several factors play a role in the level of difficulty a parent faces when coming home, including the gender of the parent and the gender of the child, the age of the child, the duration of separation, the frequency and nature of contact during incarceration, the number of previous separations, and the level of kinship care and family support that the child received while the parent was away.

During a period of separation, parents, children, and the family as a whole change in dramatic ways. Children can be more mature, have new or strengthened relationships, and have had new life experiences since a parent left. More than a third of minor children are estimated to reach the age of eighteen during their parent's incarceration (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). Some parents back away when they realize their child has developed new relationships during their absence (Furstenberg 1995). Family members, including children, are quickly forced to become independent when a primary caregiver is removed from a home. Well-established roles and responsibilities within a family structure are realigned when a parent is sent to prison; the parent's return home can disrupt the newly established balance of roles and responsibilities. It is even possible that a new dynamic may emerge in which the recently returned parent is dependent on other family members for housing, transportation, and financial support, making it more difficult to reclaim a parental role. Tensions can arise between children and their returning parent, as children may resent any attempt at discipline or feel they have been betrayed by the parent. Conflicts can also arise among parents and other adults who have assumed caregiver roles; conversations about what to expect during reintegration into a family can mitigate such conflicts. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other primary

caregivers during a period of incarceration may be hesitant to relinquish parenting roles for fear that a returning parent might revert to the “old lifestyle.”

Although the large majority of children are eager for a parent to come home, not all homecomings are welcomed events. This is particularly true in cases where the parent was emotionally or physically abusive, had mental-health problems, or abused drugs or alcohol. In a 2009 survey two-thirds of family members indicated that the incarcerated parent’s return had a positive effect on a minor child; 12 percent said the effect was negative; and, interestingly, approximately 20 percent reported that the return of a parent had no effect on a minor child (Shollenberger 2009).

In addition to the emotional and relational aspects of coming home, legal and financial considerations can make reunification with a child difficult. According to one study, 29 percent of returning fathers with minor children had child payment obligations (*ibid.*). Child-support payments that accrue during incarceration are one of the largest financial challenges a parent may encounter after release from prison. The loss of legal custody during incarceration, and the placement of children in foster care, can also represent barriers to reunification.<sup>10</sup> Eleven percent of incarcerated mothers and 2 percent of incarcerated fathers have children placed in foster care (Glaze and Maruschak 2008).

Despite the myriad psychological and practical challenges associated with the return of an incarcerated parent, little to no support is provided to families—and specifically to children—by the criminal justice or human services system to prepare for and work through the return of a family member from prison. According to a Texas study, although family members were highly involved in the reentry process and provided a variety of supports, such as housing and financial assistance, only 5 percent reported receiving any services from community groups or government agencies during the reentry process (Shollenberger 2009). The return of a parent to daily life is one of the most profound and possibly pivotal experiences for a child. Yet social institutions do almost nothing to support and care for children as they go through that process.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The extraordinary growth in the prison population has resulted in serious unintended consequences for hundreds of thousands of youths of color who have lived significant portions of their developmental years with a parent behind bars. The ripple effects of this wave of incarceration are only

beginning to be understood. One point, however, is clear: although these children come into contact with a variety of agencies and systems, no single entity is taking full responsibility for this group of at-risk youth.

### **A Shared Responsibility**

Every time a child of an incarcerated parent comes into contact with a social institution such as a human service agency, a school, the welfare system, or the criminal justice system it is an opportunity for positive change. A child's contact with these systems should be viewed as an opening to understand and address some of the challenges these children face. When that doesn't happen, opportunities are missed. Each of these institutions shares a responsibility to provide support, services, and care for these children. As a starting point, systems should assess the positive and negative effects of their policies and practices on children with a parent behind bars. A few states and localities have already made progress along these lines, but most do not understand the extent to which the policies and practices of numerous state and local agencies have a negative impact on these children (Christian 2009).

The acknowledgment by state and local agencies that they share a responsibility to provide resources and support for children of incarcerated parents is in the early stages. Actions taken by these agencies on this issue are even less. To date, little is known about which strategies are the most effective; therefore, offering prescriptive recommendations here would be premature. However, to illustrate ways in which institutions may be able to mitigate negative impacts and facilitate positive outcomes for this underserved population, we provide the following examples:

- Law-enforcement agencies could develop policies on what to do when a child is present during an arrest and train staff on how to handle those situations.
- The courts could use information about whether a convicted felon is the sole and primary caregiver of a minor child as part of sentencing decisions.
- Corrections departments could institute policies and practices to facilitate communication and contact between incarcerated parents and their children to make the transition from prison to home less stressful. A small number of departments have instituted longer visitation periods, overnight visits, structured visits, social worker involvement before release, and/or family counseling sessions as the

release day approaches. Providing a safe environment for children to communicate with the parent about how they feel about the parent's return home can lead to more realistic expectations, clarity about roles and responsibilities, and fewer opportunities for stress and conflict to emerge (Shollenberger 2009).

- Social-service agencies could provide emotional support and counseling for children at the time of a parent's removal, during the period of incarceration, and when a parent returns home.
- School systems could teach educators how to address the stigma that children with incarcerated parents often carry.
- Child-welfare agencies making custody determinations could adapt their policies to take into account whether a parent has been in prison.
- Researchers could focus on improving and expanding the body of knowledge related to the experiences and outcomes of children of incarcerated parents.

### **Working across Disciplines**

Improved communication and collaboration across disciplines should help minimize the chances that a child of incarcerated parents will “slip through the cracks.” A collective approach to understanding these issues would improve the level of support and care for children of incarcerated parents. One of the fundamental challenges for fostering collaboration is that for the most part, these systems have different—and sometimes even competing—missions, mandates, and philosophies. For example, the primary focus of a corrections department is about control and the security of their facilities; corrections officials may not consider the well-being of families to be among their responsibilities. Similarly, child-welfare workers may not be familiar with or experienced at navigating the correctional system. Other challenges to collaboration include a lack of common data systems, poor or nonexistent data, privacy concerns, and limited staff and resources.

Strategies for overcoming these challenges include establishing information-sharing policies across agencies; conducting cross-training of correctional staff and child-welfare staff on the impacts of incarceration on children and on ways to reduce harm and improve the situation; and upgrading and standardizing data-collection systems (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009; Simmons 2000). Examples of some of the work states have done to improve the coordination of services include:



- Oregon legislation established an advisory committee to examine issues related to children of incarcerated parents, in which personnel from corrections, youth authority, the state department of education, and human service agencies were required to participate.
- Washington legislation likewise established an oversight committee that sought to develop an interagency agenda to address the needs of children whose parents are incarcerated.
- Hawaii convened a task force composed of representatives from public safety and human service agencies and produced a report that focused on providing services and programs for children of incarcerated parents and for incarcerated parents.

Despite the dearth of research in this area, there are signs of hope. Growing numbers of governmental bodies, policymakers, and researchers are calling for increased attention to children with an incarcerated parent (Hairston 2007; Travis 2005; Christian 2009; Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009; La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008). Prisoner reentry has become a high-profile issue over the past decade, with new legislation, increased funding, and more programs targeted at the more than seven hundred thousand men and women who return home from prison each year. Yet the resources being directed toward families' reintegration of prisoners are limited. Increased attention to prisoner reentry should be used as an opportunity to raise awareness around the plight of children of incarcerated parents and to develop strategies to support and care for this vulnerable population. The well-being of these disadvantaged children is at stake. They deserve thoughtful attention and expanded resources—and they deserve it today.

## NOTES

1. For the purposes of this chapter, the term “incarceration” refers to state and federal prisons and not to local jails, which come with a notably different set of issues.

2. For comparative purposes, during the thirty-year period from 1950 to 1980, the prison population doubled, growing from approximately 166,000 to 320,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Surveys).

3. “Collateral consequences” are defined by the Sentencing Project as follows: Increasingly, laws and policies are being enacted to restrict persons with a felony conviction (particularly convictions for drug offenses) from employment, receipt of welfare benefits, access to public housing, and eligibility for student loans for higher education. Such collateral penalties place substantial barriers to an individ-

ual's social and economic advancement (available online at <http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=143>).

4. Note that these estimates may underestimate the true number of incarcerated parents and their children, as they do not account for prisoners who were the caregivers of children but not biological parents. This underestimate of children may be at least partially offset by the fact that U.S. statistics on incarcerated parents do not account for incarcerated mothers and fathers who are parents of the same child (La Vigne, Davies, and Brazzell 2008).

5. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) permits considerable state flexibility in regard to the termination of the parental rights requirement. For more, see Christian 2009.

6. The case was known as *White v. Rochford*, 592 F2d 381 (7th Cir. 1979).

7. Although there is some evidence that termination of parental rights for incarcerated mothers and fathers has increased since the passage of the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (Lee, Genty, and Laver 2005, as cited in Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009) and that this would appear to affect imprisoned parents and their children, there are minimal data to assess the extent to which this occurs (Nickel, Garland, and Kane 2009).

8. This information comes from <http://www.abanet.org/child/kinshipcare.shtml>.

9. The Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities was designed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and conducted by the Bureau of the Census from June through October 1997.

10. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 was intended to increase stability in children's lives, but in cases of parental incarceration, the provisions of this act can result in permanent severance of legal rights. The act allows for termination of parental rights after a child has been in foster care for fifteen or more of the past twenty-two months.

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**BIG BOYS DON'T CRY,  
BLACK BOYS DON'T FEEL**

*The Intersection of Shame and Worry on Community  
Violence and the Social Construction of Masculinity among  
Urban African American Males: The Case of Derrion Albert*

Waldo E. Johnson Jr., David J. Pate Jr.,  
and Jarvis Ray Givens

**ABSTRACT**

In the fall of 2009, Derrion Albert, a sixteen-year-old African American male honor student at Chicago's Christian Fenger Academy High School, made international news. On his way home from school, Albert was brutally attacked and murdered by a group of assailants. It is alleged that he was caught in a brawl involving factions of two neighborhood gangs. Albert had no affiliation with either of the gangs; he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. This chapter explores Derrion Albert's death and situates it within the context of violence between and among African American males more broadly. Specifically, this chapter examines the intersection between the social construction of masculinity among African American young males and violence in low-income urban communities. The authors conduct three levels of analysis to explore the social determinants of health and mental well-being at the individual, community, and social system levels. The first part discusses two current theoretical determinants of community violence: shame and worry. The second part employs an examination of print and Web-based archival data to reassess Derrion Albert's murder and community responses to that event, within the context of individual and community shame and worry.



## INTRODUCTION

On the afternoon of September 24, 2009, Derrion Albert, a sixteen-year-old honor student at Christian Fenger Academy High School on Chicago's South Side, was brutally beaten to death before a crowd of more than fifty spectators, largely his male peers, as he waited at a bus stop. Within twenty-four hours the melee had been witnessed worldwide. Bystanders had recorded the attack using camera phones that captured images of assailants wielding parts of railroad ties, the rectangular-shaped wooden objects used as the base of railroad tracks in the United States.

Roseland, the community area where the incident occurred, is often characterized as among Chicago's most violent neighborhoods—a once thriving neighborhood, where community violence is now a daily occurrence, according to residents. Media reports suggest that the deadly after-school brawl began as a dispute between factions of two neighborhood gangs: one from the Altgeld Gardens neighborhood, in which Derrion resided, and another from “The Ville,” a section of the Roseland community centered about a block from Fenger. The actual location of the melee was just outside the Agape Community Center, a long-standing neighborhood sanctuary where students could complete homework, take Bible classes, or simply escape the chaotic streets of Chicago's Southeast side.

Derrion Albert had been walking east among fellow Fenger classmates to the bus stop when approximately ten teens converged from opposite directions on the vacant lot adjacent to the community center. The two groups of students began quarreling on the street about the details of a shooting in Altgeld Gardens earlier that day that police reported was gang-related. The quarrel became physically violent and within minutes dozens of teen males converged on the vacant lot as bystanders. Witnesses confirm that Albert was not initially a target; rather, he was swept up into the altercation as he approached the bus stop. There, he was confronted by Eric Carson and another unidentified member of the Ville faction. Carson struck Albert in the head with a piece of a wooden railroad tie, and the second person punched him in the face. He was briefly knocked unconscious but regained consciousness and was trying to get up when he was attacked by a second group, apparently from his own Altgeld Gardens neighborhood. He was struck in the head by Eugene Riley with a piece of railroad tie. When Derrion was on the ground again, Silvonus Shannon could be seen on video “stomping on his head repeatedly.”

An amateur video shot by a witness showed the attack unfolding and has been subsequently viewed thousands of times nationally. “Derrion, get

up!” a female voice pleads on the video. Earlier in the video, a male voice is overheard exclaiming: “Beat that . . .” The video reveals that, as the attackers ran away, the person with the camera, who remains unidentified, and several other bystanders approached Derrion. When it was all over, Derrion lay in the gravel and his slight, five-seven frame was dented and damaged from the pummeling. He was pulled into the community center by T’awanna Piper, a youth worker employed by the center. He was taken to Roseland Community Hospital and then transferred to Advocate Christ Hospital and Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

A local TV station received the video and turned it over to police. Four teens—Eugene Bailey, seventeen; Eric Carson, sixteen; Eugene Riley, eighteen; and Silvonus Shannon, nineteen—were initially charged with his murder. Riley and Shannon were Derrion’s fellow Fenger classmates and before the brawl, neither had criminal records. Carson was on probation for a 2008 robbery conviction. Charges against Bailey have since been dropped for insufficient evidence. On January 20, 2010, nineteen-year-old Lapoleon Colbert was charged with first-degree murder in the beating death. He is presently being held in jail without access to bail.

This chapter examines the tensions between the two impoverished neighborhoods from which the victim and his assailants hail to offer a broader context for understanding the events of that day. We consider how public policies in response to economic shifts and downturns, housing and demographic patterns, and declining educational and employment opportunities interact with community social structures and resulting community behavior in ways that might otherwise be viewed as solely individually motivated and potentially criminal. The neighborhood context provides a lens through which we examine community violence and the social construction of masculinity among African American males. This lens helps us understand the life trajectories of Derrion Albert and his attackers. This perspective might also help to explain how community violence may derive from a set of social structures within which Albert and his assailants may *both* be victims. We consider shame and worry as social stressors that may also promote violence among African American males within this neighborhood context.

These young males are both active agents and passive reactors in an ongoing, downward spiral of diminishing social and economic opportunities for individual and community development. Such circumscribed urban spaces are fertile terrains for community violence. The chronically violent atmosphere in which these young males reside invokes individual stressors not the least of which is the persistent worry that they may be the targets of

violence and shame. Such social stressors, coupled with the narrow options available to these young men of color within the social construction of masculinity in their communities, may cause these African American males to resort to violent behavior against strangers and neighborhood peers as a socially tolerated means of coping and survival.

Derrion Albert may have been viewed as an unlikely target because he was neither a gang member nor known to hang out and participate in antisocial behavior. Yet violent male bravado characterizes the social construction of masculinity within the cultural context of his impoverished neighborhood. This narrow and confining construction of masculinity poses both real and imagined threats to healthy male physical and mental development. In fact, Albert's reputation as an honor student and "a good kid" (both descriptions are at odds with the social construction of "street cred" masculinity in his social environment) coupled with the fact that he found himself in a contested space at an importune time may have enhanced his vulnerability to violence. The violence was initially perpetrated by angry young men from an opposing neighborhood, but strangers and fellow neighborhood peers ultimately joined in it.

#### **HOW PRECIPITATING AND REACTIVE PUBLIC POLICIES CONTRIBUTE TO CONTESTED NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURAL CONTEXTS**

Derrion Albert and several of his alleged assailants were residents of Altgeld Gardens, a neighborhood within the Riverdale community, one of the seventy-seven Chicago community areas. Chicago's community areas were originally defined by the Social Science Research Committee at the University of Chicago, which during the 1920s unofficially divided the city into seventy-seven areas. These well-defined and static U.S. Census areas serve as the basis for a variety of local and regional planning initiatives. At one time they corresponded roughly to neighborhoods within the city. With few exceptions, however, the original boundaries have not been revised since to reflect any demographic change. Today, many of the community areas no longer correspond to any single neighborhood; some of their names have fallen out of colloquial use. In many cases the actual character of the community area is quite independent of the individual neighborhoods it comprises. According to the City of Chicago Department of Community Development, Chicago neighborhoods have changed substantially over time due to urban redevelopment, gentrification, and the constant shuffle and absorption of the immigrant population.

Today, the Altgeld neighborhood is often colloquially characterized as a community area because of the large public-housing complex, Altgeld Gardens, which encompasses the area. Since the late 1990s, Chicago's transformation of public housing has resulted in the demolition of large public-housing complexes, including the Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, and Cabrini Green located along Grand Boulevard. The Douglas and Gold Coast community areas are less than a mile from Chicago's alluring lakefront, within blocks of major highway arteries, and equally close to the expanding and gentrifying South Loop and central business district. The neighborhoods and community areas where these massive public-housing complexes were once located have also undergone gentrification to a lesser degree. Perhaps most visibly missing from these neighborhoods and communities, besides the demolished housing units, is the array of both private and public social-welfare services, including schools, health, and social-service organizations, that were once located within blocks of the housing complexes.

Ironically, the transformation of public housing in close proximity to Chicago's lakefront and its expanding central business district forced the relocation of the vast majority of former residents to more remote and impoverished neighborhoods, like Roseland and even Altgeld Gardens to a lesser degree. Concurrently, other policies sought to address the declining high school attendance rates among students in neighborhoods experiencing escalating crime and violence. These policies contributed to the conversion of the Altgeld Gardens neighborhood high school into a military academy (George Washington Carver), with its accompanying selection criteria and appeal. Roseland's neighborhood high school (Christian Fenger Academy High School) was reconstituted into a general academic center that aimed to unify the two opposing neighborhoods into one high school district.

Although Derrion Albert's neighborhood has not witnessed the demolition of its large public-housing complex, Altgeld Gardens and neighboring Roseland have not escaped the public policies that have resulted in transforming, reconstituting, and even closing schools that previously were largely populated along neighborhood boundaries. The neighborhood high school that served residents of Altgeld Gardens, George Washington Carver, began its transition to a military academy in 2000, thus forcing Altgeld Gardens high school students seeking an area general academic curriculum to attend Fenger. Located in the Roseland community area, Fenger was designated as a "turnaround school," in which improvements to curriculum and programming began during the 2008–09 school year. The accompanying escalating high school drop-out rate, particularly among

African American students, also contributed to the reduction of available high school options in light of changing neighborhood demographics and decreasing public-school funding. In addition, a proliferation of military schools emerged as high school options within the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) during this period. In light of the rising community violence and history of crime associated with Altgeld Gardens and surrounding neighborhoods, a military academy was viewed as a viable option for enhancing youth development and expanding educational opportunities.

These considerations notwithstanding, neighborhood high schools in large urban communities provide accessible educational services to residents whose geographic mobility is constrained. They also serve important safety and social control functions. As a metropolis renowned as the City of Neighborhoods, Chicago celebrates many ethnic cultures within its seventy-seven community areas. It boasts the largest Polish community outside of Poland, expansive Italian and Irish neighborhoods, as well as Asian, Caribbean, and Latino communities in its North Side and South Side areas. These neighborhoods or communities, often used interchangeably, are widely recognized for their maintenance of food, cultural celebrations, and other events identified with their countries and nations of origin.

Neighborhoods also form distinguishing individual, familial, or structural identities. Before late-twentieth-century gentrification, for example, Chicago's South and West Loops were historically characterized as non-residential warehouse and business districts. Over time, and because of their proximity to the central business district (CBD), these neighborhoods became increasingly attractive to middle- and upper-income urban dwellers as mixed-use areas for residential, business services, recreation, restaurants, and entertainment. Community areas like Roseland and Altgeld Gardens in the neighboring Riverdale community, miles removed from the CBD in contrast, are contemporaneously recognized as the affordable but largely residential communities of former public-housing residents evicted from adjacent impoverished neighborhoods, including Cabrini Green on the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park on the Near North Side, the Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway Gardens, and the Harold Ickes Homes located in the Near South Side, and the Douglas and Grand Boulevard neighborhoods just south of the CBD.

The latest wave of gentrification in communities within a mile or so of Chicago's central business district has yet to fully reach the Roseland community, and demographic changes within this neighborhood have led to economic and social decline over time. Historically, Roseland, the home of the opposing assailants in the Derrion Albert case, was a cosmopolitan,

multiethnic bedroom community next to industrial Pullman, where George Pullman had manufactured his “Palace” railway coaches. Fortunes began to change in the 1960s, when industry patterns led to economic decline. Steel mills were shuttered. Pullman scaled back production and closed for good in 1981. A period of rapid ethnic succession took place. Skyrocketing crime rates, gang violence, and urban decay forced longtime Roseland residents and businesses to move away—a phenomenon referred to locally as white flight. New residents, almost exclusively African American, purchased homes with federal subsidies and mortgages backed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). By the mid-1980s Roseland had one of the highest Housing and Urban Development (HUD) repossession rates in the city. Much needed economic and social revival remains elusive.

Unlike the now demolished Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway Gardens public-housing complexes, Altgeld Gardens has never enjoyed a wide complement of social and public services, in part because of its remoteness from the CBD. As a public-housing complex located on Chicago’s far southeastern border, it has generally been “out of sight and out of mind.” Even the physical construction and traffic patterns of the housing complex reflect its distal physical location from neighboring communities, businesses, and social services, except those physically housed within the complex. The proximal environment of urban decline reflected in lost economic enterprise and community infrastructure, deteriorating housing, and educational opportunities is nearly a stone’s throw from the yet distal oases of thriving communities near the CBD, where social order and development positively interact with economic opportunity to promote civic engagement and reinforce positive youth development.

Carver High School’s transition to a military academy redefined the neighborhood boundaries between Altgeld Gardens and the Roseland community, which were at best fragile. The reconstitution and closure of high schools, another public policy designed to respond to budgetary crises affecting public education, also implicitly addresses youth violence in schools and neighborhoods and aims to enhance civic order within these communities. As a consequence, school-age youth residing in Altgeld Gardens must now travel the streets of the adjacent yet often unfamiliar neighborhoods in pursuit of education on a daily basis. This combining of neighborhood school boundaries was intended to enhance the high school matriculation rate, particularly among African American males. In reality, though, it functioned to diminish the likelihood that the young males will continue their high school education. This, in part, is due to the heightening tension and hostility between youth peers in the neighboring com-

munities. Concerned, engaged parents often elect to enroll their students in another school. A select few gifted and academically talented African American male high school students enroll in better schools. The majority of transferees, however, enroll in equally mediocre schools or in schools with even lesser academic reputations—all of which may require several hours of commuting each way on a daily basis.

These neighborhood tensions, which in earlier generations resulted in youthful verbal disagreements and occasional skirmishes between youth residents, are now characterized by frequent and devastating gun violence among youth. In Chicago alone twenty-four youths have been the victims of school- and community-related shootings and deaths since the beginning of the 2009–10 academic term. Ironically, the motivations for the violence, popularly attributed to gang struggles for drugs and weapons turf, are generally unknown to the legions of largely involuntary foot soldiers who are engaged in fighting the turf wars. It is quite likely that the origins of these neighborhood hostilities that pit youth against youth are more ideological than resulting from actual physical or personal transgressions. Police and witnesses have said that the melee of September 24, 2009, was a culmination of a simmering rivalry between two groups of Fenger students—one that lived near the school and the other from the Altgeld Gardens housing development. Neighbors have said the feud had been building since August 2009, spilling across Roseland streets and, some have said, into Fenger. Others have held that the feud between the two communities is a long-standing one, going back as many as twenty years.

#### **IDENTITY AND MASCULINITY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN COMMUNITIES IN CHAOS**

Although both male and female youth must navigate the streets and negotiate safety issues within troubled communities, young African American males face unique threats to their physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual development. Namely, they must develop a healthy masculine identity while avoiding potential threats to personal safety. Derrion Albert was no exception. Although African American females are threatened by physical violence and deplorable sexual assault, African American males are more likely to be the daily targets of gang recruitment. Gang members are often the perpetrators of these gendered physical and sexual offenses against young girls and women, at times within the context of gang initiation, but also increasingly for sport as depicted in misogynist music, video, and media presentations in which females are routinely degraded.

By all available accounts, Derrion Albert had successfully resisted these constant entreatments to join neighborhood gangs. Nor was he characterized as an individual who participated in antisocial and criminal activities. He was widely recognized as a mannerable and disciplined young man. “This gang violence is escalating beyond control,” said T’Awanna Piper, the youth worker who pulled Derrion’s beaten body into the building. “He was caught in it. The kids directly involved walked away healthy, and this kid didn’t walk away at all.” Ms. Muhammad, a life-long resident of Altgeld who worked as a community activist for CeaseFire, a community-based organization, affirmed that Derrion was not affiliated with a gang. She reported that he did not even engage in behaviors like wearing his cap turned around or using profanity that some view as a means of signaling affiliation with their neighborhoods or to deflect gang recruitment and attack. Derrion’s grandfather, Joseph Walker, described his grandson as a peaceful young man who attended Bible class on Tuesday evenings and church routinely on Sunday.

Derrion’s academic record reflected that he was very engaged in his studies and was an honor roll student. School peers have described him as an athlete and member of the Fenger football team, despite his slight build, who loved computers and who was popular with the young ladies in his school. Such personality characteristics were unlikely to win Derrion respect or what his young peers might call “street cred.” Street cred is accorded to individuals who demonstrate experience in or knowledge of issues affecting the local community environment. Even the prestige and honor generally attributed to being a student-athlete has declining value among neighborhood peers, as reflected in the shooting death of Chicago prep athletes such as sixteen-year-old Ben Wilson, a legendary basketball player at Chicago’s Simeon High School. Wilson was slain by a gang member in November 1984. More recently is the example of Blair Holt, a sixteen-year-old high school junior who died on a city bus after he attempted to shield a fellow student from a spray of gunfire targeted toward a rival gang member in May 2007. Derrion’s humanity, although largely unknown before his untimely death, became a national and international symbol of a young African American male struggling to achieve in the face of tremendous odds.

In sharp contrast, as public-health researcher John Rich has so poignantly articulated, young men like Silvonus Shannon, Eugene Bailey, Eric Carson, Lapoleon Colbert, and Eugene Riley have become, for many people, “strange icons of fear.” In his 2009 book *Wrong Place, Wrong Time: Trauma and Violence in the Lives of Young Black Men*, Rich explains:



“Each time a shooting or stabbing or an assault is reported in the news, the details obscure a young man with a story. Without any access to their voices, we could easily formulate solutions that are out of sync with the realities of their lives and that would be ineffective or outright destructive” (ibid.: xv). Instead, as a result of their notoriety, their humanity is diminished and they are viewed as inhumane, cold-blooded killers. Their aberrant behavior is assessed out of context, devoid of the violent environment in which they, not unlike Derrion, are victimized. Diminishing their humanity validates the assumption held by many in society that these youths are “Black ghetto gangsters warring over turf and drug trade and when they are injured or killed, they deserve what they get” (ibid.: xv).

Limited information about Shannon and Riley, beyond their videotaped confessions, have contributed to the public perception of these young men as juvenile delinquents en route to becoming hardened criminals who should be severely punished. Yet, in addition to being one of Derrion’s fellow classmates at Fenger, Shannon had a job as a landscaper. Riley, a high school graduate, worked part time at a health-care center and an auto repair shop. In thoughtful reflection, then, we are left wanting more information about the lives of these young men, far more than the details of a criminal charge of murder can offer.

Similarly, in his book *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*, Rhodes Scholar Wes Moore ponders how he might have fared without family and community support during his troubled adolescent transition in Brooklyn and subsequently in military high school in Pennsylvania. This support helped to redirect Moore’s energies to become a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Johns Hopkins University. His book outlines the life trajectories of two African American males named Wes Moore, born within a few years of one another and residing in the same Baltimore neighborhood as youths. Author Wes Moore’s father died unexpectedly and both male youths grew up in female-headed, single-parent households. The mother of author Wes Moore drew on family and community resources that assisted her in protecting her son from the mean Baltimore streets; she relocated to Brooklyn to reside with her parents. Still residing in a tough urban environment and growing increasingly angered by his impoverished circumstances throughout his childhood, author Wes Moore succeeded against tremendous odds while the other Wes Moore is currently serving a life sentence in prison for murder.

Derrion Albert and his alleged assailants are not unlike other young African American males residing in urban environments who encounter daily tests of wills in which the outcomes can be life altering. Derrion’s

family structure mirrored that of the two Wes Moores. His mother was unable to maintain parental custody, so he was being reared by his grandfather. Derrion's academic performance suggested that he was similar to the author Wes Moore, but unlike the author's mother, Derrion's grandfather was unable to provide the needed sanctuary that could protect him from harm's way. Our limited insight into the family structures and family life of Derrion's alleged assailants provide insufficient knowledge to make different or parallel comparisons, but given the pervasiveness of female-headed, single-parent households among this population, the authors feel reasonably certain that parallel comparisons about the victim and the alleged assailants' family life can be asserted.

Those held personally responsible for Derrion's death, as well as the small legion of "innocent bystanders" who watched the brutal killing, are young African American males who in some respects are undiagnosed victims of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This disorder results from the cumulative physical and psychological effects of chronic exposure to community violence. As young males whose identities are in part inextricably linked to their neighborhoods, their behavior can be viewed as context to the structural conditions within. Irrespective of male bravado and maladaptive masculine identities imposed upon them, all of these young males worry about their own vulnerability to becoming victims of violence in their own and neighboring communities.

Thug identities all too often have become the monikers of celebrity and respect among male youth within communities like Altgeld Gardens and beyond, even among in middle-class urban and suburban communities. However, for male youth in these communities, such monikers may more likely be youthful identities of sport—that is, one of a range of socially constructed identities drawn from popular youth culture from which these youth may mimic. However, family socioeconomic status, neighborhood context, community norms of behavior, and access to a broader opportunity structure may regulate adoption of the thug identity as the sole or primary moniker.

In sharp contrast, young boys and adolescent males residing in impoverished neighborhoods are often enchanted by and regale in the bravado accorded the thug identity and access to other monikers of success are often unrepresented or far less accessible. Some seek to obtain such thug status even as young boys. In 1994, for example, the Roseland community gained notoriety as the stomping ground of Robert "Yummy" Sandifer, the African American youth who was executed by his gang at age eleven. Nicknamed Yummy because of his love of junk food, Sandifer was a mem-

ber of Chicago's Black Disciples street gang. After committing murder, arson, and armed robbery, he was executed by fellow gang members who feared he had turned snitch. Media coverage of Sandifer's death and widely published retrospectives on his short, violent life became symbols of the gang problem in America, the failure of the social safety net, and the shortcomings of the juvenile justice system.

### **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK MASCULINITY IN THE URBAN CONTEXT**

Young African American males like Derrion Albert, who successfully negotiate daily taunts and entreatments to affiliate with a gang or to engage in other juvenile delinquent activities, face constant threats to their physical safety, psychological well-being and to their masculine development. Rich (2009) has empirically examined an all-too-often held assumption about urban violence among young African American males. His study confirms that the pervasive urban violence is only part of the story. He cites statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which confirm that homicide is the leading cause of death for African American men between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four. In 2006, for example, the homicide rate for African American males ages fifteen to twenty-four was 92 in 100,000, while for white males in the same age group, the homicide rate was 4.7 in 100,000. In other words the homicide death rate was more than nineteen times higher for young African American males than young white men. Rich (*ibid.*) has also pointed out that while the overall homicide rates have appeared stable since 1999, the homicide rate among African American men between twenty-five and forty-four has increased substantially.

Rich's study is even more insightful: "Homicide represents only the tip of the iceberg with regard to violence. . . . Nonfatal injuries are far more common than fatal injuries. The CDC estimates that for every homicide, there are more than 94 nonfatal violent incidents. In other words for every person who gets shot and dies, another four get shot and survive" (*ibid.*: x). Rich also points out that violence studies suggest that violence is a recurrent problem: "Up to 45 percent of people who have had a penetrating injury—a gunshot or stab wound—will have another similar injury within five years. More disturbing is the finding that five years after their initial injury, 20 percent of these individuals are dead" (*ibid.*: xi). According to Rich, researchers have tried to identify predictors of who is most likely to be shot or stabbed again. Among the factors that predict reinjury are

being black, being male, being poor, past or current drug use, carrying a weapon, living in an unsafe neighborhood, unemployment, and prior arrest. However, the risks are so general that they are associated with health risks other than violence and tell us little about how violence recurs.

These findings have important implications for the physical, psychological, emotional, and even spiritual statuses of young African American males. Even within communities where violence is less pervasive, young males are uniquely at risk as targets of violence if they must routinely exit their relatively safe environs to enter or cross neighborhoods where chronic violence abounds. Now challenged to navigate the streets of unfamiliar neighborhoods often hostile to “young male outsiders,” all the while negotiating constant refusals to join gangs within their own neighborhoods, young African American males like Derrion Albert may be viewed with universal suspicion by adult neighborhood residents who perceive them as threats to their physical selves before given the opportunity to present themselves otherwise. At worst, they may be perceived as rival neighborhood gang members by their peers when in reality these young males may be delicately negotiating contested urban spaces without the protection of gang affiliation. Several contemporaneous reports have suggested that this account aptly describes the context in which Derrion Albert navigated the Ville area of the Roseland community as an African American male student attending Fenger High School but as a resident of Altgeld Gardens. Such constant scrutiny and potential peril mandate a level of hypervigilance and self-affirmation that is developmentally demanding for a sixteen-year-old male. In his 2009 work, Rich also mentions Carnell Cooper, a Baltimore trauma surgeon, who has reported that some young African American men cited “being dissed” as a cause of their injuries, hinting at more complex factors in the environment that might spur violence to erupt.

Daniel Bennett (2010) has also identified “being dissed” as part of a larger perspective in which young African American males disproportionately experience hassles with authority figures and with peers. Chronic assaults on their personhood can ignite visceral responses that contribute to the escalation of violence. Michael Lindsey (2010) has linked community violence to heightened levels of stress and mental illness among African American adolescents. He cites depression as a major undiagnosed mental illness among African American adolescent males, who are particularly vulnerable as they perceive fewer future opportunities, low neighborhood social capital, lack of kinship social support, and expanded violence. Lindsey’s findings support earlier research by Phaedra Corso and her colleagues (2007, also cited in Rich 2009, xiv) by pointing out that beyond the

staggering human and financial costs, urban violence has broader social effects: “Violence in neighborhoods breeds fear, which hinders community members from coming to the aid of others in need. Violence in schools leads to increased absenteeism because children are afraid to go to school. School violence also increases behavioral problems in schools.”

Rich (2009) has suggested that fragmentation of urban families, while often attributed to the lack of responsibility on the part of the father, may have roots in trauma itself. We know that traumatized people can find it difficult to connect to loved ones and to feel. We also know that in the setting of poverty and lack of opportunity, young men may find it difficult to fulfill their responsibilities, even if they desire to do so. A high level of community violence makes young men feel physically, psychologically, and socially unsafe. “Physically, young men who have been shot, stabbed or attacked feel that unless they arm themselves, someone else might attempt to harm them as they have been injured before,” Rich (*ibid.*: xv) continues: “Psychologically, they are left with the hyper vigilance and disruption that comes from trauma. Socially, they have been raised in communities where there is a shared idea that if you fail to defend yourself when challenged, you become a ‘sucker,’ which will lead other people, who now believe you are weak, to take advantage of you. This idea, which takes on a life of its own in communities where young people feel threatened, is also spurred on by ideas of what it means to be a man and what it means to stand up for oneself.”

Earlier scholarship by Elijah Anderson (1999 and 2008) has documented the widening grip of urban violence and the default identities that young males within these communities assume as perpetrators of violence. Fellow urban scholars like Ronald Mincy (2006), Sudhir Ventkatesh (2008, 2006, and 2000), William Wilson (2010, 1997, 1990 and 1987), and Alford Young (2004) have attested to the physical transformation of once thriving urban communities into contemporary oases of crime and deterioration and the impact of this transformation on residents, particularly young African American males. Originally populated by residents working to achieve “the American Dream,” these communities have become urban battlegrounds where those who can, move out, and those left behind engage in a daily test of will. Youths are pitted against adults; residents are numbed by chronic violence; and the most vibrant opportunities for living the American Dream appear to lie within the underground economy that is accompanied by personal and family risk.

Gangs and ganglike activities within communities are increasingly responsible for curtailing youth activities that have historically character-

ized youth transition into adulthood and masculine physical development. For example, physical exertion in public playgrounds, pick-up ballgames, and league participation in neighborhood parks as well as park district leagues have all been reduced significantly as a result of increasing gang presence in neighborhoods. In addition, childhood obesity, asthma, and other health problems among urban youth often result or are exacerbated due in part to a lack of physical activity and subsequent decline in mental acumen, particularly among African American youths. Some scholars have linked improper diet and preoccupation with video games to these physical problems, but the impact of community violence on a range of options available for healthy exercise, youth hobbies and exploration, sports, and other activities important to physical and mental health is often underestimated. These physical exertion limitations resulting from community violence have important implications for male development during the transitional developmental stages from childhood to adolescence and again to adulthood.

Despite the tension and risk that gang presence invokes, young males are more likely to spend time outside during childhood, seek communion with other male peers during late boyhood, and desire to navigate the sidewalks and streets during adolescence without adult supervision. Like the playgrounds and neighborhood parks that are under siege, community sidewalks, bus stops, and neighborhood streets in Altgeld Gardens and Roseland have become the pathways and arteries that are settings for interpersonal and random community violence. This severely limits youth and adult mobility and engagement within these neighborhoods. Historical myths and notions regarding the resilience of males in navigating such boundaries may have the effect of minimizing the real dangers they face, which inevitably places them at far greater risk of violence. Derrion Albert, recognized as a “good kid” with academic potential, is such an example.

Indeed, healthy masculine development is challenged on nearly every front, not only in violent urban neighborhoods but also in American society in general. The country’s violent societal context, its tolerance not only for the right to bear arms but also the penchant for sustaining extremist public policy that fosters access to assault weapons, bears some responsibility for the inevitable transformation of boys and adolescent males, particularly males of color growing up in impoverished communities, into the perpetrators of heinous criminal activity. As a result, the “bleeding of boys into men” (Johnson 2010) is clearly reflected in the implementation of public policies where youthful offenders are now routinely removed from

the neighborhoods and increasingly from the jurisdiction of juvenile courts and are charged and tried as adults with accompanying sentences, including death. The development of a healthy masculine identity is also challenged by dominant social expectations within poor communities in which males are expected to exhibit powerful, strong, brave, and in-control personas irrespective of context. Not only is this expectation unrealistic and contextually bound; it is also psychologically unhealthy given that these expectations begin all too often for African American males during childhood.

For example, the contention that “big boys don’t cry” is often a verbal chiding to suppress an emotional reaction that is equally uncomfortable for all involved. Yet boys are not men—neither chronologically nor developmentally—even if their physical stature may suggest otherwise. Perhaps more important, boys and men alike should not be socialized to believe that expressing emotions connotes less than masculine traits, and crying is indeed contextually appropriate when they experience disappointment or loss. Boys, like girls, need to develop and engage in the range of emotional responses to personal disappointment and loss as well as public tragedy that are contextually appropriate over the life course. Psychologist Joshua Coleman (2005) has revealed that a man’s emotional life is as complex and rich as a woman’s but often remains a mystery to him as well as to any woman who loves him. Although emotions have long been considered a female trait, men report feelings as often as women and describe their experiences of emotion similarly. In Coleman’s 2005 analysis of the emotional intelligence of five hundred thousand adults, men rated just as high in emotional awareness.

In studies of married couples, “husbands proved as attuned to their mates’ stress levels as wives, and just as capable of offering support. Although both men and women sigh, cry, rejoice, express rage, shout, and pout, the sexes process and express emotions differently. Emotions live in the background of a man’s life and the foreground of a woman’s. Testosterone dampens feelings in men, who compartmentalize and intellectualize more. Women seem naturally more in touch with their emotions, while men have to work at it. But when they do, it’s a win-win situation. They discover a whole new dimension of themselves. Their relationships are happier, and they’re happier too” (*ibid.*: 178). Coleman’s findings suggest that men lead healthier lives when they recognize the full range of emotional responses and engage in them.

The development of healthy masculine identity begins during boyhood

and continues to mature during adolescence (Biddulph 1995). But for young males growing up in urban environments, the challenges of negotiating multiple environments, many of which are hostile to their sensibilities (Bennett 2010), often mandates the formation of masculine development in late childhood. Educational psychologist Courtland Lee (1994) has posited that the urban context often accelerates adolescent development, calling into question the traditional developmental markers that characterize theories of adolescent development articulated by developmental psychologists Eric Erikson and Jean Piaget. Lee's research on African American urban youth builds on the scholarship of Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary Gardner (1941), whose pathbreaking research focused on socialized anxiety within adolescence and drew particular attention to race and social class position of "Negroes" in American society. More recently, developmental psychologist Margaret Spencer (2008) has examined African American male youths in the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST). PVEST serves as the foundation for Spencer's gendered research that addresses the resiliency, identity, and competence formation processes of African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Euro-American youth. Spencer's continuing research addresses youths' emerging capacity for healthy outcomes and constructive coping methods while developing under unacknowledged and stressful conditions.

For those young males, especially African American boys and adolescents who experience abridged childhoods in chronically violent settings, masculine development is often neither healthy nor socially adaptive. They may seek to control their emotions and environment by intimidating those viewed as more vulnerable than themselves and retaliating in the form of verbal and physical confrontation against those who threaten violence. The failure to help African American boys and adolescents to recognize and appropriately employ the range of emotional responses to individual and structural phenomena—including self-reflection, responding to loss by crying, and acknowledging grief—can wreak havoc on their orderly growth and development. Growing up in neighborhoods like Altgeld Gardens potentially encourages young African American boys and adolescent males to grow up too fast and to adopt unhealthy masculine character traits in lieu of more adaptive strategies for coping with interpersonal, family, and community violence. As a result, young African American boys and adolescent males are not only admonished that big boys don't cry, they are also implicitly attuned to becoming black boys who don't feel, who are insensitive to the feelings of their fellow peers, and ultimately who devalue their own humanity.



**SHAME AND WORRY AS CONCEPTUAL MOTIVES  
AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE**

The Derrion Albert story can be easily written off as just another case of urban youth violence—an all-too-frequent phenomenon in communities like Albert's. Absent from most accounts, however, is an analysis of the motivations of the alleged perpetrators of the crime. Subsequent to the initial shock and public outcry, many similar incidents are therefore simply dismissed as black males killing other black males. These young males are typically characterized as innately hyperaggressive, predisposed to both interpersonal and community violence, and intrinsically inhumane. They are perceived as such because society offers little or no critical insight or reasoning as to why these events of community violence are largely situated within African American communities (and in this case almost exclusively among adolescent and young adult African American males). Reports in newspaper articles, local news stations, and other popular media frequently depict superficial accounts of African American male violence. A shallow understanding of these young males has thus become standard practice in reporting their daily activities and the lack of contextual understanding of their numbing, violent responses to the interplay of individual and structural factors goes largely unchallenged.

This chapter offers an alternative perspective, however. It simultaneously affirms that such violent behavior is appalling, yet posits that these young males are in part reacting to other structural phenomena. As perpetrators of community violence, these young males are responding to macro-structural forces and public policies that inadvertently motivate such behavior. This account builds on two conceptual perspectives—worry and shame—as being precipitating and reactive factors to community violence among African American males. In this discussion shame is referenced as “an overwhelmingly powerful emotion that is associated with feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, and damaged self image” (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, and Breugelmans, in press). The concept of shame challenges one to think more critically about how individuals who commit unprovoked acts of violence against fellow community members view themselves, and how their self-perception may trigger certain behavioral responses to the presence of others. The question of how self-perception develops is critical and can be understood as resulting from media depictions as well as from a sense of diminished socioeconomic status. When these young men are socialized to embrace certain gender roles, with respect to male responsibility, and are unable to meet these expectations,

the result can become a shameful and conditioning experience. For many of them diminished socioeconomic status is widely reflected in nearly every social dimension of their life experience as well as in the lived experiences of those with whom they associate. It is intergenerational.

However, shame may manifest as something that young men endeavor to hide or mask. Coauthors Richard Majors and Janet Billson (1992) have identified “cool pose” as young African American males’ attempt to hide their frustration or shame by appearing completely emotionless. This may result in other unhealthy forms of masculine identity to assert and maintain social constructions of manhood. According to this perspective, the idea of being (or at least appearing) apathetic, indifferent, or detached to emotions or events that affect the individual is a coping mechanism used to maintain sanity and perceived psychological balance. In other words these young males appear to or choose not to work toward attaining things that may be foreign or unattainable (education, obtaining jobs in the legitimate labor market, being a supportive father or husband). Instead, enacting aggression and violence can be used as a means by which they acquire the respect or power that would otherwise escape them, and in the process these young males seek to appear neither ashamed nor weak.

“The link between masculinity and aggression can be partly understood from a social learning perspective,” anxiety scholars Matthew Jakupcak, Matthew Tull, and Lizabeth Roemer (2005: 281) have written, “in which media images, cultural expectations, and adult male modeling of aggressive responses influence men’s beliefs and behaviors associated with anger and hostility. However, expressions of hostility and aggression may serve a more immediate, emotion-regulatory function for men; men may learn to regulate their emotional experiences by using aggression and hostility to terminate their experience of vulnerable emotions, such as fear and shame.” Shame, therefore, can operate as a stimulant for violence. There are a number of reasons why so many young men and boys are ashamed or maintain a negative self-view. In the case of Derrion Albert, the community is poverty-stricken. Drug abuse, broken homes, and lack of educational opportunity largely characterize the environment and likely affected the young men involved in the brawl that killed Albert. In communities such as these, the intense shame among residents is increasingly manifested as community violence.

In exploring this concept of shame, it is important to also understand how aggression and violence are attributable to the development of masculinity as defined by Western standards. This is important to note because

although young African American males may be unable to affirm their manhood in socially acceptable ways (such as through work or educational attainment), they may assert their masculinity through violence. Furthermore, to compensate for the diminished sense of power or respect gained through socially acceptable channels (for example, employment, status, or conspicuous display of personal wealth), young black males may come to be hyperaggressive and violent. Aggression scholar Shaun Hegdeth (2006) has discussed the intersection of shame and aggression in the following manner: "Among lower working-class, racial minority boys, the youth group or gang is the central arena within which masculinity is enacted. The street, rather than school or workplace, provides gang members with the resources to display manhood. Crime becomes a means of transcending class and race domination and an important resource for accomplishing gender. In this setting, the gang is the public repository for a collective staging of manhood."

Hegdeth stresses that community spaces or streets where gangs form become a stage on which gender can be enacted and defined. As opposed to dealing with the shame associated with the lack of accessibility to jobs or a proper education, violence and aggression in the street becomes the alternative. Community violence serves as a mechanism to escape the powerlessness and shame that comes with being a part of a subordinate group. Within this theoretical frame the brutal killing of Derrion Albert can be seen as a performance of young black men struggling to maintain a purpose for their existence within the norm of Western gender politics. Although this may seem extreme, it is important to understand that at the core of one's humanity is the longing to have a positive self-view and to be at peace with one's individuality. However, when a person is ashamed, his positive self-image is challenged, as is his or her feeling of self-worth (De Hooze, Zeelenberg, Breugelmans, in press). The young men involved in the brawl that killed Albert were therefore going to extreme measures to validate their masculinity, because in just about every other sector of society they are devalued. "The harsher the environment, the more accentuated the behavior. The more depleted the resources for augmenting manhood, the higher the stakes for the accrual of honor" (Hegdeth 2006: 38).

The next stage to this model is worry, or the anxiety that comes with keeping uncontrollable realities or feelings private from the outside world. Worry is the afterthought of shame. If a boy is ashamed, he will worry about others finding out and viewing him as weak. As stated before, shame in a young man by dominant standards is not a positive attribute. Feelings

can be interpreted as weakness while a show of anger often equates to strength. This leads young men to believe that to protect themselves they should suppress the feelings that are characterized as weak and amplify anger. Therefore, worry can be seen as the link between shame and aggression. Although shame is created internally when a young boy does not measure up, it is the worry about how others will view him that drives him to aggressive behavior as he seeks to mask his emotions or to maintain respect as a masculine being. Many young boys have a fear of losing face if their shame is exposed (Jakupcak, Tull, and Roemer 2005).

The progression from shame to worry, and then to violence, is a symptom that has become commonplace in impoverished African American urban communities. Young African American males have been positioned such that they have far more to be ashamed of than proud, therefore as young males they worry about masking their negative self-image and feelings of worthlessness. Thus they are left with violence as their most adept means of asserting personal agency, protecting their manhood, and validating their worth. This stress and strife serves as a “powerful predictor of future life difficulties” (Rich 2009: xv). Rich (*ibid.*: xiii) has asserted that “trauma looms even larger in the hostile environments in which these young men live. . . . It drives their reactions and decisions and disrupts their normal supportive relationships that all of us depend on. In this same environment, there is great pressure to ‘be a man’ (perhaps in the presumed and real absence of men serving in more traditional roles as residential and custodial fathers) and not acknowledge these [daily] traumas, lest they appear weak. The pressure not to be seen as weak piles on even more pressure to prove that they are strong. All of these pressures prime the pump for the cycle of violence.”

#### **THE DERRION ALBERT MURDER: SAMPLING APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION**

The conceptual and theoretical framework presented in this chapter aims to situate the Derrion Albert case contextually lest the data be taken out of context and assessed in terms of the visceral reactions they engender. We examined the events surrounding the murder by collecting and assessing newspaper reports and TV newscasts on the murder. Data were also obtained through content analysis of selected YouTube videos and electronic message boards from September 24, 2009, through March 31, 2010. Most of these materials were posted during the months of September through November 2009.

### **Data Analysis**

The print, visual, and audio materials collected were analyzed using ethnographic content analysis or, as it is more commonly referred to, document-analysis techniques.<sup>1</sup> The goal of document analysis is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid. This type of study allows for an orientation toward constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant images and meanings. The qualitative content analysis employed a final sample consisting of seventy-seven newspaper articles, three National Public Radio programs, and three hundred videos—all providing reflective editorial comments on the murder of Derrion Albert. The informants included newscasters, identified family members, identified friends, and residents of the Roseland community. The analysis allowed us to capture meaning and emphasis of the data through the identification of frames, themes, and discourse (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Altheide 1996).

### **Demographics**

The review of the various materials provided a snapshot of the “voices” of anger, frustration, stress, shame, confusion, and sadness. The majority of the informants on the videos and in the newspaper interviews were men of various ages. We estimate that the ages of these men ranged from sixteen to the mid-sixties. Women also provided editorial commentary on the Derrion Albert murder, but the overwhelming majority of informants were men. Another primary source of material were blogs associated with the various YouTube videos; many of these blogs contained messages written by women, but the “voices” of men were overwhelmingly present. The only media that allowed for visual examination of commentary were videos and television newscasts. These informants were primarily Black men and women; however, there were a few young white and Latino men and women providing commentary as well.

### **Limitations of the Research Methodology**

The primary limitation of this methodology is the lack of an opportunity for the researchers to directly observe the social and cultural environments of the informants in the printed and visual media. In previous years someone conducting media analysis would have been constrained by limited access to the various types of media material discussed; however, electronic and information technology has progressed significantly in the past ten

years. Therefore, the ability to conduct content analysis has been significantly enhanced.

### **Research Findings: “Why Are They So Angry?”**

“This is a perfect example of how parents need to do a better job of raising their kids. Seriously, who would want to live near these people, and give them jobs? This video is sick, I cried while watching it. This was brutality and a senseless crime. I am praying for everyone involved. This is why black people are thought of as so stupid and dumb . . . my people . . . let’s be serious.” The preceding comment was posted in response to the raw video showing the beating of Derrion Albert. The video was posted on YouTube seventy-two hours after Albert’s death. The video prompted President Obama to dispatch Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to Chicago to meet with Mayor Daley and other community and political leaders. The video gained a national as well as an international audience. Since September 27, 2009, there have been more than two million viewings of this YouTube video, accompanied by more than four thousand comments. A Google news search will yield over ninety thousand stories on the death of the sophomore “honor” student at Christian Fenger High School in the Roseland Community. The total number of YouTube video postings as of March 31, 2010, was at 692 and growing. The majority of these postings occurred during the months September through November 2009 and do not significantly taper off until the week before Thanksgiving of that year.

Despite the outpouring of emotion for the family, the death of Derrion Albert has produced various reactions across the country. We hypothesize that these reactions are different depending on whether people view the video images of the killing versus only hearing about it. Based on our analysis, there have been four prominent public reactions (themes) to the actual viewing of the raw footage of the killing. The reaction recorded most often was sadness; another reaction was to blame the parents for failing to teach morals and values to their children; another reaction was anger and frustration with the death of another young innocent black male; and the final reaction was a negative moral judgment of the way of life and community interactions. Some people identify with the perpetrators of the horrible crime and are ashamed of their community. A discussion of the community’s reactions to viewing the raw footage of the beating of Derrion Albert follows. The community’s reaction has been categorized into the four themes of (1) sadness, (2) parental responsibility, (3) frustration and anger, and (4) moral judgment and embarrassment.

*Sadness.* Many of the reactions to viewing of the Albert video were characterized by sadness, often profound sadness followed by an offering of condolences to the family. A young woman offered her reaction: “This is so sad, I cried as I watched the video of this young man being beat to death, especially since there appeared to [be] many people, who included adults standing around . . . and not one person lifted a voice or a hand to intervene, possibly saving Derrion’s life. Where is all of this anger coming from amongst our young adults? It is truly time for the saints of God to cry out to God to heal this land so we can stop the murder and annihilation of our future generations. Will the real saints please stand in prayer, set the atmosphere and make a difference? Be Blessed!”

A young African American woman described her reaction after viewing the video as “the most disturbing and sickest thing I’ve ever seen in my life.” Another person provided a historical context to his sadness with the circumstances surrounding the Albert family with this reaction: “What is even sadder is the fact that Albert was not a part . . . of the 2 sides fighting. Instead both sides took advantage of a [innocent] bystander on the [ground] and decided to gang up on [Derrion who was left] with no defenses. Talk about the epitome of cowardice, I truly hate gangsters. They are the scum of America. I remember in 1984 the killing of Ben Wilson, the standout basketball star from Simeon high school who was gunned down by senseless thugs here in Chicago. That was 25 years ago, and the senseless murder of this young man Derrion Albert reminds me so much of that tragedy.”

Many of the high-school-age community members who viewed the video reacted in a violent and sad manner. The following and final quote is from a sixteen-year-old African American female student: “I almost cried when I saw the footage of those kids hitting him with those pieces of wood. I’m 16 years old and I cannot believe that [this] happened. Fuck those kids who killed him, they should be on death row. . . . I felt like I couldn’t be safe around there [the Roseland community] anymore so I stop visiting my father [in this neighborhood].” One Roseland community resident provided these insightful and historical comments: “I just live blocks from where this happen[ed]. Night after night I hear sirens, either police or ambulances. Roseland is a good neighborhood at times, filled with good people. We just have some lost and misdirected teens. Instead of focusing on the Olympic games in 2016, help our kids. Give them programs . . . give them jobs . . . upgrade their schools. I hope we don’t win the bid . . . this city definitely doesn’t deserve it. Rest in peace, Derrion!” There were many references in the print and visual materials about the now failed bid for

the Olympics and that there should be more attention given to the youth violence in the communities.

*Parental responsibility.* The second highest reaction to the viewing of the video was that parents need to take more responsibility for their children. Specifically, the viewers were referring to the parents of the alleged murderers. Take this comment, for example: “Many people are becoming parents who are not willing to put in the time or discipline or income to do it right. I have opted not to have children after much thought because I am afraid. I can’t do it correctly as a single woman. I don’t expect taxpayers to fund my child’s upbringing. I don’t think the community should be responsible for picking up where my potential failings could leave off. What we are seeing here is kids who have not been raised like Derrion, who have not been paid attention to or disciplined, who feel they have no options. We are not at fault for that. Their parents are. And I frankly don’t think their parents care one iota about what they did last Thursday.” A final comment on this theme was from a man residing in Kentucky: “I live in rural Kentucky . . . but I agree with [others, that] our children are not being brought up with the right value’s. . . . Parents should be responsible for teaching their kids what is important in life.” Many of the comments reiterated the same recommendation that parents needed to take more responsibility for their children’s behavior.

*Anger and frustration.* The third theme combines the emotions of anger and frustration. Many of the video presentations included many men, primarily black men, expressing anger and simple frustration with the beating of Derrion. A demonstrably frustrated sixteen-year-old black youth sat facing the camera and stated: “I really need to just speak on this, America. I honestly want to thank whoever videotaped this and this is why [I am thanking her] because America needs to realize how destructive it can be . . . most of these things happen behind the scenes . . . so you cannot ignore it [the video] . . . you need to see it with your [own] two eyes. . . . As a black youth, it really hurts my heart and as an American we need to get our shit together. . . . People around the world will realize that his death was not in vain. . . . I pray that it makes a change . . . we gotta get it together people. . . . I really do not know what to say man . . . we need to wake up, America!”

Derrion Albert’s grandfather, Joseph Walker, stated that he was frustrated and that his grandson was a good kid who did not deserve to die. “He was in Bible class this Tuesday night. Church on Sunday,” Walker told WLS-TV. “I have no trouble out of my grandson whatsoever. This thing that happened to him is so horrific that we just don’t know what we’re



going to do. We lost a really dear friend in my grandson. He was a blessed child. I don't know where all this anger comes from these people today. That's just too much anger for someone to have in their heart. All I can do is, I'm going to pray for these people, I'm going to pray for forgiveness." Another man expressed his anger by simply saying that he was "a black man . . . [and] when I see this video, it is safe to say that our children are turning into animals."

A man in his early twenties expressed his strong frustration this way: "I do not understand what the fuck these little kids fighting for. . . . I do not even know if you can call it gangbanging . . . it is not for money . . . I just think that there is just a lot of angry little niggers out . . . there ain't no money out there in drugs . . . he got mobbed by a gang and his life got stomped out of him . . . he was coming home from school, a baby . . . he never got to experience life, he probably never had his first car, he did not get to experience college, he probably never had his first love . . . they killing our kids, killing our babies, they [Chicago] does not care, but his mother has go to deal with that for the rest of her life . . . this is my reality . . . and I had to deal with this when I was young . . . it is not even safe in school . . . nobody cares about us [blacks] . . . if they keep killing our youth, what is our future?"

Finally, a young black man who identified as a college student in his YouTube response stated his frustration and issued a cry for action: "This is really sad and awful. . . . I come home from my class and I look at this and kids are dying on the street every day. . . . He was an honor student, had no gang affiliation or membership . . . an innocent kid is murdered. . . . What are we going to do? When is this going to stop? Tell me, what you think? There is an urban underclass of poverty, they are destitute and what are going to do? . . . No resources, no way to escape their prison. What are we going to do? How are we going to stop this? . . . Our destinies are tied."

*Moral judgment and embarrassment.* The final theme included expressions of moral judgment and embarrassment after viewing the video of the beating of Derrion Albert. This comment expresses both embarrassment and condemnation of the parents: "This is a perfect example of how parents need to do a better job of raising their kids. Secondly this is why [we] African Americans keep ourselves down with hate and insensitive behavior. It is completely understandable that's why [black people] are victims of racism." Another man in a heavy British accent said: "Will Derrion Albert become a household name in Black America? . . . We all know Jena Six, Sean Bell . . . this is [the] reason why things are the way they are. . . . How do you gain compassion from the outsiders . . . when the oppressed group

is running around and [conducting] a mob murder? . . . something in the mind-set that has gone terribly awry . . . this is disgusting man.”

A third man made this simple statement on his YouTube presentation: “I hate and am ashamed of our kids, I mean hate.” Two students attending Fenger High School who were in the middle of the mob stated that “this type of incident makes white people think that this is who we are. This is stupid.” A final comment provides a critical analysis of the event: “Until we begin discussing solutions, nothing will change. Self-hate is a huge issue in most disenfranchised communities. There are serious psychological issues that are the result of an American legacy of violence and dehumanization. It affects all . . . but the dynamics will vary from group to group. One will never take responsibility if he does not believe a problem exists nor will he care if he hates his own people and himself.”

### CONCLUSION

After viewing the video of the beating of Derrion Albert, the prominent themes of sadness, parental responsibility, anger, frustration, moral judgment, and embarrassment were present among the commentators. After personally viewing the video, we too were left sad and frustrated. We were left questioning whether Derrion’s death will make a difference because it received national attention. The recently published book *Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority* provides a statement on the positive effects of the video. The author, Tom Burrell, wrote: “Each year, thousands of Black children die violent deaths in this country. The reaction to Derrion’s death was mostly because millions watched the murder on the Internet. Overwhelming silence is the standard reaction to such senseless deaths” (Burrell 2010: 87). We agree with Burrell, founder and retired CEO of Burrell Communications, one of the nation’s oldest and largest African American advertising firms, that “community violence and the death of Black children are handled with sensational news coverage for the moment followed by silence” (ibid.: 117).

We wanted to learn more about follow-up activities associated with the Derrion Albert death, so we interviewed Phillip Jackson, a Chicago community activist and founder of the Black Star Project. On April 9, 2010, his organization held a community “call to action” meeting in which more than fifteen hundred people were in attendance. When asked, “Do you think the response to your call to action is a result of Derrion’s Albert murder?” Jackson responded: “No, it did not stop the violence.” He proceeded to provide more insight on the day of the beating. “On that day of

the [Derrion Albert] beating, there were at least ten other mob fights on that did not get any coverage, and since the well-publicized beating, there has [*sic*] been hundreds of mob fights in the city of Chicago. Nothing has changed!"<sup>2</sup>

Jackson offered that there is "a lot of despair in the Black community, and that we are shortchanging these students." He reported that Fenger High School has a range of 2 to 7 percent of the entire student body performing at grade level. He hypothesized that the problem is that these students know that their life chances are limited. Therefore, there is no hope for a bright future. This contention, especially for African American males, is supported by a number of recent studies, including work by Howard University professor Ivory Toldson (2008); the Schott Foundation (2008); authors Marcus Littles, Ryan Bowers, and Micah Gilmer (2008); T. S. Jenkins (2006); Jelani Mandara (2006); and Ann Arnett Ferguson (2000). In a 2008 PBS report, economist Hernando Soto, in discussing the issues confronting poor people, stated: "Don't be fooled. . . . People don't get violent because they're poor. Poor people are pretty meek and humble. People get angry and violent and terrorism grows when people feel excluded." We infer from his statement, and those of Philip Jackson, that current and future social and economic exclusion contributes to the violent behavior.

Roseland community activist Diane Latiker has become so incensed by the violence in her community, and what she views as the city's seeming "indifference" to it, that she has turned her Roseland home into an after-school community center for teenagers. On Friday afternoon (after the beating of Derrion Albert) dozens of area teens gathered there to cry about the death of a schoolmate and voice concerns that they might be next. But after an hour they went about their business of planning a Thanksgiving dinner for hungry families in the Roseland area. "First they cry," she said. "But then they shake their heads and continue with their day, because it's become so commonplace to them. It's like, 'Oh well, another bump on the road.' They go on because it's the only way they can deal with it." Latiker wonders how she can possibly make room for Derrion's headstone. She created a memorial two years ago to honor the young people killed in Chicago. Each time a child is shot, stabbed, or beaten to death, she adds a stone to the memorial wall. "We have 163 stones right now, but we are 20, now 21, behind," she said. "I thought, well, I hoped, I dreamed that there'd be more space on the wall than kids being killed."

We have offered this conceptual frame as a lens through which readers might examine the circumstances that led to Derrion Albert's brutal death. We contend that while Silvonus Shannon, Eric Carson, and Eugene Riley

allegedly landed the physical blows that mortally wounded Albert, the community context resulting from the public policies, economic decline, and the community violence in which these four young males navigate daily also bears some responsibility for the chain of events that unfolded that fateful autumn afternoon. It is plausible that some of these young men—even Shannon, Carson, and Riley—may have engaged in various forms of community violence as a means of self-defense, peremptorily attacking individuals who they perceived to be more vulnerable than themselves. In the moment of escalating mob violence on that autumn afternoon, the victim may have been viewed as more vulnerable, a “punk”—as he was audibly described by one onlooker—who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We seek to complicate what seems on the surface to be no more than violence between two rival gangs, because neither Derrion nor his attackers have ever been confirmed to be gang members. We suggest instead that Albert’s violent death reflects the interplay of a number of factors, both individual and structural. By simply punishing the four young accused men, we may exact justice but will not end the cycle of community violence that encroaches on the lives of all residents of communities like Altgeld Gardens. Integrated, systemic approaches to eradicating community violence are required.

## NOTES

1. “Document analysis” refers to an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, and analyzing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning. Broadly conceived, all research materials are potentially documents within the researcher’s framework. The use of this method and a combination of methods are not paradigms or disciplines in their own right; rather, they are analytic strategies that reflect and respect the complexity of social organization, the forms of social action, and the conventions of social representation (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 836).

2. Flash mobs are a new phenomenon that is defined as a large group of people who organize on the Internet and quickly assemble in a public place. Jackson referred to these mob fights as a flash mob and hypothesized that young people have developed a new set of community rules that may be a result of the flash mob mentality because of what he sees as underlying anger and despair about their future.

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**PART V**

**THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**





**TRAJECTORIES OF OPPORTUNITY  
FOR YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF COLOR**

*Built Environment and Place-making Strategies  
for Creating Equitable, Healthy,  
and Sustainable Communities*

Deborah L. McKoy, Jeffrey M. Vincent,  
and Ariel H. Bierbaum

**ABSTRACT**

Where we live, work, learn, and play greatly affects everything—from health and safety to education and employment opportunities. The aim of this chapter is twofold: (1) we investigate the ways in which unhealthy environments—and the urban planning and institutional practices that created them—structure disadvantage and undermine the life chances of young men and boys of color; and (2) we describe how innovative city-school initiatives are aligning and leveraging the diverse elements of the built and social environment to create the trajectories of opportunity this group needs and deserves. We begin by drawing lessons from the literature on neighborhood effects, smart growth and regional equity, the growing educational opportunity gap, youth participatory planning, and innovative governance.

We then turn to an investigation of innovative place-making efforts under way in the San Francisco Bay Area, whose actors realize the connection between place characteristics and life outcomes. Through partnership-based redevelopment efforts, these efforts aim to improve the opportunities available to disadvantaged residents, especially young people. The cases look at the revitalization of public-housing communities, the comprehensive redevelopment of a severely distressed neighborhood, the creation of a full-service “center of community life” public school, and youth lifting

themselves up through authentic participation in urban planning and place-making processes. Effective interventions require concerted efforts to create trajectories of opportunity for disadvantaged young people. Place-making strategies can play a key catalytic role. Effective, comprehensive interventions mean aligning and leveraging people, place-making, and policies in new and profound ways. Finally, we present an evidenced-based framework for building healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities for all by establishing trajectories of opportunity for those in most need of them.



America's metropolitan areas are both very sprawling and very segregated by race and class, a dual pattern that creates what scholars have termed an "uneven geography of opportunity." Understanding and changing that geography is crucial if America is to improve outcomes in education, employment, safety, health and other vital areas over the next generation.

Xavier de Souza Briggs, *Geography of Opportunity*, 14

History has shown us that differences in educational achievement among groups cannot be addressed by one-dimensional approaches such as pedagogical shifts, desegregation, or accountability. We must first acknowledge not only that there is a gap in educational achievement, both in the United States and abroad, but also that a larger gap in opportunity precedes its manifestation in the educational realm.

Carol DeShano da Silva et al., *Opportunity Gap*, 4

It is time for a shift to communities intentionally designed to facilitate physical and mental well-being. To effect this change, we need to draw upon the unique ability of humans to plan creatively for healthy communities.

Richard J. Jackson, "Impact of the Built Environment on Health," 1,383

## INTRODUCTION

The places in which we live, work, learn, and play have profound affects on many aspects of our lives—from health and safety to education and

employment. Places are defined by who and what occupies them; they are intricate sums of their built, social, political, and economic environments. To understand “the power of places” and how they affect individuals and social communities, we need to discover how they are “planned, designed, built, inhabited, appropriated, celebrated, despoiled and discarded” (Hayden 1995: 15). In other words, we need to understand the powerful act of place-making.

Understanding the place-making process takes on a particular urgency, given the fact that so many of the places where young men and boys of color live are defined by stubborn patterns of racial and economic segregation. These segregated places, lacking what we refer to as “trajectories of opportunity,” hinder the life chances of young men and boys of color. Trajectories of opportunity are relevant for any and all low-income and marginalized communities, but they speak especially to the situations of so many young men and boys of color because of their all-too-common persistently poor life outcomes that so many researchers have documented, in this volume and elsewhere (Dellums Commission 2006; Davis, Kilburn, and Schultz 2009).

In this chapter we describe the ways in which places can contribute to patterns of poor health, economic disadvantage, and the educational inequalities that disproportionately afflict minority and/or low-income communities. We focus in particular on the role of the physical aspects of places—the bricks-and-mortar “built environments” of communities, including buildings, homes, schools, workplaces, parks and recreation areas, commercial areas, and streets.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, we seek to offer a deeper understanding of how places and their built environments contribute to the unique web of disparities and poor life outcomes in which so many disadvantaged young people are caught. We then turn to an investigation of innovative place-making efforts currently under way in the San Francisco Bay Area. These efforts realize the connection between place characteristics and life outcomes, and through partnership-based redevelopment efforts, they aim to improve the opportunities available to disadvantaged residents, especially young people. Effective interventions require concerted efforts to create trajectories of opportunity for disadvantaged young people. Place-making strategies can play a key catalytic role. Effective, comprehensive interventions mean aligning and leveraging people, place-making, and policies in new and profound ways.

We develop this idea by addressing two key questions: (1) How do places and factors of the built environments affect the life chances and well-being of disadvantaged young men and boys of color? (2) How can partnership-

based place-making interventions help create trajectories of opportunity for these young people? To answer these questions, we bring together the current focus among many urban scholars on the “uneven geographies of opportunity” across cities and metropolitan regions with what educational researchers have described as the persistent “opportunity gap” that continues to plague low-income students. We use these two concepts as our theoretical lens to survey the relevant literature on the relationship between the built environments of places, place-making, and these two opportunity concepts. Lessons learned from the literature show how our framework helps us create trajectories of opportunity by aligning and leveraging the complex factors that otherwise form uneven geographies of educational opportunity.

Our focus then turns to three case studies drawn from our action research at the Center for Cities and Schools (CC&S) at the University of California at Berkeley with city-school partnership initiatives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Each of these cases illustrates innovative practices designed to improve the quality of life for residents and the life chances of young people by simultaneously transforming neighborhoods and educational opportunities. We begin in Richmond, California, where the city, the Housing Authority, the school district, a local foundation, and other partners are collaborating on the redevelopment of the local elementary school and an adjacent park, community space, and public housing. We then turn to the far smaller town of Emeryville, where the city and school district leaders have partnered to develop a jointly used facility that will include K–12 schools and city-run health, wellness, recreation, and other activities. In San Francisco the city and Housing Authority have partnered with the school district to transform the city’s most distressed public-housing sites into thriving, mixed-income neighborhoods. Although each initiative is unique, all three cases involve formal partnerships between city agencies, school districts, and other partners that invite young people to play important roles in the urban revitalization process. Finally, we take stock of what we have learned from the literature and our case studies and offer recommendations for policy aimed at creating trajectories of opportunity for all residents, including young men and boys of color.

#### **TOWARD A THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF TRAJECTORIES OF OPPORTUNITY**

Increasingly, scholars and policymakers alike have described the fundamental challenge to poverty and inequality in today’s urban and metro-

politan environments in terms of “opportunity.” For most people “opportunity” means having access to quality schools that are safe and staffed by highly qualified teachers, to jobs with advancement possibilities, to essential services and health care, to ample recreation, and to regional mobility. For young men and boys of color, however, life is often defined by a lack of opportunity. Thus we must confront how to afford young men and boys of color access to opportunities by effectively intervening in the unique web of disparities in which they are caught.

Two leading theoretical perspectives on opportunity (and the lack of it) inform this chapter. Urban planning and geography scholars have noted the “uneven geographies of opportunity” experienced by residents in the same city or metropolitan area (Briggs 2005). That is, people living in some neighborhoods have access to services, amenities, and economic prospects, while others live in areas where these are severely lacking. Thus, where one lives either erects barriers or provides clear “paths” to opportunity. In chapter 12 in this volume, coauthors Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Lindsay E. Rosenfeld, Nancy McArdle, and Theresa L. Osypuk have described in more detail the research findings on these links.

Similarly, educational researchers and reformers have long sought to remedy the persistent educational achievement gap between primarily higher-income, white students and lower-income and minority students. More recently, efforts have turned to identifying the underlying factors of this achievement gap and focused on the gaps in opportunity that result in the widening discrepancy in educational attainment between African American and Latino students on the one hand and their white and Asian peers on the other. The Harvard Education Press marked this important development in the field by putting out a collection of influential studies titled *The Opportunity Gap: Achievement and Inequality in Education* (DeShano da Silva et al. 2007). The volume brings together research that spans more than three decades and helps us understand the history of inequality in education and how educators came to think in terms of an “opportunity gap.” When we bring these two bodies of research together, it becomes increasingly clear how low-income and minority students often face a kind of double jeopardy—both their neighborhoods and their schools are defined by an essential lack of opportunity. In effect, many young people find themselves in the crosshairs of an uneven geography of opportunity and an educational opportunity gap. From their point of view the urban landscape appears as uneven geography of educational opportunity.

By working at the intersection of urban planning and educational

research, we have come to think of this complex situation in terms of “trajectories of opportunity.” These are pathways for young people that structure success through aligned and accessible resources across education, social supports, and healthy environments. For individuals to realize positive life outcomes, they must have this access to maximize relationships, places, and resources. Trajectories of opportunity are more than the sum of their parts; rather, they require alignment and coherence—connective tissue—created through not only institutional commitment but also through personal relationship building. Together, these things foster positive life trajectories, which are critical for all young people, but particularly so for young men and boys of color who find themselves in otherwise hostile, threatening, and limited environments. These negative environments are the result of deliberate policies, the consequences (intended or otherwise) of which disproportionately negatively impact young men and boys of color. Therefore, attempts to create trajectories of opportunity require integrated and inclusive efforts on the part of city officials and planning professionals, school administrators and teachers, community and business leaders, parents and other adult residents, and (most important) young people themselves.

We use the idea of trajectories of opportunity as a lens to draw lessons from the literature and to analyze three cases of city-school place-making and educational improvement initiatives drawn from our action-oriented research. In this way we hope to better understand how to leverage and align mutually beneficial changes in both realms for comprehensive interventions aimed at creating trajectories of opportunity for young men and boys of color. We use trajectories of opportunity as an organizing concept to discuss our action-oriented research on city-school planning and policy initiatives. Our research aims to articulate ways of transforming difficult life trajectories into trajectories of opportunity. Achieving this profound transformation requires a full understanding of the complex neighborhood and educational landscapes young people and their families encounter as well as a recognition that neighborhoods and schools are intricately related.

As researchers and policymakers, we must take up the point of view of young people and their families and recognize how educational outcomes “do not exist in a vacuum”; rather, they are intricately tied to neighborhood conditions (DeShano da Silva et al. 2007: 4). We understand barriers associated with place and with educational opportunities as core to the patterns of poor life outcomes for disadvantaged individuals. Interventions need to look not only at education, but also at places, their built environments, and place-making strategies to improve them. Leveraging mutually

beneficial changes in both realms, comprehensive interventions will create trajectories of opportunity for young men and boys of color.

### MAPPING THE LITERATURE

A growing number of disciplines inform our understanding of the factors that affect the well-being and life trajectories of all individuals, particularly young men and boys of color who live and go to school in low-income and underresourced communities. Since the early 1990s, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to how places and built environment factors have affected quality of life and measurable life outcomes. This growing body of literature broadens our knowledge of the roles that physical and social environments play in affording opportunity for some while erecting barriers for others. From this often disparate research, we are able to draw specific recommendations for better place-making strategies. We provide an overview of what we have come to recognize as the most important lessons to draw from the literature. Our trajectory-of-opportunity lens has focused our attention on two concerns: (1) built-environment factors that are especially relevant to the fate of young people; and (2) the ways that place-making efforts are deliberately being (re)structured to increase equity and opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

#### **The Impact of Neighborhood Characteristics on Life and Health Outcomes**

Researchers have long found connections between where people live and their life outcomes. Most notably, a strong correlation has been repeatedly found between residing in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty and poor life outcomes (Crane 1991; Wilson 1990; Yinger 1993). Poverty-concentrated neighborhoods tend to have poor-quality and unhealthy housing, low levels of ongoing public infrastructure investment, and little recent private-sector bricks-and-mortar investment (Orfield 2002; Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2005). These neighborhoods typically have higher crime rates, poorer-performing schools, and fewer employment opportunities (Turner 2008). Middle- or upper-income families generally do not view these neighborhoods as desirable places in which to live or attend schools (McKoy and Vincent 2008). A growing “neighborhood effects” literature has examined the relationship between socioeconomic status life outcomes and neighborhoods, noting the important life trajectory relationships embedded in where one lives (Ellen and Turner 1997; Jencks and

Mayer 1990; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Socioeconomic status life outcomes are closely tied to race; in general, people of color are more likely than whites to live in neighborhoods that are poor and lack services and amenities. African Americans tend to be the most economically segregated of all groups (Ellen 2008).

Despite increasing evidence that neighborhood conditions play a role in shaping individual outcomes, much remains to be understood. For example, as the researchers Ingrid Gould Ellen and Margery Austin Turner (1997) have noted, the specific causal mechanisms remain unclear, including which neighborhood characteristics affect which outcomes and whether they affect different groups of people differently. Regarding young men and boys of color, this gray area remains a significant gap in the literature. A growing body of research finds a wide variety of health disparities experienced by individuals living in low-income and minority communities. Coauthors Dolores Acevedo-Garcia and Theresa L. Osypuk (2008: 208) have noted that “after taking into account individual-level factors, disadvantaged neighborhood environments (e.g., poverty concentration) have a detrimental effect on health outcomes, including mortality, child and adult physical and mental health, and health behaviors.” They further argue that there is a growing need to link neighborhoods and health outcomes to four main issues: (1) neighborhood social relationships and norms; (2) community institutions and services; (3) direct environmental factors (for example, pollution) and indirect environmental factors that may influence health behaviors (such as access to healthy food); and (4) broader structural issues that affect neighborhoods (for example, residential segregation at the metropolitan level).

The built environment as a contributing factor to obesity and poor health has garnered increasing interest among research and health advocates (Jackson 2003; Sallis and Glanz 2006). Rising obesity rates in children in particular (and especially minority and low-income children) are partly due to decreased physical activity (Ewing et al. 2003; Killingsworth and Lamming 2001; Kann et al. 1998). Elements of urban form and the design of communities have been shown to promote or discourage physical activity, a key strategy for combating obesity (Yancey et al. 2007; Gordon-Larson et al. 2006) through walking and bicycling infrastructure, parks, trails, and other public recreational facilities (Frank et al. 2005; Saelens et al. 2003). Although these built-environment resources are effective in reducing obesity, creating them can be challenging, particularly in existing neighborhoods. The researcher Kristen Day (2003) has noted that the promotion of physical activity is frequently put on the back burner because of



the pressing need for better schools, increased job access, affordable housing, and improved safety in low-income neighborhoods. Social factors, including safety concerns and territoriality in the neighborhoods of many young men and boys of color, further inhibit opportunities for physical activity and need to be better understood in relation to built-environment elements (Lopez and Hynes 2006).

The disproportionate occurrences and effects of environmental pollution and obesity in low-income and minority communities have been found to be directly related to the built environment. Poverty-concentrated neighborhoods are more likely to be located near pollution sources (Bullard 1993) and have higher rates of obesity (Day 2003), both of which cause a host of debilitating and chronic health problems, including cancer, asthma, and diabetes. However, like the socioeconomic status-focused neighborhood-effects research, methodological problems limit a full understanding of the root issues that lead to negative life outcomes. It is clear, though, that these health threats that are at least in part a result of the built environment do affect individuals' life outcomes.

As the researcher Howard Frumkin (2002: 209) has written: "There is evidence that several of the specific health threats related to sprawl affect minority populations disproportionately. Air pollution is one example. Poor people and people of color are disproportionately impacted by air pollution for at least two reasons: (1) disproportionate exposure and (2) high prevalence of underlying diseases that increase susceptibility. Members of minority groups are relatively more exposed to air pollutants than whites, independent of income and urbanization. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data show that black people and Hispanics are more likely than white people to live in areas that violate air quality standards." In the words of scholar Robert Bullard (2002), poor "people of color and whites do not have the same opportunities to 'vote with their feet' and escape undesirable physical environments."

Research from a variety of perspectives investigating the relationship between where a person lives and socioeconomic status-related outcomes, health, and general life opportunities has found that built environments play important and unique roles in contributing to positive or negative outcomes. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University sums up the situation this way: "Unfortunately, many citizens are isolated from opportunity by patterns of residential segregation, exclusionary land use policies, sprawl and disinvestment in urban areas. Fifty years of social science research has demonstrated that racially isolated and economically poor neighborhoods restrict employ-

ment options for young people, contribute to poor health, expose children to extremely high rates of crime and violence, and house some of the least-performing schools. Neighborhood racial and economic segregation is segregation from opportunities critical to quality of life, financial stability and social advancement. Isolation and disinvestment threatens not only individuals and their families, but entire communities.”<sup>3</sup> Recognizing that the literature has established a causal relationship between neighborhood characteristics and life and health outcomes of residents, we now raise the question of how principled interventions in each area can impact the other.

### **Smart-Growth and Regional-Equity Movements: A New Framework**

Two urban-planning movements—“smart growth” and “regional equity”—have emerged to counter the prevailing land-use and built-environment trends of recent decades that have resulted in rapid, low-density suburban development and urban disinvestment. With an environmentally minded regional land-use planning approach, the smart-growth movement promotes higher-density, mixed-use development, infill development, transit and pedestrian transportation options, and natural resource conservation (Katz 2002). Regional equity advocates push smart growth further by incorporating planning strategies that alleviate the resource and conditional disparities found in different cities and neighborhoods across a metropolitan region (Pastor et al. 2000; Glover-Blackwell 2007; Glover-Blackwell and Treuhaft 2008).

The focus is on improving basic infrastructure, local educational assets, and residential quality of life in marginalized areas. For example, the Kirwan Institute’s Opportunity Communities/Housing initiative “advocates affirmatively connecting marginalized populations to regional opportunity structures by improving housing mobility options and providing fair and effective public transportation and for managing sprawling growth, in order to reduce the drain of jobs and resources from existing communities.”<sup>4</sup> Both the smart-growth and regional-equity frameworks aim to reduce the negative neighborhood effects on socioeconomic status and health described earlier by linking them to efficient land use, multi-modal transportation access, and other sustainable development practices. Both movements emerged from and advanced the sustainability movement that began in earnest in the early 1980s (Katz, Scully, and Bressi 1994; Calthorpe 1993).

Consistent with our opportunity framework, researchers and advocates

in the smart-growth, regional-equity, and public-health fields are finding overlapping agendas and common ground related to educational improvement, sustainable transportation, social inclusion, human health, and efficient and environmentally responsible land use and development (see Great Communities Collaborative 2009; Glover-Blackwell and Treuhaft 2008; Bell and Rubin 2007; Fox and Glover Blackwell 2004; Proscio 2003). The overlapping agendas come from the growing research-based recognition of the interrelationship between various life outcomes (economic, health, educational, and so on) and factors of places and their built environments. Increasingly, the term “sustainable communities” is being used to encompass the variety of elements within these frameworks—linking neighborhoods, health, land use, economy, and environment.

As early as 1993, the President’s Council on Sustainable Development defined sustainable communities as “healthy communities where natural and historic resources are preserved, jobs are available, sprawl is contained, neighborhoods are secure, education is lifelong, transportation and health care are accessible, and all citizens have opportunities to improve the quality of their lives” (cited in Srinivasan, O’Fallon, and Dreary 2003: 1,447). More recently, the Obama administration has released grant money for “multi-jurisdictional and multi-sector partnerships” on issues including economic development, land use, transportation, water infrastructure, and workforce development. The goal is to devise locally driven solutions that broaden opportunity for “access to good jobs, quality schools, and safe streets” (Donovan 2009).

These developments include a new focus on the role that built-environment interventions and urban-planning strategies can play in addressing complex social problems. The focus builds from metropolitan policy scholar Bruce Katz’s (2005) notion of creating neighborhoods of “choice and connection,” using complementary place- and people-based strategies while focusing on non-socioeconomic status quality-of-life indicators (including air quality, health, physical activity, and access to local services and amenities). In other words, interventions invest in the bricks and mortar of the built environment while simultaneously addressing people-based solutions aimed to invest in the human and social capital of residents.

As researchers Sacoby Wilson, Malo Hutson, and Mahasin Mujahid (2008: 214) have noted: “The time is now to challenge communities and cities across the country beset by fragmentation, environmental injustice, and health disparities to use zoning, planning, and community development to preserve urban landscapes, limit the distribution of pathogenic industries, and improve built environment conditions for urban popu-

lations.” As the neighborhood-effects literature shows, and the smart-growth and regional-equity frameworks illustrate, tying together previously disconnected issues—such as land use and obesity or housing redevelopment and schools—and bringing together the stakeholders for coordinated action can lead to significant improvements for neighborhoods and individuals.

### **Uneven Geographies of Educational Opportunity Require More Than One-Dimensional Reform Efforts**

The move within the educational literature from looking solely at the “achievement gap” to uncovering factors that create the “opportunity gap” points to three important policy-related reconceptualizations. First, it signals a realization that educators, policymakers, and community members (and not just students) are failing in achieving high-quality educational outcomes (DeShano da Silva et al. 2007: 231). The experience of the prominent educational researcher Michelle Fine and her collaborators found that “we have failed, some would argue refused, to dismantle the structures and guarantees of race and class privilege. A gap—which youth call an *opportunity gap*, not an achievement gap—is sewn into the seams of our national educational fabric” (Fine et al. 2004: 12; emphasis in original). The opportunity gap means that we need to support students in ways that do not assume they are the problem.

This shift in focus also signals that public education is not the panacea for America’s woes, as many people believe. Historically, public schools were not only expected to mold citizens, teach practical skills, prepare for adulthood, and instill a capacity for critical thinking, but also overcome the opportunity gap for poor students and more (Miller 1999). It is increasingly clear, however, that gaps in educational opportunity not only mirror, but even widen, gaps in social equity. In some cases high-poverty students and ethnic minority students are twice as likely as low-poverty and majority students to be assigned inexperienced teachers who are new to the profession (Akiba, LeTendre, and Scribner 2007). Even when indicators suggest educational progress, there is reason to remain vigilant. For example, access to high-performing schools does not necessarily lead to higher-education attainment for students from low-income and minority communities (National Center for Education Statistics 1998; Camblin 2003). A closer look at college participation rates also reminds us that hard-won gains in the past do not guarantee continued success in the

future: gains made by black and Hispanic students relative to their white peers in the early seventies were effectively erased and reversed by the turn of the century, a trend that correlates with the decline of Pell Grants and other funding sources (St. John 2002).

Third, the shift from a focus on the achievement gap to that of the opportunity gap signals a recognition that confronting the multiple disadvantages facing many students requires a multidimensional framework and intervention. The retreat from affirmative action in the 1990s (Rendón 1998) and the heavy emphasis on accountability and standardized testing over the past decade has made educators and educational researchers increasingly concerned about the various kinds of barriers that limit access to educational resources and the need to go beyond issues of access to support the development of “winners” (DeShano da Silva et al. 2007: 76). This has proven to be the case when it comes to the relative experience and qualifications of mathematics teachers serving black and Latino students (Flores 2007: 27). The closer researchers look, the more disadvantages appear to multiply and accumulate: limited resources outside of school correlate with the least desirable locations and conditions within schools, while with low expectations and evaluations both occur within and outside of schools (Diamond 2006).

Improving educational outcomes in significant and lasting ways will therefore require more than one-dimensional reform efforts: the “challenge of providing equal opportunity calls for a collective response—the coordinated efforts and action of multiple players in the field of education” (DeShano da Silva et al. 2007: 231). Researchers William Brown and James Jones (2004: 268), for example, have found that students’ perceptions of limited opportunity in the wider society were associated with lowered intrinsic motivation for academic work, with “clear implication for policy makers who insist that we ‘leave no child behind’ [being] that we must narrow the opportunity gap and continue to work to increase the educational, occupational, and social opportunities available to minorities.” Like education researcher Sonia Nieto (1994), our work has led us to include students in the dialogue about expanding educational opportunities and “creating a chance to dream.” Instead of focusing on their vulnerabilities, we need to focus on their resilience and the critical personal experiences that they bring to their educational settings. In sum, there is every reason to believe that young men and boys of color are not the problem, but an important part of the solution. Therefore, how can these young people play a constructive role in place-making efforts?

### **Authentic Youth Engagement in Integrated Planning Projects**

Community participation in city planning and development efforts has a long history in the literature (Friedman 1987; Arnstein 1969). However, youth participation—especially the involvement of marginalized or disadvantaged youth—has received much less attention. The concept of “maximum feasible participation” was established with the Model Cities Act of 1966 after first appearing as a vague requirement in urban-renewal programs with the Housing Act of 1954. Aimed at ensuring that communities participate in defining interests and values for redevelopment, the process of eliciting and incorporating community input remained poorly understood until urban planner Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) “Ladder of Citizen Participation” established participation typologies. The ladder’s “rungs” correspond to the extent of citizens’ power—that is, their ability to determine planning outcomes. The theory held that participation without some element of power redistribution leads to an empty, frustrating, and marginalizing process for communities.

Adapting Arnstein’s ideas, researcher Roger Hart (1992 and 1997) has developed the “Ladder of Young People’s Participation” as a tool for thinking about children and youth working with adults in community and environmental development projects. Such participation can be seen as “a process of involving youth in the institutions and the decisions that affect their lives. It includes initiatives to organize groups for social action, plan programs at the community level, and develop community-based services and resources. It is not a form of adult advocacy for local youth or of token representation of youth in the meetings of agencies, but a process through which young people solve problems and plan programs in the community” (Checkoway, Pothukuchi, and Finn 1995: 134).

Hart placed his ladder against the backdrop of “adultist” planning and decision making (Armstrong 1996) in which young people were seen as not having worthwhile voices to positively affect community change and thus were excluded from the planning process. Confronting “adultism” means scrutinizing the way we interact and communicate with young people, especially in community-development strategies. As youth participation proponents and researchers have argued, youth and adults should share in decision-making processes to create authentic and meaningful civic engagement that leads to a greater distribution of power among youth and adult partners (see Hart 1992; Checkoway, Pothukuchi, and Finn 1995; McKoy and Vincent 2007; Driskell 2002).

The rationale for involving young people—particularly those from disadvantaged communities—in community-improvement efforts is multifaceted and complex. We point to three important dimensions of this work. From a city-planning and community-development perspective, greater involvement by a diverse set of stakeholders—including children and youth—ultimately results in better decisions that create better cities (Driskell 2002). Second, from an educational and youth-development perspective, authentic youth participation in planning can be an essential component of project-based learning because the activity has real and direct meaning, relevance, and potential impact on the world rather than being an exercise in hypothetical problem solving (McKoy and Vincent 2007; Archibald and Newmann 1989).

Youth participation supports two key indicators for positive engagement of young men and boys of color: (1) engagement in civil society and community-building activities; and (2) engagement in academic and educational enrichment activities (Davis, Kilburn, and Schultz 2009). When structured appropriately with adequate adult support and authentic access to decision makers, young people's participation can result in a greater sense of belonging to adult communities and long-term access to the "trajectories of participation" that define these communities (Lave and Wenger 1991). Third, from a professional-development perspective, an authentic process shared with young people transforms city-planning and community-development practitioners by changing the way adults view themselves and their work (McKoy and Vincent 2007; Fine et al. 2004).

### **Partnership-driven Problem Solving**

As understanding grows about the interrelated nature of many social and economic challenges, particularly regarding children and youth, cross-sector partnerships of public, private, and nonprofit actors are no longer a radical idea but a practical imperative. Given the multidimensional framework described earlier, in many cases institutional actors are coming together in new ways; in other cases new configurations and systems of governance have been created to ensure multidimensional interventions are realized. These configurations draw actors from beyond government agencies, blur traditional boundaries and responsibilities, suggest more consensus-building roles for formerly static government agencies, and call for new ways to measure and track success (see Innes, Di Vittorio, and Booher 2009; Briggs 2003; Innes and Booher 1999; Chaskin 2001; Stoker 1998).

These types of partnerships are increasingly common in place-making efforts looking to improve built environments and life trajectories. Because attempts to transform the built environment in communities have long relied on processes that harness the public, private, and nonprofit institutions that regulate and invest in bricks and mortar, these new approaches to governance have the potential to play an instrumental role in addressing the uneven geographies of opportunity and the opportunity gap. At the same time, multiagency, cross-sector partnerships prove to be immensely challenging, and researchers have studied these partnerships to understand their governance structures, successes, and failures. In many cases institutional actors are coming together that at best have little history of collaboration and at worst have adversarial relationships.

The federal government is currently playing a major role in promoting these types of place-making partnerships. Under the Obama administration both the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Education are focused on their complementary roles in structuring opportunity for young people and families, particularly in urban schools and neighborhoods. HUD secretary Shaun Donovan (2009) has expressed his commitment to “creating a geography of opportunity for all Americans,” while education secretary Arne Duncan (2009) is similarly committed to “closing the opportunity gap more than the achievement gap. . . . Education is the dividing line between the haves and the have-nots.” In the words of Secretary Donovan (2009), “Building communities in a more integrated and inclusive way isn’t separate from advancing social and economic justice and the promise of America: it’s absolutely essential to it.”

The lessons we have drawn from the literature sharpen our understanding of how integrated and inclusive approaches to structuring physical and social environments can afford young men and boys of color the means of finding their way through landscapes that otherwise present social, economic, and educational challenges. We call those means trajectories of opportunity. Next we illustrate how such efforts are confronting the uneven geographies of educational opportunity in Bay Area communities.

### **CASE STUDIES: BUILDING TRAJECTORIES OF OPPORTUNITY WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

We turn our attention to three cases of city-school partnership initiatives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Each case not only involves formal partnerships between city agencies and public school districts but, critically, also



involves young people in the urban revitalization process. These initiatives are part of the multiyear action research effort known as the PLUS (Planning and Learning United for Systems Change) Leadership Initiative of the Center for Cities and Schools (CC&S). Through this initiative CC&S partners with more than fifty educational, community, and civic leaders in the region to provide capacity-building assistance to, and documentation of, the development of collaborative, mutually beneficial policies and practices aimed at improving the life trajectories of disadvantaged residents, particularly young people. CC&S provides technical assistance, convenes institutes, and conducts research for these cross-sector partners. As part of these efforts, CC&S also facilitates a Social Enterprise for Learning (SEFL) initiative known as Y-PLAN (Youth—Plan, Learn, Act, Now!). An award-winning program, Y-PLAN engages young people as authentic stakeholders in local community-development projects through their high school curriculum (McKoy and Vincent 2007).

The cases come from three of the Bay Area's most historied cities: Richmond, Emeryville, and Bayview/Hunters Point. In Richmond, NURVE (Nystrom United Revitalization Effort) partners—the City of Richmond, the Richmond Housing Authority, the Bay Area Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Richmond Children's Foundation, the West Contra Costa Unified School District, and others—are working to create a safe, diverse, and thriving place in one of the region's poorest communities. The focus is on redevelopment of Nystrom Elementary School and adjacent community space, parks, and public housing. The second case comes from the small, former industrial city of Emeryville, where city and school district leaders have partnered to redevelop an existing secondary school site into the Emeryville Center of Community Life, a jointly used facility that will include K–12 schools and city-run health, wellness, recreation, and other activities. The third case comes from one of the most isolated neighborhoods in San Francisco, Bayview/Hunters Point. Driven by the mayor's Office of Housing and the San Francisco Housing Authority, efforts are underway to transform the city's most distressed public-housing sites into thriving, mixed-income neighborhoods.

In Bayview/Hunters Point the housing agencies are working with the San Francisco Unified School District to ensure that all new housing development, local school renovations, and park and community space redevelopment activities are aligned to improve educational outcomes and increase neighborhood desirability. Together, these cases reveal important lessons about how multiagency, cross-sector partnership-based place-making efforts include innovations in the built environment of distressed

neighborhoods and schools and increase the trajectories of opportunity for young people. They also show us that young people are helping their adult allies bring about these innovations.

### **Case One: Nystrom Urban Revitalization Effort (NURVE)**

“When I first moved here,” recalled U.T., a youth council member, “I heard a gunshot every night, like in the movies. . . . I used to think what you see in the movies is fake but it’s not.”<sup>5</sup> Located in the East Bay, sixteen miles northeast of San Francisco, Richmond is home to about a hundred thousand residents. The city has a rich African American history, with generations of families dedicating their lives to building what was once one of the most important industrial centers in the region. This is especially true of Richmond’s Nystrom neighborhood, named after John Nystrom, a nineteenth-century civic leader and member of Richmond’s first local school board. The neighborhood became the site of great industrial and economic activity in the early twentieth century because of its proximity to the Kaiser shipyards. The area took on a critical importance during World War II because of its shipbuilding and manufacturing capabilities. Richmond also pioneered the country’s first publicly supported childcare center for working mothers, as well as the first HMO.<sup>6</sup>

Since World War II, however, Richmond and Nystrom have faced significant economic challenges. While buttressed by some of the wealthiest communities in the Bay Area, Richmond is now one of the poorest communities.<sup>7</sup> The Santa Fe and Coronado neighborhoods around Nystrom Elementary School are among the most impoverished in Richmond. This distressed area is now home to low-income families, below-average school performance (with a high school graduation rate of only 28 percent), and outdated, unsafe, and underutilized community spaces; it is plagued by violence, drugs, and gang activity.<sup>8</sup>

Launched in 2001, NURVE brought together a dozen institutional stakeholders in an effort spearheaded by Bay Area LISC and the East Bay Community Foundation. NURVE’s mission is “to create a safe, diverse and thriving place, where kids walk to quality schools, people of all ages use the parks and community facilities, and a variety of housing options meet the needs of local residents.” Partners include the city of Richmond, the Richmond Housing Authority (RHA), the Richmond Children’s Foundation (RCF), the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), local neighborhood councils, and residents. Stakeholders from professional planners to community members and young people worked together to

identify urgent issues and needs. Through more than fifteen million dollars in capital building projects, programming and community partnerships, and greater connections among stakeholders, NURVE aims to revitalize the economy and improve quality of life in the area surrounding Nystrom Elementary and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park. NURVE's guiding theory of change is that "neighborhood change happens at the nexus of people, place, and collaborative practice." For the Nystrom neighborhood, change has not only taken the form of capital improvement projects but also in historic levels of commitment by the city, WCCUSD, and other community partners working together for the good of the entire community.

NURVE emerged from the conviction that changes in the built environment are key to a community's revitalization and transformation. NURVE partners are working to align the planning of four large capital development projects, each driven by a different lead entity. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park comprises twelve acres of open space at the corner of Harbour Way and Cutting Boulevard. Despite its prominent and well-trafficked location, the park has been underutilized for years. NURVE will transform the space into a vibrant park and neighborhood centerpiece, attracting sports leagues and community programs with amenities including a regulation track, senior area, open space, and equipment. Community feedback and youth-generated recommendations have been included in the plans. This project is fully funded (through a Murray-Hayden urban youth services grant and support from the Parks and Recreation Department, NFL/LISC Grassroots Programs, and the Oakland Raiders), and construction begins in spring 2010. The city is also undertaking intensive streetscape improvements for Harbour Way, incorporating such traffic calming measures as altering lane configurations, paving, and sidewalk upgrades. The city has worked closely with the district to ensure that designs of the park space and the adjacent renovated elementary school are complementary.

Nystrom Elementary School, built in 1942, is outdated and in poor condition. The physical structure of the building does not meet American with Disabilities Act standards, and the school was slated for closure at the end of 2009. Using local bond money, WCCUSD is undertaking a historic renovation of the main building, building a new multipurpose facility, modernizing both wings of the school, and creating new access ways, parking lots, playgrounds, and landscape work. WCCUSD architects worked with the city to reorient the new multipurpose room in the Nystrom neighborhood to maximize joint use by members of the school community and patrons of the park. The Richmond Housing Authority is leading another major capital project, Nystrom Village, which originally provided housing for

workers in the Kaiser shipyards. Currently, the village consists of 102 family units built in 1943. RHA plans to replace these substandard structures with 212 affordable-housing rental units, 150 new senior units, and 39 homeownership units. Based on smart-growth and regional-equity principles, the new Nystrom Village project increases affordable and quality housing that will include both mixed-use and mixed-income development.

The Maritime Center is home to the first publicly supported childcare center in the nation; it is named in the congressional legislation that established this building as part of the Rosie the Riveter National Historic site. Built in 1943, the building will be renovated as part of RHA's Nystrom Redevelopment Project, undertaken in conjunction with the National Parks Service (NPS). The center will not only continue its proud tradition of offering quality childcare; it will also include spaces for community meetings and other activities. Portions of the building are also likely to be leased by the Richmond Children's Foundation for its preschool program and by NPS for its interpretive center.

While capital projects lay the physical foundation of neighborhood revitalization, civic leaders recognize that connecting to and engaging the community is critical to realize and sustain the vision of NURVE: creating a vibrant Nystrom community. Since 2007, Y-PLAN has provided a vehicle to build the capacity of young people to participate in this neighborhood change by bringing together the adult leaders of NURVE and students at Kennedy High School. Throughout this work participating students put great emphasis on race, the history of their changing neighborhood, and the importance of listening to and understanding the needs of young people. Although Richmond in general and the Nystrom neighborhood specifically is increasingly comprised of low-income Latino and new immigrant families, the Y-PLAN project-based learning activities that took place with majority Latino eleventh-grade students in their U.S. history class helped these young planners recognize and appreciate Nystrom's past as a thriving African American industrial community.

In proposals presented to NURVE partners, students called for greater amenities and services for themselves and their families. They articulated the connections between the built environment and the social amenities they need to support their personal and collective aspirations. These young planners proposed new ideas for safe pathways and recreational fields, with a network of "blue light" telephones for quick access to police services. They asked for adult English language classes and job training for their families and bilingual tutoring assistance for their peers. They presented proposals that honored the legacy of their neighborhood as home

to Rosie the Riveter and the first women shipbuilders in World War II; the students also lobbied for the historical preservation of the local public-housing development and the first childcare center in the nation.

Participating adult allies—including the mayor, city council members, the city manager, and others—have adapted their understanding and the vision of the NURVE project priorities and needs accordingly. Residents and families feel more confident that redevelopment will not mean gentrification and displacement. Seeing how such a project can lead to the realization of their vision for the neighborhood, young planners have organized a youth council to continue their involvement in the physical and social transformation of their community. As the executive director of the Richmond Children’s Foundation noted: “It is largely the visible role of young people that has kept all parties coming back to the table and accountable to each other.”<sup>9</sup> As a result, residents and stakeholder group leaders are motivated to move forward because they agree that the future of the community depends in large measure on supporting the next generation of residents.

To realize its aim, NURVE partners see the improvement of the physical neighborhood as a way to catalyze positive change through reduction in crime, expansion of educational opportunities, increased community capacity, increase in business investment and the tax base, encouragement of workforce development, and promotion of improved health. Ensuring successful implementation of this complex menu of services has required the development of new policies, innovative practices, and tremendous leadership. City and district leaders have been organizing joint meetings, sharing information in new ways, and coordinating their work on a day-to-day level. As in other initiatives of this kind, coordinated and consistent leadership has been a major challenge for NURVE. The Richmond Children’s Foundation, with extensive support from the Bay Area LISC, has met this challenge by playing the role of intermediary. This has not been easy, as managing such a range of stakeholders from diverse institutions takes time, patience, and commitment. A new executive director of RCF has restored confidence to the project, in large part through her and her board’s recognition of the youth council and the vital role played by young people. Coupled with the work of the city and district, these community institutions have come together to move NURVE forward.

Three key lessons have emerged from the Richmond case. First, formal written codification of the partnership can play a role in moving these types of multiagency, cross-sector partnerships forward. The leading NURVE stakeholders have entered into a partnership memorandum of understand-

ing (MOU) that articulates the shared goals and outlines each agency's core responsibilities to the partnership. In addition, the city and school district have entered into a more specific joint use agreement (JUA) that negotiates the terms for the entities sharing the fields on the nearby school sites. Second, young people can play a pivotal role in increasing community-level engagement in these types of multifaceted redevelopment efforts. Third, "third party" entities can play crucial roles in creating, managing, and sustaining constant communication among the many agency partners and community members. Essential to this role is incorporating the feedback of the many stakeholders into the planning processes, including the formal partnership documents such as the MOU.

### **Case Two: The Emeryville Center of Community Life**

"The collaboration of cities and schools together isn't something that is supported legally," Pat O'Keeffe, Emeryville city manager, has said, "so we've had to look at special legislation in order to facilitate some of the joint aspects of the project." Emeryville is a 1.2-square mile, bustling urban city of about ten thousand residents in the heart of the San Francisco Bay Area, wedged between Berkeley, Oakland, and the bay. The city's population is relatively young, with a median age of 35.2. Sixty-three percent of Emeryville's residents are renters. As in Richmond, Emeryville's economy was originally industrial; today, however, Emeryville is home to many new-economy businesses, including such major corporations as Novartis and Pixar. On any given weekday Emeryville's population more than doubles as nonresidents stream into the city for some twenty thousand jobs. Emeryville has a diverse and evolving landscape; as a result of its growing economy over the past two decades, the city has seen tremendous growth in housing, retail, and community space.

Although Emeryville is relatively small, it faces some big-city challenges. The city boasts tremendous resources as a result of its burgeoning economy, but it suffers from a great divide between the newer, wealthier "loft dwellers" and the longer-standing residents—primarily families of color who tend to be lower-income homeowners, residing on the north and east sides of the city. City leaders, residents, commuters, and students have come to describe this situation as "the two Emeryvilles." The services and amenities that these "two Emeryvilles" require often diverge; in no place is that clearer than in the strategies and offerings of the school district. Emery Unified School District (EUSD) serves about eight hundred students at its two schools: Anna Yates Elementary (grades K–6) and Emery Secondary

School (grades 7–12). Approximately 80 percent of EUSD students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, indicating that they come from families living in poverty. Although the city is racially diverse, approximately 97 percent of the enrollment in the EUSD are students of color, with 57 percent of students identifying as African American.<sup>10</sup> Recently coming out from under a state takeover for fiscal mismanagement and low academic performance, the EUSD is seeking to make significant improvements to its educational system by becoming a more integral part of planning and visioning Emeryville's growth and revitalization with the city.

The district is improving academically in the process. In 2009 the Board of Education passed a new set of goals for all students in the district, aligning K–12 course content and admission standards to meet the entrance standards of California colleges and universities. In addition to enhancing in-class academic activities, the district partners with local businesses, including Novartis and Pixar, for internships and mentor programs. While the elementary school is experiencing consistent improvement, Emery Secondary School still struggles to meet state standards and adequately prepare students for college matriculation and retention. District leadership has asserted a bold vision that integrating with revitalization of Emeryville can support the academic improvements in the school.

The city and district have come together on a number of initiatives out of a shared commitment to provide comprehensive services to youth in the city. Leaders in Emeryville have a deep understanding of the interwoven strands of physical and social infrastructure. The development of the city's Youth Services Master Plan in 2002 launched a joint city and school district visioning process, laying the foundation for the ongoing planning processes and attendant strategic plans. This effort has produced the vision for the Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL), an innovative multi-purpose, joint use facility that will house Emeryville's K–12 public schools along with a childcare facility, a recreation center offering both indoor and outdoor activities, an arts center for visual and performing arts, and a forum that will provide community services focused on wellness, health, and other areas. According to project publications, the ECCL "creates a new framework for a 21st-century urban place where we will play, learn, grow, and come together as a community. By offering a variety of educational, recreational, cultural, and social opportunities, as well as services and programs that support lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles, the Center will transform the quality of life of all Emeryville citizens."<sup>11</sup>

Only after the city and district collaboratively laid a clear roadmap of social and recreation services did the idea for the ECCL emerge. The

vision evolved to create the physical infrastructure that could best house and facilitate the social, recreational, and educational services that the city and district provide to all students and families. The school district has recently completed the renovation of the elementary school, and the city has updated its recreation center. The quality of community and school facilities—and the physical landscape of the city as a whole—is of primary importance for many of Emeryville’s city and education leaders as they consider how to improve the city’s vibrancy and how to boost the life chances and opportunities for residents, students, and their families.

Since 2006, Y-PLAN has engaged more than seventy-five students in the conceptualization and development of the Emeryville Center of Community Life, along with a range of other city and regional planning and revitalization projects. Students gathered the data they needed to identify and define issues that reflect the “two Emeryvilles.” City and school leaders now envision a unified and integrated Emeryville that brings diverse residents together by integrating city and district recreation, social, and educational services in common physical spaces. Y-PLAN participants identified top priorities that school and city leaders have been able to implement in the short term—offering nursing and counseling services, healthy cafeteria food, and other youth resources and activities. Beyond specific programming suggestions, city and district leaders discuss how to create an open and welcoming ECCL, local business community, and government culture to address concerns that students had about feeling judged and alienated from these sectors of the “other Emeryville.”

The intensive youth participation in the planning and visioning of the ECCL has served to open up city government to a broader cross-section of the community. The mayor and city council members recognized that the first Y-PLAN presentation in city council chambers in 2006 marked a turning point. It was the first time the council chambers room was filled with families of color. Y-PLAN served an important role in opening up formal policymaking processes to an underrepresented constituency of residents and stakeholders.

In addition to providing input on the design of and programming for the ECCL, students advocated for a long-term and sustained voice in the planning and development process. In response, the city and district have restructured several working committees to include youth representation. This transformation mirrors the work city and district leaders have undertaken on joint decision making and governance in general. The City-Schools Committee, made up of all school board and city council mem-



bers, meets monthly and is an operating committee fielding all partnership and joint decision-making issues. A student representative now sits on the City-Schools Committee, selected through an application process managed jointly by school and city stakeholders. The committee is the body that formally adopted the Youth Services Master Plan and all subsequent ECCL conceptual plans and vision statements. In Emeryville the original Youth Services Master Plan laid out roles and responsibilities for city agencies and the school district. The city has a joint use lease agreement to use the district's playing fields and gymnasium space for after-school and evening city-run recreation programs. The superintendent and the city manager now have a weekly meeting to brief each other on activities and to strategize about major collaborative projects.

Beyond improved processes locally, the ECCL has already had statewide implications. In 2009 state legislators passed ABro8o, which changes the California education code to allow greater flexibility for cities and districts to "co-house" their programming in one building. Finally, as the planning for the ECCL enters its final phase, city and district leaders are actively researching the types of governance structures necessary to operate and maintain the ECCL. Leaders are discussing developing a constitution-like document to guide the partnership and evolving the current City-Schools Committee and community advisory groups to ensure that the ECCL embodies the spirit of collaboration and seamless service provision in perpetuity.

Three key lessons have emerged from the Emeryville case. First, this case points to the fact that cross-sector, multiagency partnerships are forming new kinds of governance structures as they forge ahead. The City-Schools Committee and the regular meetings between the superintendent and the city manager have ensured project progress, while the Youth Services Master Plan and the joint use agreement provide shared codification of targets and responsibilities. As Emeryville leaders have come to recognize, the governance structure will likely need to evolve over the course of the partnership, particularly when the ECCL opens its doors. Second, the participation of young people has again played a critical role. Similar to NURVE, young people have not only formalized their participation through the youth council and informed the planning processes through their research, but they have also bridged long-standing divisions within the community. Finally, academic improvements must be central, simultaneously pursued goals in revitalization efforts to ensure strong buy-in from schools and the school district. In Emeryville's case this was done in part

through the district stepping up its educational offerings and by the district and city working together to align social-service provisions for students as part of the redevelopment planning.

### **Case Three: HOPE SF in Bayview/Hunters Point**

“We all make these incredible choices about where we’re going to live based on schools, transportation, and whatnot,” Doug Shoemaker, director of the mayor’s Office of Housing has said, “and now we’re rediscovering all that as we think about what we need to do in the HOPE SF neighborhoods.”<sup>12</sup> Launched in 2007 by Mayor Gavin Newsom and now driven by the mayor’s Office of Housing and the San Francisco Housing Authority, HOPE SF represents a unique opportunity to take a systemic approach to educational improvement and housing redevelopment. HOPE SF seeks to transform San Francisco’s most distressed public-housing sites into vibrant, thriving communities.

Modeled on the national HOPE VI initiative, HOPE SF is revitalizing eight public-housing developments, transforming blighted neighborhoods into mixed-income developments that include new affordable and market-rate homes as well as parks and other public amenities for residents and neighbors alike. The initiative recognizes that all families need and deserve the opportunity to have safe, high-quality housing and neighborhoods and good educational options for their children. It also recognizes that creating successful mixed-income communities requires collaboration, and to this end city leaders are working alongside educational leaders from the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). Aligned with the citywide commitment of the mayor’s team is a bold vision for the SFUSD defined by the superintendent’s office. The vision is articulated in a strategic plan to close the achievement gap by closing the opportunity gap that students face across the district but especially in the Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhoods.

The mayor’s Office of Housing and SFUSD are working together to ensure that all new housing redevelopment, school renovations, and park/community space development are planned and executed collaboratively. To provide extended educational opportunities for residents, the team has made joint use of HOPE SF local school and community facilities a priority. At Hunters View, the first HOPE SF site, the city and a nonprofit after-school provider have a lease on SFUSD land adjacent to the local elementary school called YouthPark. The HOPE SF team has hired a third party to facilitate a process on how to renew or transform that arrangement to maximize the school and community facilities.

HOPE SF started as a mayoral initiative. The day-to-day work across agencies, and the partnerships between city employees and community members, can be challenging and contentious. At pivotal moments, however, student vision and involvement have brought diverse stakeholders together and have focused participants' attention on systemic improvements for future generations. This was certainly the case in Hunters View, where classes of third- and fourth-grade students from Malcolm X Academy engaged in community mapping and developed visions and design proposals for the HOPE SF revitalization project, presenting their ideas to the development team and city and district leaders. The mayor's Office of Housing subsequently launched a citywide youth engagement strategy for all HOPE SF sites. As the director of policy in the mayor's Office of Housing noted, "Young people of all ages are the key to a vibrant future."<sup>13</sup> In addition to making significant contributions in their neighborhoods and beyond, the work of these young planners was integrated with their core academic work while cultivating stewardship of and personal responsibility for their community.

Although the physical design and layout of each HOPE SF development site is important, so too are the street and transportation connections to the rest of the city and to regional networks. Many of these public-housing communities are physically isolated from educational and employment opportunities. Teams of nationally renowned developers are working on the four HOPE SF sites that are currently in planning or implementation stages; these experts are creating neighborhoods with new housing, open space, quality streets, and paths for pedestrians and bicyclists. Developers will focus on using innovative green-building techniques and on connecting these developments to the broader San Francisco community. HOPE SF partners are also working toward "people-based" interventions, including workforce development, enhanced educational opportunities, and targeted social-service delivery that will work to overcome the opportunity gap that so many communities face. For example, the SFUSD office of 21st-Century Learning offers a range of programs and school site supports from preschool through college. Such programs as Career Technical Education have long-standing partnerships with San Francisco City College and San Francisco State University to facilitate access to higher education. The HOPE SF initiative is creating an internship and jobs pipeline for youth at each of the development sites.

San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF) funds the majority of community-based organizations that provide social services and supplemental and enrichment activities within and

apart from schools. Key to this effort is not only the physical revitalization of these neighborhoods, but also the provision of quality services and amenities to support current members of this community and to attract future residents. As part of their funding requirements, DCYF increasingly asks its nonprofit grantees to align their programs and outcomes to SFUSD and school site goals to support academic outcomes of the students they serve. Because research shows the parent engagement in school is a critical factor in student achievement, in Hunters View, for example, the city funds “Parent University,” which builds the capacity of parents around issues of early childhood development, childcare, social services, and school readiness.

HOPE SF leaders have prioritized information-sharing with residents. Information about the HOPE SF developments and the other social, recreational, and educational opportunities available is critical for all residents—young and old. Limited access to this information can be one of the greatest barriers to success—in school, work, and community. Recognizing this need, the district has created an interactive Web site for its strategic plan (see <http://beyondthetalk.org>) that allows parents and community members to post questions and comments, to which staff members respond promptly. The HOPE SF team has also launched a new Web site (<http://hope-sf.org/>), which provides updated information about specific projects and the initiative as a whole. The Hunters View development team and SFUSD have worked together to leverage opportunities for sharing information. For example, SFUSD now provides information to the public housing Tenants’ Association, and likewise, the development team has created FAQ sheets on the project for teachers and parents at the nearby elementary school.

Three key lessons have emerged from the San Francisco case. First, the stated commitment of agency leaders is critical; the commitment of leaders at the highest level in the city and district is a key step to sustained alignment across agencies to meet the ambitious goals of HOPE SF and SFUSD’s Strategic Plan. Second, the contributions of the elementary school students to the planning process was done through their classroom work, making it connected to their core academic work while cultivating stewardship of and personal responsibility for their community. Third, the sharing of information across agencies and with community members plays a number of crucial roles, including bolstering agency leadership and staff capacity and increasing opportunities to participate in the planning process and to access services and programs for community residents.

### CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Insights from both the literature and our action-oriented research on local city-school district initiatives help us understand the complex relationship among place-making, people, and policies that conspire to perpetuate the inequitable and too often dire situations that low-income communities of color, and particularly young men and boys of color, face today. Uneven geographies of opportunity and the educational opportunity gap routinely converge and limit individuals' abilities and hinder their efforts to get ahead. Remedying this situation requires concerted efforts to address these inequities in comprehensive, aligned, and practical ways.

We have seen how diverse factors work to undermine isolated efforts to redress the negative impacts of living and learning in the wrong place at the wrong time: despite the best intentions, one-dimensional solutions to complex problems invariably fall short. Neighborhood-effects researchers have focused on understanding the ways in which physical and social environments affect socioeconomic status and life outcomes. Similarly, public-health researchers have looked at how social and built environments influence health outcomes. The smart-growth and regional-equity literature focuses on the impact of the built environment on community development and on the policies and planning practices grounded in environmentalism and social equity that help create these environments.

By focusing on the opportunity gap, educators have signaled an important shift away from dealing with symptoms and toward the underlying causes of the growing educational achievement gap. Youth engagement and participatory planning highlight the contributions that young people can make to collective efforts to plan and build healthy environments for themselves and future generations. The era of partnership-driven, innovative governance has arrived, with a focus on developing policies, institutions, and organizational arrangements that directly affect places and people simultaneously. Bringing these disparate fields together suggests new planning practices to create and structure innovative opportunities for young people so they may navigate the urban and educational terrain in positive and forward-looking ways.

The three case studies illustrate that innovations in neighborhood and school built environments play an integral role and can catalyze the social components of place-making efforts, such as intentional community outreach or investments in workforce development. Whether the initial driver for the local project was investing in massive neighborhood infrastructure

in Richmond, improving youth services in Emeryville, or transforming public housing in San Francisco—city-school initiatives have harnessed the power of place-making. Such initiatives have resulted in coordinated interventions in the physical and social environments. Investments in buildings, education, social services, economic development, and so on that are merely parallel, but not strategically aligned, are not enough to create true trajectories of opportunity for residents and young people. Authentic place-making builds human relations that support the transformation not only of neighborhoods, but also of the ways young people see themselves as actors in their communities, of the manner in which city and school leaders communicate with each other and the public, and of the combined impact of public institutions—all of which results in lasting, systemic change. As the multiyear initiatives described demonstrate, and as the “silo-ed” nature of the scholarship reflects, achieving this level of systemic change is by no means simple. Next we provide an evidence-based framework and a set of recommendations to move toward the systemic change needed to create these robust trajectories of opportunity for those most in need.

### **TRAJECTORIES OF OPPORTUNITY: A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

Creating true trajectories of opportunity requires a concerted effort to align and leverage innovations with respect to place-making, people, and policies. To this end, we recommend three distinct yet mutually reinforcing strategies.

1. *Align innovations in the built environment: Integrate changes in schools, housing, and neighborhoods.* To create trajectories of opportunity, particularly for young men and boys of color, place-making efforts and built-environment innovations can and should play strategic roles. Large capital improvement projects can serve as a catalyst for multiagency, cross-sector partnerships to align the improvement of neighborhoods and schools simultaneously. In Richmond we saw how capital improvement projects have effectively catalyzed collective action for change in ways that have transcended historical divides. In Emeryville we saw how a community divided is being transformed into a community united around facilities especially designed for multiple school and community-serving uses. In San Francisco innovation took the form of connecting distressed neighborhoods to the city’s regional geography of opportunity.

Collaborative efforts to transform the physical environment can result in significant changes in the social environment. Distressed communities benefit when they are connected to regional geographies of opportunity.

2. *Harness innovations in educational practice: Engage students and schools in urban planning and place-making.* Place-making strategies that aim to connect community and school improvement should be structured to maximize the authentic participation of young people. Young people can be a vital link between redevelopment institutions and low-income residents. Even students at the elementary-school level can play a significant role in their communities' revitalization efforts, draw attention to the assets and special needs of the present, and envision a brighter future for themselves and their community. In Richmond young planners honored the past while drawing attention to present assets and needs. In Emeryville students not only contributed substantive vision to a physical development project, but they also spurred critical conversation around deeply entrenched race and class divides in their city. In San Francisco, when tensions mounted among institutional stakeholders, children's voices brought people together to diffuse the situation. When youth are invited to be legitimate participants in neighborhood and school redevelopment projects, parents and other adult residents are drawn into the process and therefore in a position to make contributions themselves.
3. *Establish innovations in governance: Cultivate leadership and institutionalize collaborative policymaking practices.* To align place-making efforts to establish robust trajectories of opportunity—and engage young people in the process—multiagency, cross-sector partnership-based planning and governance structures need to be established and institutionalized to address complex, intertwined problems. City-school initiatives can transform a divided community into one united around safe, healthy neighborhoods with access to high-quality educational and community facilities. Formal agreements, leadership at all levels, shared responsibility, systems for internal and external communication are vital components of cross-agency communication. Leaders in Richmond have finalized a memorandum of understanding that includes all institutional stakeholders and outlines roles and responsibilities moving forward. Emeryville is actively investigating the best way to set up collaborative governance of their new ECCL, with a clearly defined

role for community stakeholders and young people. Finally, in San Francisco both the city and the district are seizing the power of digital technology, launching a new HOPE SF Web site and maintaining the interactive “Beyond the Talk” site that allows for both cross-agency and community accountability.

In all three cases leaders are making strides to ensure that vision for change is held from the top leadership of mayors and superintendents to program and school site staff to community residents and young people. Local, regional, and state stakeholders as well as federal agencies have shown an increasing commitment to adopt integrated and inclusive initiatives in response to the inequitable, unhealthy, and unsustainable situations facing many communities today. Young men and boys of color in particular need city and school officials and other community leaders to make the most of this historical moment. Agencies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Education to local municipalities and school boards are demonstrating a willingness to stand shoulder-to-shoulder as never before. Their success will ultimately rest not merely on the commitment expressed, but on the demonstrated transformation of policies and practices that create aligned and coherent place-making interventions and invest in the capacity and support of people and in the vibrancy of the built environments they navigate. Only then will we see systemic change that creates true trajectories of opportunity and structures success for young people—particularly young men and boys of color.

## NOTES

1. Researchers Shobha Srinivasan, Liam O’Fallon, and Allen Dreary (2003: 1,446) have defined the built environment as including “our homes, schools, workplaces, parks/recreation areas, business areas and roads. It extends overhead in the form of electric transmission lines, underground in the form of waste disposal sites and subway trains, and across the country in the form of highways. The built environment encompasses all buildings, spaces and products that are created or modified by people. It impacts indoor and outdoor physical environments (for example, climatic conditions and indoor/outdoor air quality), as well as social environments (for example, civic participation, community capacity and investment) and subsequently our health and quality of life.”

2. As far as built-environment factors that are especially relevant to the fate of young people, we have in mind the four broad individual outcome domains identified by the RAND Corporation (Davis, Kilburn, and Schultz 2009) (socioeconomic, health, safety, and ready to learn), the components of healthy communities (physical and mental health, community and work, education, and positive engage-



ment), and the “root causes” of the unique combination of disparities impacting young men and boys of color (housing patterns, assets and wealth, access to care, representation in custodial systems, educational achievement, violence and trauma, family and community stability, and employment/income) proposed by the California Endowment’s 2009 Boys and Men of Color Initiative.

3. This quotation is from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, available online at <http://kirwaninstitute.org/research/opportunity-communities-housing/index.php>.

4. Ibid.

5. These NURVE case study details come in part from research conducted by Samir Bolar and J. April Suwalsky, PLUS fellows with the Center for Cities and Schools.

6. See the City of Richmond’s “Black History Corner” Web site, at <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=1137>.

7. The median household income is \$50,346, and the average household size is 2.81. About a quarter of adults over age twenty-five are high school graduates, while another quarter (combined) hold bachelor’s and graduate degrees. Major employers include Chevron U.S.A., Inc., the Permanente Medical Group, and Walmart (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005–2007).

8. The West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) serves a total enrollment of more than thirty thousand students; 62 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, 84 percent of all enrolled students are of color, and 33 percent of enrolled students are English language learners (ELL). WCCUSD continues to strive to address such issues as staff turnover, poor school performance, and low graduation rates. According to the 2007–08 District Profile, only 2 percent of graduates completed all courses required for California State University or University of California entrance with a grade of C or better (WCCUSD Profile, Ed-Data, FY 2007–08).

9. Interview with the authors, May 13, 2009, Richmond, Calif.

10. This information comes from the California Department of Education Web site, available at <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>.

11. This quotation is from the Emeryville Center of Community Life’s Web site (formerly at <http://www.emerycenter.org/> but no longer online).

12. Interview with the authors, March 26, 2010, San Francisco, Calif.

13. Ibid.

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**PART VI**

**THE ROAD AHEAD**



## MINDING THE GAP

### *Strategic Philanthropy and the Crisis among Black Young Men and Boys*

Tia Elena Martinez, Susan J. Colby,  
and Lisa Quay

#### ABSTRACT

Since the early 1980s, two parallel trends have contributed significantly to the transformation of social, political, and economic life in America: (1) the steady decline in the life outcomes of black young men and boys; and (2) the explosion of new philanthropic activity in the wake of enormous newly created wealth. This chapter explores how present-day philanthropists have responded to the crisis among black young men and boys. Based on an analysis of quantitative data on foundation grant-making and qualitative data from interviews with foundation officers as well as our personal observations from more than two decades of combined experience working with foundation leaders, we document three major periods of foundation investment related to black young men and boys since 1990. Recognizing the crucial work of entrepreneurial program officers, we observe that funding has fluctuated significantly across these periods but failed to reach necessary levels. We also note particularly low levels of investment among “new” philanthropists who entered the field after 1980.

Exploring these findings, we outline three general barriers to foundation investment: the challenges involved in directly addressing race and gender in the United States; foundation staff’s reluctance to take on a highly complex social problem with few proven solutions; and the absence of sustained institutional support. We identify a specific barrier to new philanthropic funding—strategic-planning methods designed to maximize impact and “value for money.” Using a hypothetical case study, we demonstrate how strategic-planning methods may systematically disadvantage black young

men and boys as targeted recipients of philanthropic investment. Cautioning that strategic-planning methods are quickly becoming standard foundation practice, we conclude the chapter with seven concrete recommendations for overcoming these general and specific barriers to increased funding.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s, two parallel trends have contributed significantly to the transformation of social, political, and economic life in America: (1) the steady decline in the life outcomes of black young men and boys; and (2) the explosion of new philanthropic activity in the wake of enormous newly created wealth. The decline in black men's life chances during this period is well documented and still shocking. By the year 2000—in the wake of two decades of deindustrialization, changes in sentencing law, and reform of welfare and child-support laws—a black man in his thirties stood nearly twice the chance of serving prison time (22 percent) than of earning a bachelor of arts degree (12 percent). In contrast, white men faced only a 3 percent likelihood of incarceration and a 32 percent chance of earning a BA.<sup>1</sup>

This deterioration of opportunity among black men occurred at the same time that the U.S. economy was expanding at an astounding rate, driven by rapid growth in the technology, finance, and real estate sectors. Massive fortunes were built, fueling the growth of the super rich, and leading to ever-increasing levels of income and wealth inequality. This era of economic expansion culminated in a period of enormous growth in private philanthropy as the era's most successful businesspeople began to give away their fortunes. The value of the endowments of charitable foundations skyrocketed in sync with the stock market. Between 1980 and 2007 the number of foundations operating in the United States more than tripled—from twenty-two thousand to seventy-five thousand—and the combined value of their assets increased sharply from \$100 billion to \$680 billion.<sup>2</sup>

The question that informs this chapter is whether these two trends intersect, and if so, how: specifically, how has this latest generation of philanthropists and foundation leaders responded to the crisis among black young men and boys, a crisis that developed in tandem with the growth of their own fortunes and endowments? Many philanthropists have dedicated themselves to tackling an array of social issues affecting the most disadvantaged people in American society, including education, health, employment, and poverty. While in theory these areas support work with black young

men and boys, there has been a surprising lack of explicit investment in this highly vulnerable population. This chapter seeks to provide an overview of the crisis facing black men and boys, to suggest that targeted investment in this population is required, and to identify barriers that have prevented such investment. We also propose a set of recommendations designed to improve present-day philanthropy's ability to meet this challenge.

Although this chapter focuses on philanthropic foundations, we acknowledge that the foundation is only one of a range of institutional actors needed to effectively address a crisis of this proportion—and almost certainly not the most influential.<sup>3</sup> As previous contributions in this collection have made clear, effective solutions to this crisis will require the coordinated activities of all three sectors of the economy: government, business, and nonprofit. We are acutely aware that foundation resources are dwarfed by those of both the government and the private sector. Furthermore, other nonprofit organizations (such as community-based direct service providers, community organizing groups, and religious institutions) are arguably more central than foundations to addressing the challenges faced by black young men and boys.<sup>4</sup> Despite these limitations, however, foundations can play a unique and absolutely essential role in solving the current crisis. Foundation dollars have the potential to represent society's "risk capital"; freed from the constraints of politics or the market, foundations can address "unpopular" issues that others are unwilling or unable to take on. They can also pursue opportunities that have a potentially huge payoff but carry a high risk of failure. Finally, foundation dollars represent one of the very few sources of funding that can be used to strengthen nonprofit organizational capacity and support field-building activities.

Foundations have historically fulfilled this role by tackling some of the nation's most intractable social issues, stepping in as an essential voice and resource when others have thought it too risky. In the context of race and poverty, foundation actions have been far-reaching. In the post-Civil War South, for example, the Rockefeller Foundation supported the establishment of new elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools for African Americans, including Morehouse College and Spelman College. During the 1940s the Carnegie Foundation funded sociologist Gunnar Myrdal to write his seminal work on race in America. In the 1960s and 1970s—in the wake of white flight, riots, and massive disinvestment—the Ford Foundation invested heavily in rebuilding and strengthening poor, urban neighborhoods; since then, Ford has supported the nonprofit infrastructure of civil rights advocacy groups, including the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the National Council of La Raza.<sup>5</sup>

None of these foundations can claim to have brought about change single-handedly, however, or even come close to solving the big problems they attempted to tackle. But they did offer the money, platform, and public support to voices and organizations that likely would not have found support elsewhere and that ultimately were essential to catalyzing large-scale social change. Throughout this chapter we explore how contemporary foundations are meeting the latest challenge in the multicentury struggle to dismantle a race-based caste system in the United States.

### OVERVIEW OF THE CRISIS AND A CALL TO ACTION

The depth of the crisis among black boys and men—and the level of suffering and diminution of opportunity it embodies—is devastating, calling for a forceful, coordinated, long-term response from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. This population faces unacceptably high probabilities of academic failure, chronic unemployment, and incarceration. The accumulation of disadvantage begins in the public education system, where black boys are increasingly concentrated in segregated, high-poverty schools that lack the instructional resources that matter most to teaching and learning. Trapped in failing schools, 42 percent of all black boys fall at least one full grade behind.<sup>6</sup>

Black boys are increasingly being pushed out of these schools. Although they account for 9 percent of total enrollment in the nation's elementary and secondary schools, they make up 22 percent of total expulsions.<sup>7</sup> By the time they reach high school, fewer than one in two (43 percent) will graduate on time.<sup>8</sup> In urban areas their high-school graduation rates are even lower. In Milwaukee and Baltimore, for example, fewer than one in three young black men graduates (32 percent and 31 percent, respectively). As adolescents and adults, young black men struggle to connect to jobs and find a path out of poverty. In 2004, 72 percent of black male high-school dropouts in their twenties were jobless, compared with 34 percent of white dropouts. Even when high-school graduates were included, half of black men in their twenties were jobless.<sup>9</sup> And as the likelihood of finding a job decreased among black men, their likelihood of being incarcerated in state or federal prison skyrocketed. Incarceration rates climbed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reaching historic highs in recent years.<sup>10</sup> During this period the incarceration rate for black men in their early thirties doubled; one in five of these men now have a history of incarceration. Among less-educated black men, the

increase in the probability of incarceration was especially steep. In 1980, 17 percent of black male high-school dropouts in their early thirties had been incarcerated; by 2000 nearly 60 percent (58 percent) had been imprisoned.<sup>11</sup>

The contrast between the expansion of incarceration among this population and the reduction in educational, work, and civic opportunities is stark. In 2000, among black dropouts in their late twenties, more were in prison on a given day (34 percent) than were working (30 percent).<sup>12</sup> Today, more black men receive their GED in prison than graduate from college.<sup>13</sup> In certain states, such as Florida and Alabama, 30 percent of black men are disenfranchised as a result of having a felony conviction.<sup>14</sup> Mass incarceration, a failing public school system, ongoing family disintegration, and chronic unemployment have formed a juggernaut that crushes the promise of opportunity for this population, leaving an unacceptable number of black men—especially those with low levels of education—disconnected from family, school, and work.

As a society—at an individual, community, institutional, and national level—we must decide whether it is acceptable for any race and/or gender group to face these odds. A life defined by these parameters is robbed of hope and possibility. Simply put, to consign men of a certain racial group to this fate is inconsistent with basic notions of justice, equity, and fairness. When one group in society is so thoroughly marginalized and excluded, democracy is seriously weakened, exposing a gaping hole in what remains of the frayed social contract. There is a moral imperative to take action to change the life chances for black boys and men. For the United States to tolerate these conditions is to abandon its commitment to a shared fate and a common destiny. But even if one rejects the moral call to action based on equity, democracy, and justice, the enormous social costs of this crisis should engender a response. The impact of this crisis on low-income black families, children, and communities is devastating. The spillover effects of crime and violence, the cost of incarceration and increased use of public services, the loss of a potentially productive labor force and forgone tax revenue, and the decreases in civic participation and political stability are overwhelming and affect all Americans.<sup>15</sup> The potential benefits accrued by avoiding even a fraction of these costs justify immediate action and investment.

### **THE CURRENT RESPONSE OF FOUNDATIONS TO THE CRISIS**

To examine the response of today's foundations to the current crisis, we analyzed quantitative data on grants awarded since the early 1990s and

qualitative data from one-on-one interviews with experienced foundation program staff involved with current and past initiatives that have targeted black young men and boys. We also reviewed relevant reports, evaluations, and research articles available through the Foundation Center and online. To provide an overview of philanthropic giving among regional and smaller national foundations, we relied on existing published reviews by the Ford Foundation and the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE).<sup>16</sup> Across these sources we identified foundation initiatives aimed at black young men and boys in current and historical grant making over the past two decades. To examine the broader landscape of the recent funding patterns of foundations, we reviewed the past seven years of giving records of the country's fifty largest national grant-making foundations.<sup>17</sup>

In amassing this body of data, we included only those initiatives that specifically and explicitly targeted this population as both black *and* male. Foundation initiatives that were in theory intended to benefit black young men and boys as part of attempts to serve a larger population of disadvantaged individuals—such as efforts to reform K–12 public education systems serving low-income and minority youth, or the development of housing solutions for the chronically homeless—were included only if they appeared to explicitly apply a race and gender lens. We applied these strict criteria because empirical evidence suggests that the crisis demands an integrated response that directly targets the specific needs of these men and boys. More universal strategies intended to reform the education or health system for all disadvantaged Americans are urgently needed and are an important part of the solution to the crisis, but these efforts will likely leave black young men and boys behind unless they are coupled with targeted strategies that specifically address the unique and interrelated dynamics affecting this group—including the impact of gendered racial discrimination in schools and the job market, early criminalization and incarceration, pervasive structural violence and trauma, the dearth of fathers and male role models, and cultural norms around race and masculinity.<sup>18</sup>

We found a moderate amount of funding focused explicitly on black men and boys, averaging approximately \$8.6 million per year in real 2009 dollars (\$5.4 million unadjusted), with significant variation across time.<sup>19</sup> Overall, funding grew in the early 1990s, peaking sharply in 1997, when foundations committed an unprecedented \$60 million (\$35 million) to the crisis. Funding dropped to pre-1997 levels the subsequent year but maintained a steady pace of growth throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, peaking once again in 2001 at \$11 million (\$8 million). Funding fell sharply



after 2003 to a low of around \$2.5 million (\$2 million) per year through 2005. After a jump to around \$4 million (\$4 million) in 2006, funding levels stayed relatively constant through 2008, but picked up again in 2009 to \$5 million (\$5 million). Newer foundations begun after 1980 were less likely to fund targeted initiatives than their older counterparts begun before that year. We expand on each of these findings in turn.

### HISTORICAL TRENDS

Qualitative interviews and review of program materials suggest that this body of foundation work can be broken down into three historically distinct periods since 1990: the early 1990s through 2002, 2003 through 2005, and 2006 through the present.<sup>20</sup>

#### **The Early 1990s through 2002: Funding Black Men as Fathers**

With the support of a number of large national foundations, this period focused primarily on addressing the needs of black men as fathers. This spotlight grew out of research from the mid-1980s and early 1990s that revealed the erosion of job opportunities for less-educated black men as the United States shifted from a manufacturing to a service-based economy. Such academics as William Julius Wilson documented how lost employment opportunities contributed to rapidly dwindling numbers of “marriageable” black men—that is, men with stable jobs and decent incomes—in working-class black communities.<sup>21</sup> This in turn fueled the growth of single-parent families and contributed to the increase in child poverty rates and a host of other negative outcomes associated with diminished access to the emotional and financial resources available to children raised in two-parent families. Emerging from this research, fatherhood programs of the early 1990s attempted to reverse these trends by increasing employment opportunities for custodial fathers, decreasing disincentives to work, bolstering parenting skills, and helping men to navigate an increasingly punitive child support–enforcement system. For some funders “fatherhood” was a useful euphemism for discussing the needs of black men, as the parenting emphasis connected them to a more vulnerable and sympathetic group of poor children in the eyes of funders, policymakers, and the public.<sup>22</sup>

By the early 1990s the fatherhood framework had gained substantial mainstream traction as a result of a sympathetic administration and highly

publicized events (for example, the Million Man March in 1995 and the growth of groups like the Promise Keepers) that helped to raise the public's awareness and popularize fatherhood and fathers' rights as issues. The Clinton administration incorporated this framework into its welfare reform efforts. By the mid-1990s the fatherhood agenda had made significant inroads into large philanthropy. In 1994, Ron Mincy, a leading scholar of African American men and boys, joined the Ford Foundation from the Urban Institute, bringing a commitment to finding a leading role for philanthropy in a broader movement around fatherhood.

At Ford, Mincy spearheaded the design and implementation of the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative, a \$52 million (\$30 million unadjusted), seven-year effort. The initiative was intended to affect large-scale systems change, deliver appropriate and effective services through an array of programs, and improve outcomes for parents and children in low-income families. By targeting the way public agencies and community organizations work with unmarried families, the initiative also aimed to increase the capacity of young, economically disadvantaged fathers to provide financial and emotional support for their children, reducing poverty and welfare dependence as a result. Two other large foundations—the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation—joined with Ford to form a funders' collective for fathers and families.

From 1994 through 2003 two of the foundations from this funding collective, Ford and Mott, provided support for a large-scale longitudinal study of fragile families; for extensive policy work at the federal, state, and local levels to reform welfare with a focus on child support provisions; and for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of sixteen demonstration sites nationwide.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the foundations undertook an ambitious effort to create a new fatherhood "field" by seeding and building a number of large national intermediaries (for example, the National Center on Fathers and Families at the University of Pennsylvania; the Center for Fathers, Families, and Public Policy; and the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families). The foundations also supported and convened practitioners and scholars, and documented and distributed best practices.

Shortly before the Ford, Mott, and Casey foundations began their fatherhood work, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation had initiated a separate effort that directly addressed the challenges black men and boys faced. Between 1992 and 1997 the foundation invested more than \$17 million (\$8.5 million unadjusted) in an African-American Men and Boys Initiative. Designed and led by prominent scholar Bobby Austin, the effort focused on two main issues: the delivery of effective, multilayered services and leadership

development. Most significantly, funding established the National Task Force on African-American Males in 1992. In 1996 the task force issued its report, *Repairing the Breach: Key Ways to Support Family Life, Reclaim Our Streets, and Rebuild Civil Society in America's Communities*, which offered a set of recommendations designed to resolve the problems faced by young black men and boys in the United States.

The impact of both the fatherhood work and Kellogg's pioneering efforts was significant. The Fragile Families work in particular spurred crucial changes in the ways welfare, child support, and family support systems treated low-income, noncustodial fathers. These efforts increased public-sector awareness of the difference between so-called "deadbeat" dads (divorced fathers who had jobs and were willfully refusing to pay child support) and "dead broke" dads (fathers who had never married their child's mother and were often jobless). In addition, they exposed the perverse incentives embedded in child support enforcement laws that worked to distance poor, noncustodial fathers from their children and the legitimate labor force.

The foundations leveraged millions of dollars in federal funds to support a set of demonstration projects that documented the positive effects of well-designed programs on job opportunities, earnings, and child support payments among noncustodial fathers. The projects produced less evidence, however, that improved outcomes for black fathers translated into better outcomes for their children. The work of Kellogg, in particular, resulted in the growth of a number of innovative community-level programs as well as the launch of the Village Foundation, the first foundation focused solely on the needs of black boys and men. Opened in 1997 with multimillion-dollar support from Kellogg, the Village Foundation was dedicated to "repairing the breach" between African American males and the rest of society by reconnecting them first to their local communities and then to the larger society.

### **2003–2005: National Funding Drought and Regional Boom**

During the second distinct funding period, philanthropic funding for work focusing on black men and boys dwindled dramatically, decreasing from a post-1997 high of \$11 million (\$8 million unadjusted) in 2001 to \$2.5 million (\$2 million unadjusted) from 2003 through 2005. Although a couple of major funders, such as Mott and to a lesser extent Annie E. Casey, continued to fund fatherhood projects targeted at black men, the largest

national foundations, such as Ford and Kellogg, left the field. In the wake of this exit, much of the institutional capacity that had been created during the past decade disintegrated. A recent follow-up study of fifty-one organizations that served black men and boys in 1995 profiled as part of Kellogg's African-American Men and Boys Initiative found that ten years later, only half of these organizations still existed and only a quarter still had programming focused on black men and boys.<sup>24</sup> The organizations supported by the Ford Foundation fared somewhat better. Mincy has estimated that about half of the intermediaries started in the mid- to late 1990s under the auspices of the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiatives still exist in 2010 and that a number of leaders supported by these organizations have gone on to hold influential posts in the federal government.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, for an issue as complex and challenging as the crisis facing this population, the short average organizational life cycle is discouraging. This relatively rapid loss of institutional capacity represents one of the most important shortcomings of the first period of investment.

Although the sudden decline in national foundation funding was dramatic and consequential, some new sources of support emerged during this relative drought. A group of smaller and regional funders began to pioneer new work on black men that hewed much closer to Kellogg's earlier work than to the dominant fatherhood initiatives.<sup>26</sup> These efforts would lay the foundation for a renaissance of investment on the part of larger national foundations a few years hence. In 2003 the Schott Foundation for Public Education initiated a nationwide investigation of the educational performance of black males. The Mitchell Kapor Foundation commissioned its own overview of the conditions facing black men and explored the ways that grant making could best improve educational outcomes of black males. The Chicago Community Trust—one of the nation's largest community foundations—began to plan an initiative to improve outcomes among black males in Chicago. Based on this work, all three foundations subsequently created programs of focused giving that targeted black men and boys.

### **2006–Present: Funding Black Men as Black Men (and Boys)**

The final period examined began in 2006 and continues through today, albeit at slightly lower funding levels. This period is marked by renewed (and new) interest among some of the large national foundations, following several years of relative dormancy, and a shift in focus from fatherhood to

initiatives that explicitly target black men and boys in their own right, irrespective of their status as fathers. In March 2006 the *New York Times* ran a front-page story entitled “Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn” that reviewed the findings of Ron Mincy’s *Black Males Left Behind*, a collection of essays on the impact of the 1990s economic boom on black men. Largely in response to this article, a small group of ABFE members convened to discuss how philanthropy could respond to the crisis surrounding black males. Shortly thereafter, the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute began to initiate a new set of targeted investments focused on this population.

Senior program officer Loren Harris drove the brief resurgence of this work at the Ford Foundation. Between 2006 and 2009, Harris collaborated with Frontline Consulting to publish a series of reports on philanthropic giving focused on black men and boys.<sup>26</sup> This work initially centered on developing strategic ways to build and sustain capacity in the field, to avoid the setbacks that occurred in the wake of the fatherhood work. Harris concluded that “the architecture needed to advance efforts with black men and boys would be minimally comprised of a national resource center, a practitioners’ network, a clearinghouse for scholarly work and a permanent fund to support the field of practice in perpetuity.”<sup>27</sup> After convening a national meeting and a series of regional funder meetings to mobilize the philanthropic community, Ford published a report that reviewed philanthropic efforts targeting black men and boys as well as barriers to this work.

In 2006, Harris teamed up with the Twenty-First Century Foundation, a smaller national foundation that facilitates strategic giving for black community change, to host a National Conversation on Black Men and Boys that brought together more than forty national and local leaders. The Ford Foundation and the Twenty-First Century Foundation organized the meeting participants in a collaborative, national effort called the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys. Before departing Ford at the end of his term limit in 2009, Harris also supported the launch of the University of Michigan’s Scholars Network on Marginalized Males, Public Private Venture’s Practitioners Network on Marginalized Males, and the National Black Programming Consortium’s Masculinity Project. Despite these concerted efforts, however, little work in this arena continued at Ford after Harris left the foundation. Since departing Ford, he has continued his central leadership role in the effort to mobilize philanthropic response through his independent consulting practice.

The Open Society Institute, another large national foundation, took up the work around black men and boys beginning in 2008, initially under

the direction of program officer Alvin Starks. In May of that year, the institute launched its four-year fifteen-million-dollar Campaign for Black Male Achievement after a year of program development and exploratory grant making. A cross-cutting, place-based initiative located in six cities, the campaign is “aimed at promoting the positive roles government and philanthropy can play in advancing public policy reforms” as well as “key institutional and cultural changes that can help black males thrive.”<sup>28</sup> Over the past two years the institute has emerged as the key funder in this arena, linking efforts of the Schott Foundation, the Twenty-First Century Foundation, and other regional and smaller national foundations. Although Starks has since left the Open Society Institute, the program has continued, currently led by Shawn Dove and Rashid Shabazz.

This recent leadership by the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute, in partnership with Schott and the Twenty-First Century Foundation, has encouraged other large national funders to enter the field. Since 2008, several major foundations have begun a variety of initiatives targeted at black men and boys. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Changemakers began the “Young Men at Risk: Transforming the Power of a Generation” competition for innovative program models that target men of color. In 2009 the Kellogg Foundation convened a national meeting in Washington, D.C., called “Strengthen the Ties: Promoting Success of Boys and Men of Color.” Later that same year Kellogg launched its Young Men of Color initiative.

Today this latest generation of foundation work is in its early stages, the total funding committed is relatively low, and the ultimate impact remains to be seen. Initial investments, however, appear promising: the initiatives described here have begun to build the infrastructure required to address the structural and cultural roots of the crisis by connecting funders, bolstering the capacity of practitioners, creating networks of scholars, and articulating emerging policy platforms. Yet the current levels of giving are arguably not commensurate with the scale and urgency of the problem. It will require a broader and deeper response from the philanthropic community to bring these efforts to the necessary level.

### **LARGE, NEW PHILANTHROPY REMAINS UNDERREPRESENTED**

Since the early 1990s, older foundations have dominated the philanthropic efforts targeting black men and boys, with newer foundations playing a minor role.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the most prominent of these projects were initiated by large foundations begun before 1980 by such industrialists as Ford, Casey,

Kellogg, and Mott. Among large, new philanthropy, only the Open Society Institute has significantly invested in targeted initiatives.<sup>30</sup>

A similar pattern emerged when we restricted our analysis to the past seven years, to control for the fact that many new foundations were not founded until the mid- to late 1990s or the early 2000s. Looking at the top fifty largest national foundations, 14 percent ( $n = 5$ ) of the thirty-five foundations begun before 1980 have initiatives or subinitiatives targeted at black men and boys; these five foundations have invested a total of approximately \$28 million in addressing the crisis over this time period.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, only 7 percent ( $n = 1$ ) of the fifteen foundations begun after 1980 have such initiatives; this single foundation invested a total of approximately \$4 million (unadjusted) during the same time frame. To make sure that this finding was not an artifact of the exclusive focus on funders with targeted initiatives, we did a supplemental analysis for the fiscal years 2006 to 2008 that included not only those grants awarded by foundations that had an initiative or subinitiative targeting black men and boys, but also any one-off grants by other foundations that targeted this population but were not part of a specific black men and boys initiative. The same patterns emerge: between 2006 and 2008, 0.14 percent of total giving among the old “pre-1980” foundations went toward black men and boys, compared with just 0.06 percent of total giving among the new “post-1980” foundations.

This review of foundation investment patterns raises three crucial questions:

1. What are the general barriers to increasing foundation funding targeted at the crisis?
2. What are the specific barriers to increasing targeted funding among newer foundations?
3. How can philanthropy adjust current practices to overcome these barriers?

To address the first question, we draw on the existing literature and interviews with past and current foundation program officers and leaders. To address the second, we rely on personal observations from nearly two decades of combined experience working with foundation leaders engaged in strategic planning who have emerged as leading practitioners of strategic philanthropy. We served in this capacity as leaders of a nonprofit management consulting firm that helped pilot many of the practices central to contemporary strategic philanthropy. Our insights come from observing the inner workings of these foundations and reflecting on our own practices

as advisers who serve these organizations. To address the third and final question, we offer a set of concrete recommendations.

### **Identifying General Barriers to Increasing Targeted Funding among All Foundations**

Our review of the literature as well as one-on-one interviews with program officers reveal three main reasons for limited giving among foundations: (1) the challenges involved in directly addressing race and gender in America; (2) foundation staff's reluctance to take on a highly complex social problem with few proven solutions and a significant risk of failure; and (3) the absence of sustained institutional support from foundation leadership.<sup>32</sup> We address each of these barriers in turn.

*Challenges in addressing race in America.* Since the early 1980s, government and public support for efforts to achieve racial justice have declined—especially those that use race as a factor in targeting services or determining eligibility for college admissions. The public's negative reaction to mandated busing in the 1970s was followed by a growing backlash against affirmative action that included a number of state-sponsored ballot initiatives in the early and mid-1990s outlawing the use of race in college admissions. This culminated in a number of Supreme Court decisions in the 1990s and 2000s that significantly constrained the ability of schools, colleges, and universities to voluntarily use race to achieve integration. It would be hard to overstate the impact of this shift in public attitudes and jurisprudence. Although the constraints on using race applied only to state actors, academics cite a widespread chilling effect when it comes to creating racially targeted programming across all institutions, both public and private.

Feedback from the Ford Foundation's recent regional gatherings of funders and our own interviews with program officers suggest that this backlash has made its way into philanthropy. The Ford Foundation's report *Momentum* relays program officers' candid discussions about "the potential negative fallout that could come with pushing issues of race in philanthropic institutions," and "how putting race on the table has come increasingly under attack in this country."<sup>33</sup> In interviews program officers described the need to strip any proposed initiative of language that would "flag it as a race based issue." They explained that when they go to their board, they need "to talk in a race neutral way in order to garner support."

Ironically, the retreat from directly addressing race has been reinforced by the election of Barack Obama, the country's first black president, and



the emerging narrative of a “postracial” society, in which racial discrimination ostensibly no longer occurs and race is increasingly irrelevant. Foundation staff cite “a desire among many individuals within American society (including those involved with philanthropy) to magically morph to a post-racial utopia where the differences of the past are erased.”<sup>34</sup> In this postracial context black leaders increasingly find that their own success is taken as evidence for the irrelevance of race. Consequently, their support for initiatives focused on the black community is perceived as a form of favoritism, “special interest,” or bias. This dynamic makes it uniquely challenging for black leaders to address issues of race.

A number of the largest and oldest foundations today have black executives on their senior leadership team who find themselves in similar situations with their colleagues, boards, and staff. In interviews with foundation staff, respondents described the need for black program officers and leadership to tread very carefully when promoting initiatives around race. They realize that such initiatives may well be met with skepticism, and they must be prepared to meet the highest burden of proof. Similarly, in regional gatherings held by Ford and attended primarily by black foundation staff, participants reported that initiating discussions of race at foundations often creates considerable discomfort and can affect career progression. There are very real political and professional costs shouldered by black leadership when they act as champions for this issue.

The challenges involved in addressing race are further compounded by the intervening role of gender. Foundation work focusing on black males must contend with complex interactions between race and gender that produce a powerful set of societal stereotypes, cultural images, and expectations around black masculinity. The construction of black men as hypermasculine, violent criminals reinforces the general reluctance on the part of foundations to address race and supports the perception of black men as “unsympathetic” and the issues involved insoluble. In addition, the decision to target men and boys can make the work vulnerable to being perceived, inaccurately, as antifeminist.<sup>35</sup> One of the major contributions of the fatherhood work from the 1990s was to erode this perception and position the work as part of a broader agenda involving the well-being of poor families, mothers, and children. Nevertheless, a recent report on philanthropy’s potential to address the conditions of black males involving anonymous interviews with foundation executives suggests that some of this reluctance remains.<sup>36</sup> These challenges related to gender combine with the nation’s retreat from affirmative action, the attendant difficulty of talking directly and frankly about race, and the emerging myth of a

postracial America to constitute major barriers to increased targeted funding, particularly among the largest, most prominent national foundations.

*Inertia arising from complexity.* The sheer complexity of the crisis is a second barrier to increased foundation funding. When confronted with a truly tough problem for which there are few proven solutions and a significant risk of failure, foundation benefactors, staff, and boards become increasingly risk averse. The daunting challenges inherent in the crisis—along with its multicausal nature and the consequent need for solutions that cross organizational and system boundaries, sector silos, and life stages—can make the issue appear overwhelmingly complex. This problem is especially acute for foundations that are limited to only addressing one categorical area, like health or education. In interviews program officers at the health foundations described their frustration at being able to address only one component of the crisis—violence or mental health, for example—when clearly other components, such as education and employment, have played such important roles. They felt that if they could not address all elements simultaneously, their efforts would be destined to fail.

This is further complicated by the relative newness of their endeavors: the field is still emerging, nonprofit capacity is undeveloped, leadership is not connected, and the research infrastructure is nascent. Many foundations are daunted by the challenge. Recent work by Ford, the Open Society Institute, the Twenty-First Century Foundation, and the Schott Foundation for Public Education directly addresses many of these concerns by creating funders' and scholars' networks, guides to giving, reviews of existing practitioner efforts, and capacity-building grants for practitioners. Despite these recent investments, however, the perception of intractability remains a major barrier among many funders.

*Lack of sustained support by leadership.* The third and final barrier to increased foundation funding concerns the lack of sustained support among senior foundation leadership for targeted funding. Our interviews with program officers suggest that sustained support from foundation leaders—and in particular, the president or CEO—made a real, marked difference in officers' ability to successfully advance a set of targeted investments and to create a sustainable program capable of surviving their own departure from the foundation. Interviews with those involved in OSI's Campaign for Black Male Achievement cite the crucial role of strong public support from the benefactor, George Soros; the president, Gara LaMarche; and board members Lani Guinier and Geoffrey Canada. Similarly, interviewees at Kellogg spoke of the importance of the vision and ongoing support of the

vice president for health, Gail Christopher; the president, Sterling Speirn; and board member Joe Stewart.

In instances where targeted funding did materialize, a special set of circumstances appears to have been in place. There were entrepreneurial program officers willing to take initiative and a window of opportunity created by increased media attention, moral panic, or a high-profile policy issue involving black men. For example, in the early 1990s Bobby Austin's arrival at the Kellogg Foundation coincided with theories about the new "underclass" and the framing of black young men as either an "endangered species" or as "super-predators."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in the mid-1990s Ron Mincy's presence at the Ford Foundation coincided with welfare reform and the Million Man March. And in the early 2000s the work of Loren Harris at Ford and Alvin Starks at the Open Society Institute took place in the context of Hurricane Katrina and the 2006 publication of Mincy's *Black Males Left Behind*, with its attendant coverage by the *New York Times*.

The net result of this dynamic is erratic patterns of funding that are highly dependent on having the right entrepreneurial program officer in the right place at the right time. This response is far too idiosyncratic for a crisis that is simultaneously acute and chronic. It also has had a particularly devastating impact on sector capacity and, more important, on black males and their communities. Right now we are in one of the upswings. How do we avoid this mistake this time around? The seven recommendations at the end of this chapter offer suggestions about how to begin.

### **Identifying Specific Barriers to Increasing Targeted Funding among New Philanthropy**

Difficulties discussing race, the reluctance to take on a complex problem, and insufficient support from senior leadership contribute to limited levels of giving across all foundations. However, these realities cannot explain the particularly low levels of giving among new foundations. All foundations, whether in the world of old or new philanthropy, must grapple with the difficulties of discussing and directly addressing race in this country. All face the challenges associated with addressing a complex, social problem with limited proven solutions. Why then has one group responded to this crisis to a much greater extent than the other? One common explanation is that living donors who run new foundations are more likely to be ideologically conservative than liberal professionals who run older foundations, whose benefactors are long deceased. According to this explanation, older

foundations have drifted away from the more conservative “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” orientation of their founders. As such, they have morphed into institutes of social engineering run by liberal academics.<sup>38</sup>

But our experience with new foundations contradicts this explanation and suggests that the conservative-versus-liberal orientation of foundation leadership is not the main driver of lower levels of giving. Values with respect to race, individual responsibility, and the “deserving versus undeserving” poor almost certainly influence patterns of giving around this issue. However, we have not observed a marked difference on these dimensions between living benefactors and the staff and boards of older foundations. If anything, old philanthropy’s reliance on boards versus living benefactors makes those institutions more risk averse and amenable to the vagaries of public opinion. The values that are more prominent among newer philanthropists—such as a free-market orientation, seeing the public sector as inefficient, and supporting innovation—do not preclude action on this issue. In fact, efforts to build economic self-reliance, support entrepreneurship, and shed the bonds of government dependence have all played a prominent role historically in racial-justice work.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, our experience with actual planning processes reveals new philanthropists’ willingness, in theory, to take on such issues as the crisis among black men and boys. We typically begin a planning engagement by exploring whether any group or cause is clearly off the table because of the foundation’s values or preferences. Not one institution with which we have worked has said that it would consider excluding small, high-needs populations—including African American men and boys. In fact, almost all have expressed an unusual level of interest in addressing the “toughest cases.” The question is clear: Why, despite the apparent willingness of foundation leadership to engage such a problem, do proposed initiatives to address black boys and young men wind up on the cutting-room floor at the end of the day? We hypothesize that new philanthropy’s low levels of investment are in part the unintended consequence of methods of strategic planning designed to maximize impact and “value for money.”

Although the living benefactors of new philanthropy are no more likely to be ideologically averse to investment to end the crisis, they are more likely to shape their philanthropy around the same goals and approach that fueled their success in the private sector: a relentless quest to maximize return, coupled with methods of rigorous, data-driven strategic planning and resource allocation. A 2006 study of leadership at large, private foundations has confirmed that newer foundations are more likely to apply strategic planning methods to their work than older foundations.<sup>40</sup> These

strategic planning methods are characterized by: (1) a focus on maximizing impact given constrained resources; (2) an emphasis on measurable outcomes; (3) the use of data and empirical evidence to inform decisions; and (4) a preference for strategies that involve scaling discrete, proven, replicable programs or approaches.

This approach to philanthropic planning is a significant improvement over past practices that may have selected “pet projects” for funding, based on benefactors’ or program officers’ personal preferences. Indeed, as management consultants who have sought to bridge the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, we have played a central role in importing these planning methods from the for-profit sector and tailoring them to the needs of foundations. Yet we have also come to recognize that these systematic, strategic approaches to philanthropy can lead adopters to minimize or avoid investment in small, high-needs populations—including black men and boys.

Although new philanthropists piloted the planning and resource allocation methods central to the strategic approach, these techniques are rapidly becoming the default methods of the largest national foundations. The same study that demonstrated newer foundations are more likely to apply strategic planning methods to their work characterized the bulk of older foundations as “partial strategists” who apply these methods to some of their decision making but not all. Many of the recent thought-leaders who espouse strategic philanthropy are not products of the new economy; rather, they hail from the academy, like Paul Brest of the Hewlett Foundation. The leading edge in philanthropic practice has clearly made its way into the mainstream. As such, the time has come to reflect on and improve the emerging standard practice for foundation planning. In the spirit of continuous improvement of our own work, we offer a provocative, informed hypothesis and a set of recommendations to foundations and the consultancies that assist them in strategic planning.

### **THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING METHODS**

In this section we illustrate the ways in which a typical data-driven strategic planning exercise can lead philanthropists away from investment in small, high-needs groups like black men and boys. Although actual planning engagements are much less linear and much more iterative than the simplified version presented here, we think it accurately reflects the main tenets of thorough, thoughtful data-driven planning, as currently practiced. Strategic philanthropists seek to make as big a difference in the world as possible given their limited dollars. The data-driven strategic planning

process helps them to achieve this through a structured exploration of where to focus their giving based on three factors: (1) data on external opportunities and challenges, which includes what other “competitors” are doing and data describing the shifting needs and conditions in the world; (2) the organization’s strengths and limitations, including human and financial resources available; and (3) the foundation’s core values and beliefs. The planning exercise ultimately results in a focused set of goals, a plan detailing activities designed to achieve these goals, recommendations for how to align the organization to execute the plan, and a set of measurements to monitor progress. A central assumption undergirding these methods is that a more focused strategy will increase the foundation’s chance of success through reducing the level of complexity involved in implementation and ensuring that goals are truly commensurate with the human and financial resources available.

A typical planning process is usually comprised of five discrete analytic components or steps.<sup>41</sup> The first three steps allow the foundation to consider the types of change it could try to bring about (the “what”); the target populations it could seek to benefit (the “who”); and the ways in which that change might be realized (the “how”). In the fourth and fifth steps the foundation compares the relative merits of the various identified options by considering their “costs per outcome” and the unique assets the organization could bring to each. On the basis of these five steps the foundation makes a decision about the path it will pursue. Taken together, its final choices about the specific “what,” “who,” and “how” represent the foundation’s *theory of change* and serve as a guide to focus its subsequent giving. We describe the five planning steps in detail below and explain how in practice each step can unintentionally reduce the chances that a foundation will decide to invest in reversing the crisis among black men and boys.

### **Step 1: Identifying the Change the Foundation Wants to Bring About**

The first task of a foundation’s leadership team is to move from the organization’s broad mission statement to a narrower, more concrete and actionable definition of the change they would like to make. At this point in the planning process, the aperture is wide open, multiple sources of data and beliefs are considered, and one of the few constraints raised—that the type of change chosen be observable and measurable—works in favor of investing in the crisis among black young men and boys. Indeed, this crisis has been defined by an endless litany of quantitative measures: dismal gradu-

ation rates, skyrocketing rates of imprisonment, increasing mortality and morbidity rates, and decreasing life chances.

The leadership team is typically interested in focusing on the crisis, citing the urgency of the issue, the pure level of need, and the felt moral imperative to act to change these devastating odds. Reflecting this initial interest, the type of change they ultimately select—whether an increase in levels of employment or improvement in health status—usually encompasses some, if not all, elements of the crisis. This early stage of the planning process typically represents the high water mark in terms of interest and support for adopting a focus on black men and boys. As a foundation proceeds through the next four steps, data-driven methods of strategic planning unintentionally lead to a gradual dampening of their initial enthusiasm.

### **Step 2: Identifying the Specific Target Population for Which the Foundation Wants to Make Change**

In this crucial second step, consultants encourage the foundation's leadership team to focus their strategy by defining in greater specificity the different potential "target populations" for which they hope to make change.<sup>42</sup> At this juncture the leadership team is tasked with balancing two competing demands. First, they must identify a target population that is sufficiently large, because they seek to make a big impact, which is generally measured by the number of lives changed. Second, they must also identify a target population without too much variation in terms of level of need, since they need to construct a single, coherent strategy that effectively addresses the entire group. Although the leadership team realizes they could create a number of tailored substrategies to address this diversity of need, they also recognize that this may increase the complexity of implementation and spread the human and financial resources of the foundation too thin.

To help the leadership team narrow the target population and meet these two competing demands, consultants complete a market sizing and segmentation analysis, which uses a variety of quantitative sources to break the larger heterogeneous population into smaller, more homogeneous subgroups with different need profiles. For example, a foundation concerned with poverty alleviation may initially look at all individuals in Illinois who are unemployed: they would find that in 2009, 10.1 percent of the approximately 9.3 million adults in Illinois were unemployed. Analysts would then examine population subgroups, revealing that of the nearly one million unemployed adults in Illinois, 226,000 are black and just 124,000 are black men over age eighteen.<sup>43</sup> Given its mandate to maximize impact,

with these relatively small numbers, the foundation would likely be driven away from a targeted focus on unemployed black men to focus instead on the one million unemployed adults in Illinois, of which unemployed black men remains a subsegment but not the primary focus.

The option to select a broader general population is relatively attractive: it gives the leadership team the large population size needed to produce big impact, it avoids the political hazards involved in directly addressing race within the foundation, and black men and boys still remain part of the target population. Unfortunately, this decision can seriously undermine the ability to successfully address the needs of black men and boys, when these needs are sufficiently different from the majority of the target population. It can also lead to the explicit removal of a sizable proportion of black men and boys, when the leadership team attempts to truncate variation in need within their target population. In this unemployment scenario the leadership team would likely decide to exclude adults with the highest level of need, such as unemployed workers who are unstably housed or homeless, a disproportionate number of whom are black men. In either case the crisis among this population goes unaddressed.

In addition to limiting the sheer scale of impact, this population's small size restricts what consultants can infer about them from available data. This places black men and boys at a significant disadvantage in a planning process that prizes empirical evidence when making investment decisions. Consultants use this data in several ways: (1) to describe and compare populations' baseline conditions and characteristics, (2) to assess potential drivers of poor (and favorable) outcomes, and (3) to measure populations' progress over time. Consultants typically perform their own analyses using data from large population-based surveys, such as the Current Population Survey (CPS) or the American Community Survey (ACS). Both surveys are repeated at least annually, representative of the U.S. population, and widely available for customized analysis through the Internet. These surveys enable foundations to compare the size, characteristics, and level of need across different groups of potential beneficiaries and to examine the types of experiences over time that correlate with particular outcomes. For black men, however, these survey data and methods of analysis often prove inadequate because of insufficient subsample size, population undercount, and selective attrition from longitudinal surveys.

*Insufficient sample size.* The large population-based surveys preferred by consultants are of limited use when investigating a relatively small but high-needs group. Because these surveys include only a representative sample of the population, the consultant must extrapolate from the observa-



tions to estimate the “true” findings for the larger population nationwide. However, if the size of the target subpopulation is small in actuality, the corresponding subsample in the survey data will be too small to produce statistically meaningful results.<sup>44</sup> For example, if consultants attempt to use the CPS to estimate the percentage of twenty-five- to twenty-seven-year-old black men who have a bachelor’s degree, they would find that the “true” estimate lies anywhere between 9 percent and 17 percent.<sup>45</sup> This is a wide margin of error, which makes it extremely difficult to set a baseline or detect any significant changes over time. More accurate statistics on black young men can be obtained from targeted longitudinal surveys that focus specifically on young adults and hence have larger sample sizes. However, these studies happen irregularly and generally only follow one or two birth cohorts. Consequently, they do not provide a standard periodic measurement that can be used to detect current trends and assess change over time.

*Disproportionate population undercounting.* Most representative national surveys also exclude or undercount two groups in which black men and boys are overrepresented: the unstably housed and the institutionalized.<sup>46</sup> As a result, researchers estimate that only 66 percent of black males ages twenty to twenty-nine are able to be surveyed by the CPS, compared with 85 percent of their nonblack peers. This disproportionate population undercounting likely paints a more optimistic picture of the outcomes of black men and boys than is accurate, as “those who are missed by the survey likely have lower educational attainments.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the gap between the high school graduation rates of black men and white men decreases by nearly five percentage points when the prison population is excluded, as is true in the Current Population Survey.<sup>48</sup>

*Selective attrition.* Because black young men and boys drop out of school at high rates and young ages, they are disproportionately absent from the survey data (notably the longitudinal education surveys, such as NELS, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988), because they were either excluded from initial recruitment or lost during follow-up data collection. For instance, the latest national longitudinal school-based study began sampling students in the tenth grade, by which time many young black men had already left high school. Even when surveys begin earlier, the difficulty in tracking and following up with out-of-school youth results in dismal attrition rates, particularly for black men.

The net effect of these three “sampling” factors—insufficient sample size, disproportionate undercounting, and selective attrition—is that black boys and young men, especially those in their teens and early twenties, either appear to be doing better than they actually are or effectively “dis-

appear” from the data that consultants most commonly use to identify and characterize potential target populations in the course of foundation strategic planning.

### **Step 3: Determining How the Foundation Will Realize the Change It Seeks for Potential Target Populations**

Although the disadvantages related to small numbers are clearly significant, size alone does not doom a potential target population. The drawbacks stemming from a relatively small “who” can be tempered if a particularly compelling “how” exists—in other words, an exceptionally attractive and effective solution to the problems faced by a specific group. This is addressed in the third step in the planning process, as the foundation’s leadership team and their consultants begin to tackle the “how” of the emerging theory of change. In this step the consultants scan the field for the most compelling and effective solutions focused on the different potential target populations. Optimally, the consultants also assess the rigor of the evidence that these solutions are in fact effective.<sup>49</sup>

The gold standard for evidence of effectiveness is the randomized controlled trial (RCT) in which participants are randomized to either the treatment group (which receives access to the solution being studied) or the control group (which does not).<sup>50</sup> Programmatic interventions that involve the direct delivery of a discrete service are the type of solutions most amenable to RCT evaluation. Consequently, they have the strongest evidence base and are the most valued in the planning process. The consultants summarize their findings for each potential target population in a “benchmarking analysis,” which lays out existing interventions, their estimated impact, and evidence of proven effectiveness. Here the interventions targeting black men and boys fail to hit the appropriate note: most discrete interventions for this population that have been evaluated with RCTs have shown limited evidence of impact. The few interventions that do show impact are relatively intensive, complex, and expensive—characteristics that make them challenging to replicate and scale.

These disappointing evaluation outcomes are driven by the overriding fact that the crisis among black men and boys will not be solved through a single “program solution.” Attempts to reverse the impact of the current crisis that focus primarily on service delivery models and hew to sector or disciplinary boundaries will likely fail. Yet foundation leadership and strategy consultants are drawn to exactly these types of standardized programmatic solutions with proven, quantifiable “impacts” because they fit neatly

into the linear logic of a planning process that was originally designed to help businesses maximize profit. Such solutions most closely resemble a “product” that can be branded, replicated, and brought to scale.<sup>51</sup> However, any truly viable solution to the crisis among African American boys and young men will need to be less of a discrete “product” or “program” and more of a comprehensive set of diverse interventions combined with systems-building and shifts in community norms, policy, and public will. Unfortunately, this is exactly the type of “intervention” that it is most difficult to evaluate through an RCT or even a quasi-experimental study and thus will almost certainly fail to make the consultants’ list of “proven programs” that are presented to foundation leadership.

#### **Step 4: Comparing the Cost Per Outcome of the Different Options**

During this step foundation leadership compares the options that have emerged, by assessing the relative merits of different combinations of target populations (for example, black men who are incarcerated in the state of California) and potential solutions (for example, targeted recidivism reduction interventions). To weigh these options, foundations require a metric that allows comparisons across groups and interventions. Here the benchmarking analysis from Step 3 neatly combines with the population-sizing from Step 2 to produce such a metric: an estimated per-person cost per outcome (for example, the cost per additional prison sentence averted). In an attempt to maximize their impact, foundations will be drawn to the target population and solutions that maximize outcomes while minimizing the cost per outcome, so as to allow them to buy the greatest number of “significant” outcomes for any fixed amount of giving.

Once again, the standard practice of data-driven strategic planning disadvantages black young men and boys. When a set of expensive and unproven solutions is crossed with a small population, the results are predictable: a high per-person cost estimate. Even though most foundations do not invest directly in service costs beyond a handful of demonstration projects, they view a high per-person cost estimate as a significant liability because of its negative implications for achieving scale. Investment in demonstration projects is almost always predicated on the belief that the government will pay for a program to be scaled if the foundation can show that it works. As the price of the intervention climbs, foundations typically (and correctly) reason that the chances of government assuming the costs of replication diminish.

### **Step 5: Assessing the Unique Assets of the Foundation and Making a Decision**

With 80 percent of the planning process complete, the case for investing in potential solutions to the crisis looks rather weak, with readily apparent risks and highly uncertain returns. As a result, the leadership team's initial enthusiasm for addressing the crisis among black men and boys will have decidedly waned. The analyses presented so far describe a small population, for which little is known about what works; the programs that do exist are expensive, complex, and have only shown modest impacts. Some may say that this is all good evidence to support philanthropists' decisions not to place any bets here. To a certain extent, we accept that logic. This is a risky investment and not every foundation has the appetite for this type of risk. However, for the subset of foundations that fully embraces philanthropy's role as the provider of society's risk capital, investing in reversing the crisis should still look like an opportunity too good to pass up. The fifth and final step of the planning process, which addresses the foundation's competencies and role, illustrates this.

Staff and consultants consider the role of the foundation, looking to the specific competencies of the particular organization and to the general competencies of foundations as a class of institutions. Typically, the bulk of this planning time is spent identifying specific organizational competencies that differentiate this foundation from others. For instance, a certain foundation may be unusually good at identifying and vetting potential grantees or have staff with deep knowledge of a certain subsector or who possess an excellent network of field offices. Non-grant-making competencies of the foundation are also assessed, including the power to convene key stakeholders, the ability to use the bully pulpit, and the visibility and skills of the benefactor or current foundation executive. These competencies vary from foundation to foundation and hence in the aggregate neither advantage nor disadvantage the case for investment in black men and boys.

Typically, less time is spent thinking about the general competencies and role of the foundation as an institution—that is, what differentiates foundations from other public- and private-sector sources of funding for social good. These underappreciated competencies are unfortunately the very ones that strongly *support* a focus on black young men and boys, as they place foundations in a unique position to address issues that the government and private sector have failed to support. These general institutional competencies come into view when philanthropic spending is compared to the likely fate of foundation dollars had the foundation

not been endowed—specifically how government would have used the additional increment of tax revenue and how the benefactor would have invested or consumed in the private market with his or her post-tax wealth. Consequently, to maximize their unique contribution, foundations should focus on investing in those issues that the public and private sectors cannot or will not address either because of a market failure or because the problem centers on an unpopular, marginalized, and disenfranchised minority group often considered politically “untouchable.” The latter, in particular, aptly describes the crisis among black young men and boys.

After these five steps have been completed, the planning process ends and the foundation leadership makes a recommendation to their board and benefactors. The foundation leadership’s decision to focus on a specific challenge, target population, and potential solution set is made against the backdrop of a new level of transparency and accountability at the core of the data-driven strategic planning approach. The combination of measurable outcomes and relatively short time frames for assessing foundation strategies (typically five to seven years) means that failure or success will likely be made visible relatively quickly. In the face of this visibility, foundation leadership can become increasingly risk averse.

An accountability system that prizes a marked uptick in the number of “significant” outcomes and promises visibility can have the unintended consequence of encouraging foundation staff to focus on social problems and target populations most amenable to quick, short- to medium-term solutions that are relatively “known.” Engaging in this type of “cream skimming” may encourage foundations to focus on those issues and/or participants most likely to improve without the help of the investment or intervention; as a consequence, it *nets* limited social good while maintaining the false appearance of *overall* success. Strategic philanthropists’ emphasis on accountability for measureable change in a relatively short period of time ultimately makes it even less likely that foundation leadership will choose to devote resources to extremely disadvantaged populations and entrenched, challenging problems.

### **CLOSING THE GAP: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCELERATING CHANGE**

We offer seven concrete recommendations for overcoming the general and specific barriers outlined in this chapter. If these barriers are not addressed, we will likely not see increased, targeted funding from big philanthropy. Instead, the field will continue to rely on the entrepreneurial efforts of

program officers at large foundations and the ongoing work of regional, community, and smaller national foundations. In the meantime those large foundations without an entrepreneurial program officer will increasingly adopt the standard practices of data-driven strategic planning and as a result be led away from working with this population. Despite these considerable barriers, however, significant progress has been made since the early 1990s. We believe there is an opportunity to markedly increase progress through implementing these recommendations. The first two recommendations address the general barriers to increased funding. Recommendations 3 through 7 address barriers related to the strategic planning process.

### **Recommendation #1**

*A group of presidents of large, national foundations publicly commit to a coordinated long-term response to the crisis.* Since the early 1990s, the onus for organizing a philanthropic response has disproportionately rested with individual program officers willing to go to extraordinary lengths to overcome barriers related to race, complexity, and the absence of institutional leadership. Foundation leadership at the highest level must rise to the challenge and make a commitment internally to their staff and board and externally to the public to address this crisis. Although it may be difficult to affect a huge shift in the way race is discussed in the United States, foundation leaders can make it easier to address race within the confines of their institutions. If a few key leaders—both foundation presidents and board members—were to make their commitment clear to their staff, it would become substantially easier for foundation staff, benefactors, and boards to begin a productive and powerful discussion about how to address the crisis.

In addition to making their commitment known inside their own organizations, foundation leaders should make full use of their bully pulpit. They should reframe the issue as one of building a functioning, thriving democracy that will not stand for the extreme marginalization and subjugation of any one race or gender group. It is essential that this group of foundation presidents and board members be multiracial. For the past two decades much of the work of addressing the crisis has been taken up by a small group of black men and women working in foundations or sitting on boards. White, Latino, Asian, and Native American leadership must step forward and join these efforts. A multiracial group of leaders can help to counter the difficulties of addressing race in “postracial” America while

sending a powerful message that this is a shared problem that demands a shared response. If we are truly to embrace this as a crisis of democracy with far reaching impact, then we all must take responsibility to reverse it.

Finally, we strongly recommend that these efforts are led by a group of foundation leaders rather than a single “lead funder” who steps up to publicly own the issue. This would address what Marcus J. Littles, Ryan Bowers, and Micah Gilmer have described as the problem of the maverick foundation that enters and dominates an issue and a field only to vacate it completely seven years later. A collaborative response that builds thoughtfully on current work would be more sustainable and minimize the threat of erratic foundation investment undermining the field’s capacity.

## **Recommendation #2**

*Institutionalize a long-term, collaborative approach through endowing a funding collaborative devoted to addressing the crisis among black young men and boys over the next two decades.* A funding collaborative in which national, regional, and local foundations pool resources to mount a long-term response to the crisis can effectively address many of the most glaring barriers to increased, effective philanthropic investment. It can counter the cyclical, feast-or-famine nature of societal and philanthropic response to the crisis by being structured via an endowment to have at least a twenty-year life span. This “patient capital” can then be thoughtfully invested in ways that sustainably build the field—including strengthening the capacity of intermediaries and practitioners, incubating emerging innovators, creating a robust research infrastructure, and strengthening the connections between practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.

This approach will ensure that institutional memory about the work is not lost and that lessons from past efforts need not be relearned every decade. A funding collaborative can also address specific barriers faced by new philanthropists and other practitioners of strategic philanthropy. Specifically, the collaborative can provide concrete examples of strategic grant-making approaches and can offer an avenue for investment, short of starting an initiative, that does not require foundation staff to identify a small number of focused “big bets” and promise measureable impact over the course of a handful of years. Finally, a collaborative can address challenges faced by foundations that work in sector-specific silos (for example, education, health, and civic involvement) by enabling, for instance, a health foundation to team with foundations that address employment and education and together mount a comprehensive response.

Formative work on making this recommendation a reality has already begun. Jacqueline Copeland-Carson has completed an excellent feasibility study of this type of funding collaborative for the Ford Foundation, entitled “The My Brother’s Keeper Fund: Collaborative Strategy to Address America’s Black Male Crisis.” Grantmakers for Children, Families, and Youth has launched a Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative within their network, designed to “serve as a learning and mobilization venue for funders who, regardless of their specific areas of grant making, seek to understand how direct service, research, policy analysis, community advocacy, movement building, and other field-building tools can impact efforts to achieve long-term social change for marginalized males and their communities.”<sup>52</sup> We urge foundation leaders to take the next essential step and make the required financial commitments.

### **Recommendation #3**

*Begin the planning process with an in-depth consideration of the foundation’s role and foreground this throughout the planning process.* We recommend that foundation leadership explore the foundation’s role earlier in the strategic planning process and return iteratively to it throughout the process. Using role consideration as an early screen can offset the limitations that reliance on data and evaluations necessarily introduce. In particular, we recommend giving considerable time upfront to discussing with foundation leadership what makes philanthropic dollars special, different, and potentially more advantageous than dollars from the public or private sector. The leadership team should focus on identifying instances where the demands of democratic governance or the workings of the free market make these institutions incapable of effectively addressing and solving social problems. In such instances the application of flexible foundation dollars has the potential to do the most good. We recommend that foundation leadership consider prioritizing the following three categories of economic or political market failures:

1. Issues on which a democratic government will not act because of the overwhelming influence of powerful interest groups or because the population/constituency in need is disenfranchised, marginalized, or otherwise locked out of the system.
2. Times when the free market is not working—and government has not stepped in to fill the gap.



3. Issues for which we have no idea how to crack the problem, and neither government nor the market is providing the right incentives or signals to spark needed innovation.

The field has already made hopeful strides toward addressing the second and third categories as foundation leaders have increasingly recognized and embraced their comparative advantage when it comes to addressing economic market failures and encouraging innovation. Foundation leadership has been slower to embrace the first category—issues where the normal functioning of the democratic process falls short by dint of certain populations being disenfranchised, marginalized, and politically unpopular and/or powerful interest groups having “captured” policymakers and regulators.<sup>53</sup>

#### **Recommendation #4**

*Begin using a “gap check” metric as a way to assess the impact of potential strategies on equity.* Every foundation, according to the values of benefactors, boards, and staff, will seek a different balance between equity and efficiency in its giving. But to balance the two, both must be made visible as measures for which the foundation holds itself accountable. This can be achieved by including a “gap check” in which analysts look at whether a potential strategy would exacerbate, lessen, or have no effect on existing disparities by race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Such a measure provides a quick check on the impact of a proposed strategy on race, gender, and class disparities.

For instance, consider a foundation that has chosen to focus on early childhood education, with the goal of getting two out of three students proficient in reading by the fourth grade as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Currently, only 36 percent of fourth-graders meet this standard. This goal will focus grantees, schools, and teachers on improving the performance of so-called “bubble kids,” those students who are closest to achieving the passing score and need help to “get over the line.” Black boys, however, are underrepresented among students on the bubble and overrepresented among those students furthest from “the line.” As a result, the foundation could reach its goal of 66 percent of students becoming reading proficient, while leaving the majority of these boys behind. In this example the adopted strategy would risk exacerbating racial and gender disparities. Once the possibility has been identified, the foundation can take steps to mitigate it.

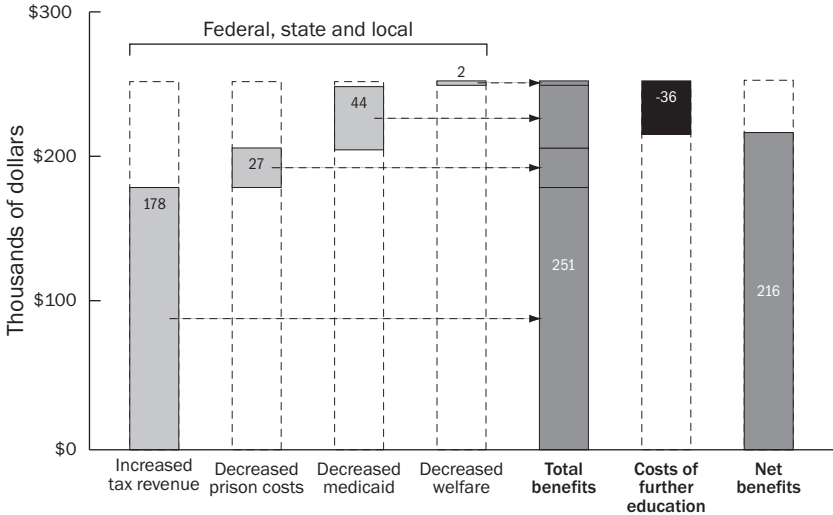
### Recommendation #5

*Expand the types of analytics and metrics used to calculate impact.* We recommend that foundations expand and alter the methods used to compare the relative cost-effectiveness of different strategies targeting specific solutions and populations. In particular, foundations need to move beyond simply counting outcomes as the marker of impact (x number of lives saved, x number of graduates, and so on) and then calculating and comparing the cost per additional outcome. These metrics are limited, as they (1) look only at the cost side of the equation (and then only at costs incurred); and (2) assume that the incremental social benefit that comes from every single positive outcome—such as high school graduation—is essentially the same. We recommend that in addition to these important metrics, foundation leadership look at:

- The negative effects that flow from some subset of the population (the most difficult to reach) not achieving a particular outcome; these effects typically affect people well beyond the target population. For instance, low levels of education are strongly associated with crime, violence, and welfare dependency. When we increase education levels among the worst off, we can avoid many of these significant costs.
- The positive effects that flow from achieving a particular outcome; these effects also typically reach people outside of the target population.

For instance, the benefits of increased education accrue not only to the individual who receives the degree but also to society in the form of increases in tax revenue to all levels of government from a rise in lifetime earnings. If a foundation wanted to increase levels of education and they were struggling to decide whether to target their efforts on (1) young people who have dropped out of high school, (2) those who have completed high school but are unprepared for college work, or (3) those who have enrolled in college but have failed to complete their degree, they would compare the cost and potential impact of working with each group. The most common approach attempts to estimate the cost per additional graduate borne by the foundation and the nation.

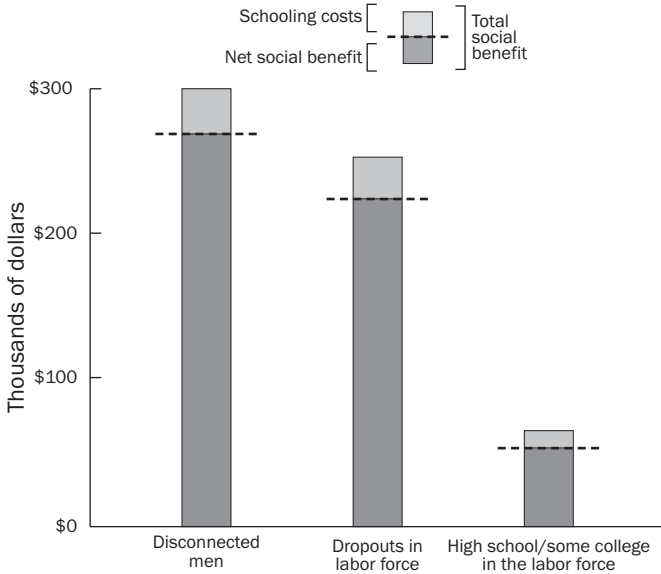
These cost estimates allow the leadership team to make the following type of forecasts: “Nationally, we’d have to expend this amount of public resources to get a certain number of incremental graduates”; or “As a



**Figure 17.1.** Social benefits associated with getting a dropout two years of college education. *Note:* Societal benefits discounted back to present day at a 3.5 percent rate. *Source:* Levin et al., “Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for America’s Children.”

foundation, we’d expend this much of our endowment to get a certain number of incremental graduates.” In either case, subject to budget constraints, this allows the leadership to maximize the number of additional graduates. But it does not necessarily help them to maximize social good. The calculus could change considerably if the two types of impacts we recommend are also examined. As Henry Levin and his colleagues have demonstrated, increasing levels of education for a high-school dropout brings in a bigger increase in tax revenue and a significantly larger reduction in harm and public expense resulting from reduced welfare, Medicaid, and juvenile justice costs than increasing levels of education for a high-school graduate (figures 17.1 and 17.2).<sup>54</sup> Hence, even though it is cheaper to help the high-school graduate, the net result is a smaller increment of social good.

We want to be clear, however: *We are not recommending that foundations leap into the highly technical world of cost-benefit analysis.* Rather, we are suggesting that measures of social good and social harm could usefully supplement current costing outcomes, giving foundations a fuller picture of potential impact while not disadvantaging the hardest to serve. These measures simply add more information to the growing lists of considerations that foundations must weigh qualitatively when choosing to



**Figure 17.2.** The incremental social benefit to society of higher education differs across population segments. *Note:* Disconnected men are both out of school and out of the labor force. Net societal benefit = increased lifetime tax revenue + decreased lifetime prison costs + decreased welfare + decreased healthcare costs – education costs (two years of college and/or two years of high school [remediation]); earning two years of college education is used as a proxy for a successful transition; societal benefit has been discounted back to the present day using a 3.5 percent rate. *Source:* Levin et al., “Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for America’s Children.”

focus on any single population. No single quantitative metric can ultimately give benefactors and foundation leadership the answer to how they should give their money.

### Recommendation #6

*Alter evidence-driven methods used to identify potential solutions to be inclusive of systems change and innovation—versus just “proven” programs.* Although we applaud foundations’ increasing attention to social science research on program effectiveness, we also recognize the limits inherent in relying too much on “proven” programs. Social problems that are resistant to either “silver bullet” programmatic solutions or straight-

forward policy fixes most amenable to rigorous evaluation get quickly labeled “intractable” or “unsolvable.” These labels scare boards and foundation leadership away from investing in these issues and seriously dampen public and political will to take them on in the public sector. Strategic philanthropy can contribute to reversing this unhelpful dynamic in two ways: (1) by broadening the definition of a “solution” to include complex systems change work, and (2) by embracing “intractable” and “unsolvable” issues through innovation.

Significant movement has been made on the first front since the early 2000s, including a shift among strategic philanthropists from a narrow focus on “programs” and discrete “interventions” to broader systems change work. For instance, the Gates Foundation’s work to reform high schools in the United States has morphed multiple times over the past decade, each time moving farther away from “program” solutions and incrementally closer to system solutions. In the late 1990s, in response to data showing that the education system was failing low-income and minority students, foundation leaders chose to take on the weakest link in the K–12 system: high schools. They began the search for solutions by gravitating to a classic productlike “discrete intervention”: small schools. They adopted a typical replicate-and-scale strategy focused on outside-the-system providers (those who created small schools).

Within a handful of years, however, it became increasingly clear that to achieve scale, the foundation would have to go *inside* the public school system. They moved toward partnering with large districts to break apart failing high schools into smaller learning communities. Eight years in, and facing flat-line national test scores among seventeen-year-olds, the foundation, under a new program director, reevaluated its strategy yet again based on lessons learned and the latest research in the field. This time, leadership recognized the limits of focusing largely on school structure and assuming that the needed shifts in teaching and learning would naturally follow. The team pivoted to focus directly on transforming the teaching profession and improving the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom through a systems change strategy that is not about program replication but rather about broad-scale implementation across multiple systems. Rigorous evaluation should continue to play a central, if evolving, role in strategic philanthropy, as foundations broaden their definition of solutions to include systems change approaches. Over the past thirty years academics and such think tanks as MDRC, The Urban Institute, and Mathematica have become increasingly sophisticated at evaluating

the impact of systems change solutions and policy changes at the city and state level. As strategic philanthropy continues to explore systems change solutions, these methods should be consistently applied and further methodological innovation supported.

### **Recommendation #7**

*Adopt a portfolio approach that allows for diversification of risk and broaden the time frame over which investments are evaluated.* This approach borrows language from private-equity investors and assumes that a foundation will intentionally take on a mix of issues with varied levels of risk and return. This allows foundation leadership, staff, and boards to manage risk in ways other than favoring the path of least resistance—that is, very risky bets can be balanced with safer investments. Some foundations may even want to carve out a specific percentage of giving for areas of high-risk, high-return giving. This recommendation is designed to counterbalance investment disincentives produced by the emphasis on measurable outcomes of success. It sends a clear message that the foundation is willing to take a chance at “succeeding brilliantly” by being willing to “fail wisely.”<sup>55</sup>

We also recommend that foundations extend the duration of their commitments considerably to a specific issue. As long as foundation initiatives are evaluated at five- to seven-year intervals, few program directors and foundation presidents will take on entrenched social problems that require long-term systems change work, field and organizational capacity building, and leadership development. In most cases it is unreasonable to expect measureable progress on such problems in a five- to seven-year period. Boards and benefactors should consider shifting these incentives by making a multidecade commitment to an issue area.

### **CONCLUSION**

At the outset of the twenty-first century the crisis among black men and boys is arguably one of the most important moral challenges this country faces. It is undoubtedly the next essential step in the ongoing struggle to dismantle a racial caste system in America. To ignore or marginalize the crisis is to put our democratic system at serious risk. We urge the new generation of foundation leadership to embrace this challenge and make the best use of philanthropic dollars, voice, and influence to bring about deep, sustainable, and just change.

## NOTES

1. These statistics come from Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*.
2. Lawrence and Mukai, *Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates*.
3. Government plays perhaps the most crucial role, as it has nearly exclusive control over the two large systems most implicated in the crisis: the educational system and the criminal justice system. The government is also uniquely positioned to address larger structural forces that drive the crisis—specifically, chronic unemployment driven by deindustrialization, employment discrimination, and poverty—through such policy levers as hiring incentives, antidiscrimination laws, income support, and tax policy. The for-profit sector also plays a central role, as it oversees the other large system affecting the well-being of black men: the labor market.
4. The nonprofit sector plays an essential role, addressing the ways that individual choices, community norms, and culture contribute to the crisis through organizing and giving voice to black men and boys and their families while also innovating and delivering culturally competent services.
5. Ford Foundation, *Civil Rights, Social Justice, and Black America*.
6. This figure is calculated using U.S. Census 2000 data, cited in Twenty-First Century Foundation, *Community Returns*.
7. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, “Elementary and Secondary Survey 2000,” Washington, D.C., 2004, cited in Twenty-First Century Foundation, *Community Returns*.
8. Schott Foundation, *Given Half a Chance*.
9. Ekholm, “Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn,” front page; “jobless” is defined as being unable to find work, not seeking it, or being incarcerated.
10. Pew Center on the States, *One in One Hundred*.
11. Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*.
12. See Steven Raphael’s analysis of the U.S. Census 2000, cited in Ekholm, “Plight Deepens for Black Men.”
13. Twenty-First Century Foundation, “2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys.”
14. Manza and Uggen, *Locked Out*.
15. Levin et al., “Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America’s Children.”
16. Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer, *Why We Can’t Wait*; Gilmer, Littles, and Bowers, *Momentum*; and Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer, *Stepping Up and Stepping Out*.
17. The data collected are based on the giving records of the fifty largest national grant-making foundations in the United States, ranked by the market value of their assets, based on the most current audited financial data in the Foundation Center’s database as of February 11, 2010.
18. Prominent examples of economic shifts and more universal programs that have failed to reach black males include the economic boom of the late 1990s and the results from the evaluation of the Moving to Opportunity program, which gave rental vouchers designed to help poor minority families move from distressed, high-poverty neighborhoods to better locations. See Mincy, *Black Males Left Behind*, and Turner and Rawlings, *Overcoming Concentrated Poverty and Isolation*.

19. Dollar amounts presented here are reported in real 2009 dollars. The unadjusted figures are listed in parentheses. The original grant amounts were adjusted using the relative share of GDP using the “Measuring Wealth” conversion instrument available online at <http://www.measuringwealth.com>. The dollar amounts presented include grants made by the national foundations that had initiatives explicitly and uniquely targeted at black men and/or boys and who either publicly reported individual grant-level data from 1990 through 2010 on their Web sites or who responded to our request for this grant-level data. Six foundations met these criteria: Annie E. Casey, Ford, W. K. Kellogg, Lumina, Charles Stewart Mott, the Open Society Institute, and Robert Wood Johnson. At the time of submitting this chapter, the Annie E. Casey Foundation had not responded to our requests for such data and is therefore not included in this analysis.

20. There was significant work done in the two decades before the early 1990s, the start of our study. In the late 1970s and 1980s, policy, foundation, and academic work focused on fatherhood, family formation, and employment in the lives of black men. Two notable multicity demonstration projects jointly funded by the federal government and foundations were Parents’ Fair Share and the Young Unwed Fathers Project. For a fuller description of this early work, see Sylvester and Reich, *Making Fathers Count*, 4–17.

21. Wilson, *Truly Disadvantaged*.

22. Telephone interview by Tia Elena Martinez with Loren Harris, March 11, 2010, San Francisco.

23. Ten of these sites were Partners for Fragile Families, funded by Ford, and six were Fathers at Work, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

24. Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer, *Why We Can’t Wait*.

25. Telephone interview by Tia Elena Martinez with Ron Mincy, April 22, 2010, San Francisco.

26. In addition to these efforts, The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in Texas continued the fatherhood work on a regional level through launching a Texas Fragile Families Initiative that endures to this day.

27. *Ibid.*; and Gilmer, Littles, and Bowers, *Momentum*.

28. Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer, *Why We Can’t Wait*, 6.

29. Shawn Dove, Georgia Kirtland, and Rashid Shabazz, “OSI U.S. Programs Campaign for Black Male Achievement: Three Year Strategic Plan,” September 2009, 4.

30. We compared the giving records of “new philanthropy” and “old philanthropy” foundations. We classified foundations as “new” or “old” by the date of founding. Foundations established before 1980 were classified as “old philanthropy”; those begun in or after 1980 were classified as “new philanthropy.” Certain exceptions were made if the donor started the foundation earlier—like the philanthropist Eli Broad—but did not begin to seriously endow and ramp up grant-making activity until after 1980.

31. Among smaller and regional funders, there were two “new philanthropy” funders: the Schott Foundation and the Mitchell Kapor Foundation.

32. Thirty-five of the top fifty largest national foundations fund social issues.

33. Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer, *Why We Can’t Wait*; and Gilmer et al., *Momentum*.



34. Gilmer, Littles, and Bowers, *Momentum*, 11.
35. *Ibid.*, 19.
36. Jacqueline Copeland-Carson, "The My Brother's Keeper Fund: A Collaborative Strategy to Address America's Black Male Crisis," Ford Foundation Report, New York, 2008, 18–19.
37. *Ibid.*
38. On the black man as an "endangered species," see the volume edited by Jewelle Taylor Gibbs, *Young, Black, and Male in America: An Endangered Species*, Auburn House Paperback, 1988.
39. MacDonald, "Billions of Dollars That Made Things Worse."
40. Even among those foundations that are socially conservative, the appeal of one of the main strands of work addressing the crisis—fatherhood and marriage—is undeniable. Heather MacDonald, a conservative critic of foundations, characterized the fatherhood work of the Ford Foundation and Annie E. Casey as "pockets of sanity, where a commonsense approach to helping people and promoting stable communities has reigned" (*ibid.*).
41. Bolduc et al., *Beyond the Rhetoric*, 14–15.
42. For ease of narrative we call these components "steps." However, this should not be taken to imply a set sequencing. These "steps" reflect the core analytic tasks involved, but in practice they are frequently combined and reordered.
43. Throughout this chapter we refer to the analysts assisting with the strategic planning process as "consultants," reflecting our own involvement as management consultants; however, this work can be (and frequently is) done by internal foundation staff.
44. The Illinois Department of Employment Security, "2009 Annual Illinois Unemployment Rates by Race and Gender," Illinois Department of Employment Security; the authors extrapolated 2009 population numbers using U.S. Census 2000 data for Illinois.
45. Even when the surveys oversample certain minority groups, by the time the consultants have made cuts by age range, the resulting sample size remains far too small. Note that lack of social-science training among consultancies often means that estimates are made without even taking sampling error into consideration.
46. This represents the 90 percent confidence interval, using pooled CPS data across three years.
47. Note that the recent improvement in the ACS now includes institutionalized populations.
48. Heckman and LaFontaine, "American High School Graduation Rate," 13.
49. *Ibid.*, 11.
50. There are too many examples of strategic planning exercises that labeled a program "proven" if it had only internal tracking data showing successful outcomes.
51. By randomly assigning participants, the treatment group and the control group are ostensibly equal in every regard except for receipt of the solution; the researcher can thus be certain that any observed change in outcomes is due to the solution, not to any unobservable characteristics that may also have an impact on the desired outcome.
52. Indeed, the nationwide cumulative impact of such a program on a target

population in terms of numbers of lives saved, college degrees attained, or jail sentences averted can be—and has been—roughly estimated on the basis of the available scientific evidence. Through such an approach the foundation leadership can finally put a “real number” on paper in terms of their organization’s potential effect on society.

53. From “Healthy Men, Healthy Communities Initiative,” at [http://www.gcyf.org/programs/programs\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=1222601](http://www.gcyf.org/programs/programs_show.htm?doc_id=1222601).

54. “Capture” refers to situations in which a state regulatory agency or policymaking body created to act in the public interest instead acts in favor of the commercial or special interests that dominate in the industry or sector it is charged with regulating. “Regulatory capture” is a form of government failure, as it can encourage large firms to produce negative externalities.

55. Levin et al., “Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All.”

56. These ideas are from Brest and Harvey, *Money Well Spent*.

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**GETTING TO ROOT CAUSES OF SOCIAL  
AND ECONOMIC DISCONNECTION**

María C. Ledesma and Jorge Ruiz de Velasco

The raw statistics are staggering. In their contribution to this volume, Belinda Reyes and Monique Nakagawa have reported, for example, that almost one in ten Latino and one in six African American males between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five was incarcerated or out of work and school in 2007. The chapters in this book have detailed how such racial and ethnic disparities develop, how they persist over time, and how they come to have profound and long-lasting effects on American families and on national and community life. Clearly, the policies, programs, and institutions that serve young people in America are not meeting the needs of young men and boys of color.

Taken together, the collected chapters in this volume point to the need to strengthen the skills, capacities, and life experiences of boys of color. They form a clarion call to improve the schools, neighborhoods, and other institutions that young men must successfully navigate along the way. In this closing chapter, we look back at the various contributions and highlight important themes that illuminate the path to building healthier communities through a focus on young men and boys of color. Although the research considered in this book does not in all instances yield clear direction for public policy and practice, insights drawn from the chapters point in promising directions. Drawing on the work of the authors represented herein, we highlight seven important strategies and action areas.

### **1. TAKE POSITIVE COLLECTIVE ACTION THROUGH BETTER INFORMED PUBLIC AGENCIES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

As Angela Glover Blackwell and Manuel Pastor have pointed out in the introductory chapter, we have been quick as a society to focus on symptomatic behaviors (such as antisocial aggression, drug use, or youth violence) and slow to recognize and act on root causes. This is so, in large part, because many of us have come to view behavior as a matter of individual responsibility. This outlook, in turn, cues us to look for solutions or modes of intervention that elicit responsible and socially appropriate responses from individuals. But the various contributions from Waldo E. Johnson Jr., David J. Pate Jr., and Jarvis Ray Givens; James Diego Vigil and Gilberto Q. Conchas; and Theodore Corbin, Sandra L. Bloom, Ann Wilson, Linda Rich, and John A. Rich shed light on the numerous ways in which behavior, perceived as antisocial in most contexts, often emerges from community, neighborhood, and family contexts where the same behavior is viewed as adaptive or even appropriate. Once these behaviors and coping mechanisms are acquired and internalized by young children, they become hard for adolescents and young adults to later relinquish. Calls for them to act “responsibly” may add to their confusion in circumstances where they come to see social aggression or even violence as a reasonable or appropriate set of responses.

The chapters in this volume remind us of the many ways in which extended families of grandparents, friends, pastors, teachers, neighbors, and others in a community shape individual development and play important collective roles in young people’s lives. These contributions make the case for expanded and better informed collective action by government agencies and community-based organizations. Where families are struggling or demonstrably fail to help youth make successful transitions to adulthood, we must act collectively and more effectively to support the individual and family and for the sake of the community as a whole.

However, arguments for such collective action are often met with skepticism in an America where a public embrace of libertarian self-sufficiency cuts against the inclusion of community-based organizations and “big government” as part of the collective “village.” The often-heard charge is that progressive public policies assume that governments and government-funded agencies can do a better job of raising children than parents. But however potent this frame may be for crystallizing public wariness of “big government,” it is plainly a red herring. What large majorities of Americans *do* believe is that a democratically accountable government can and should play

a constructive role in supporting families, especially those in economically distressed communities.

In fact, as Blackwell and Pastor have observed, the country already *does* take collective action, albeit in often punitive and unproductive ways. Society, they observe in their introduction, has gotten tougher on people who make mistakes. Zero-tolerance policies and armed security in the public schools, the diminished availability of second-chance options in community colleges, and adult workforce training programs are but a few examples of consequential collective action policies examined in the book. So moving forward, we must find clearer and more compelling ways to make the case for collective responses that heal our troubled youth, their families, and communities. The chapters in this volume point the way.

## **2. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL**

This collection of chapters makes clear that the search for root causes must begin at the local neighborhood level. There is now abundant evidence that education, social and economic opportunities, and developmental contexts vary sharply across neighborhoods and that the “geography of opportunity” differs by race and ethnicity. In their chapter Deborah L. McKoy, Jeffrey M. Vincent, and Ariel H. Bierbaum have documented how a growing number of places where young men and boys of color live, play, and learn are defined by stubborn patterns of racial and economic segregation. Analysis by Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Lindsay E. Rosenfeld, Nancy McArdle, and Theresa L. Osypuk has indicated that the ability of some groups (most notably black and Latino children) to develop their potential is constrained by a racially and ethnically unequal distribution of supportive developmental contexts at the neighborhood level. Policies to address the unequal geography of opportunity must focus on improving neighborhoods and schools across the entire regions or metropolitan areas in which they are embedded. This underscores the importance of place-based policies focused on improving the physical and social infrastructure of highly disadvantaged neighborhoods (for example, through economic development, housing revitalization, or school improvement).

## **3. ASK WHY: UNCOVER THE ROOTS OF RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR**

During a discussion at an alternative high school for “at-risk youth” in San Diego County, a student told researcher Milbrey McLaughlin that at his previous high school, he had been “on weed” almost every day in class, but

that no one ever noticed or inquired about his behavior until the day he was caught smoking on campus. When this student was taken to meet with the principal, the only conversation she wanted to have was about what alternative school he would be required to attend. Later in the discussion the students were asked why they were experiencing success in their current alternative school after being labeled “failures” in their old one. The same student responded in simple terms: “This is the first place anyone ever bothered to ask ‘*why*’ I was messing up.”

It seemed obvious, but no one in his traditional comprehensive high school bothered to ask the “why” questions. Likewise, a principal at another alternative school observed that over the years the great majority of fights on his campus occurred within view of his office window. “Why,” asked researchers Jorge Ruiz de Velasco and Milbrey McLaughlin. Because, the principal offered, adolescent youth often lack the skills to deal with emotional conflict; they *want* caring adults to step in and show them how to resolve their differences and conflicted feelings in constructive ways.

#### 4. FOCUS ON EARLY INTERVENTION

This collection of chapters documents growing evidence that the foundations of adult health, productivity, and socioeconomic attainment are established in early childhood. In his chapter David L. Kirp reported that on nearly every measure of educational attainment, black male adolescents fare the worst, below all girls and boys of all other racial or ethnic groups. This gap, moreover, is present from the first day of kindergarten and only widens in subsequent years. But Kirp also offers the good news that there are many promising, evidence-based strategies for narrowing the gap. The studies he reviews in his chapter share two clear messages: First, the effort to bridge achievement gaps and to promote adaptive social behaviors among adolescents needs to start early, well before these youth come to school. Second, successful interventions emphasize individual attention—an intensity of positive human engagement that must be maintained from kindergarten through high school. As many contributors to this collection have emphasized, young black and Latino boys—many of whom are exposed early to frequent experiences of trauma, stress, shame, and worry—need to know that an adult cares about them.

Parents and early caregivers are often best positioned to intervene early. Researchers at the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development recently reported findings from a longitudinal study indicating that teens who were in high-quality child-care settings as young children

(at home or institutional care) had higher academic and cognitive achievement and were slightly less likely to report acting-out behaviors than peers who were in lower-quality child care as children. This correlation between high-quality care and achievement and behavior was similar at age four-and-a-half and age fifteen and among both wealthy and poor children. Researchers theorized that subsequent positive interventions by teachers, peers, and others would make the differences disappear, but they did not do so entirely.

Despite subsequent positive intervention, those who had consistently positive and supportive parents and adult caregivers as children eventually continued to show statistically significant less risky, impulsive, or anti-social behavior (such as arguing, being mean to others, and getting into fights) as teens.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that caring adults in schools, community organizations, and hospitals can't make a life-altering difference in the lives of young boys of color. But their efforts are much more effective when parents and early caregivers are positively engaged with their children.

## 5. ADOPT A MULTIGENERATIONAL APPROACH

The close association between the skill and behavior of adult caregivers and the outcomes of young men and boys of color indicates that our chances of affecting the life trajectories of boys of color will be limited if we cannot help their parents and caregivers at the same time. In their chapter Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield and Linda Harris at the Center for Law and Social Policy have explored the historical and contemporary consequences for black and Latino men and fathers of their high rates of unemployment and underrepresentation in middle-skilled jobs relative to non-Hispanic white peers. American social policy favors work—irrespective of wage—over additional education for adults over twenty-four years old. But this social policy often has the unintended consequence of locking low-income black and Latino males with only a high school education—and by extension, their children and families—into a perpetual cycle of poverty via parental underemployment in low-wage jobs. Harris and Duke-Benfield have described how the only effective path out of poverty for these men and their families lies in social policies that support concurrent education during employment, so that undereducated youth can obtain certificates, credentials, licenses, and academic degrees with demonstrable value in the labor market.

The need for dual-generation approaches is supported by the appalling statistics on parent incarceration among black and Latino families shared by contributors Sarah Lawrence and Jennifer Lynn-Whaley. They report



that in 2007 the number of children with an incarcerated parent was nearly double the number of children enrolled in Head Start, with striking racial disparities in the percentages. One in fifteen black children, one in forty-two Hispanic children, and one in 111 white children has a parent in prison. Lawrence and Lynn-Whaley reported that incarcerated parents experience relatively high rates of drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems. Although there is scant information on the effects of parent incarceration on children, what little is known suggests that the aftermath is negative for both parent and child. Only rarely do schools, the criminal justice system, or the human services systems prepare children and parents newly released from jail adequately for the challenges of reunification. Healthy, stable families are an essential element of thriving communities, and social policies aimed at strengthening families should be supported.

#### **6. DEVELOP THERAPEUTIC AND RESTORATIVE SOCIAL POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS**

Although research clearly indicates that early intervention programs can provide a strong foundation for a healthy life, such programs are not enough. Theodore Corbin, Sandra L. Bloom, Ann Wilson, Linda Rich, and John A. Rich have made a strong case in their chapter that informed, therapeutic responses can be effective in healing and reengaging those troubled youth who reach adolescence and early adulthood without the benefit of early interventions. Shawn Ginwright, Waldo Johnson Jr., James Diego Vigil, and their colleagues have reminded us that young men and boys of color traverse uniquely distinct experiences, across which they not only have to learn and grow but also confront and defy long-ingrained stereotypes and myths.

As early as preadolescence, young boys of color are often stereotyped as nonacademic at best and delinquent at worst. These stereotypes are amplified by popular, media-fueled notions of black and Latino masculinity that associate these young men with negligent and criminal activity, including gang membership. Apart from the need to cope with stereotypes, young men and boys of color must also contend with the legacy of racism, which has meant that they are historically more likely than their white counterparts to be disproportionately undereducated, underemployed, and overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Yet as the contributions in this book remind us, it is never too early or too late to intervene in improving the lives and opportunities for young men and boys of color; failing to do so will prove costly to us all.

Historically, punitive policies and practices—whether they are in health, housing, education, or within the criminal justice system—have disadvantaged young men and boys of color. Natalie Slopen and David R. Williams have argued in their essay that “health inequities by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are rooted in social and contextual disadvantage, shaped by a history of unequal opportunities and discriminatory practices.” Although they recognize that over time there have been modest improvements in the life chances of men of color, they also make clear that boys and men of color “continue to encounter powerful inequities that contribute to poorer life chances with regard to education, employment, housing, neighborhood context, nutrition, and health care—all of which affect health.”

A critical way to address the well-being of boys and men of color is through the lens of trauma-informed practice. As Theodore Corbin and his colleagues have proposed, “there is an accumulating body of knowledge that points to the powerful relationship between adversity and trauma” and health. The authors define trauma as a “psychological perspective to describe experiences that are emotionally painful and distressing and that overwhelm an individual’s capacity to cope.” They argue that to fully understand the experiences, challenges, and resiliency of boys and men of color, one must understand how the cumulative impact of trauma-informed events shape their lives. These contributors have stressed in their chapter the importance of understanding and deciphering opportunity in context. In the case of men of color, demographic data suggest that they are “disproportionately affected by adverse social factors including poverty, lack of education, lack of social support, and lack of access to social capital. They are also disproportionately affected by other environmental issues, including living in unsafe neighborhoods with unstable economic and physical infrastructure.” As Corbin and his colleagues have recounted for us, each of these conditions has the potential to expose boys and men of color to some form of trauma on a daily basis, the cumulative effects of which can be dangerous, if not deadly. It is not until we recognize these facts that we can truly identify and enact effective prevention and intervention models tailored to the needs of these specific populations.

## **7. VIEW YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF COLOR AS ASSETS IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

Finally, throughout this volume the authors have stressed that to build “healthy communities,” we must learn to see the lives and experiences

of young men and boys of color through a lens of *asset* instead of *deficit*. Ginwright speaks directly to this point when he observes: “The notion that black youth are a ‘menace to society’ is fostered in the public consciousness and reinforced through public policy. Nightly news stories of shootings involving young black men, films that depict black youth as dangerous criminals, and newspaper reports of rising crime among black teens all contribute to the negative image of black youth. These images are reinforced by the fear that many hold of black people and have an indelible impact on public policy.” Ginwright contends that we must move beyond pathology and embrace public policy that takes an asset-based approach toward young men and boys of color. Blackwell and Pastor echo this sentiment: “If we can refocus our economy to incorporate the talents of those who’ve historically been left behind—if we can lift from the bottom, so to speak—we will build a stronger and more sustainable America.”

Successful strategies exist (as described throughout this collection) to address the unique needs of young men and boys of color and to ensure the safe passage of adolescent boys to adulthood. Through a variety of lenses and approaches from across disciplines—including public health, education, demography, and urban planning—this book reveals that as a nation, we have the capacity to bring about change for these young men. Not only do we have the research and data to back up the claims about inequality for this population, but we also have models of proven and successful programs and interventions. Many of these models are scalable, and as Kirp has noted, those that are not immediately scalable have nonetheless changed the policy conversation from “it can’t be done,” to “it can be done if . . .”

The chapters in this volume remind us that the need to act grows more urgent every day. We know what we need to do. Now we must marshal the collective will to act.

#### NOTE

1. Deborah Lowe Vandell et al., “Do Effects of Early Child Care Extend to Age 15 Years? Results from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development,” *Child Development* 81, no. 3: 737–56.



## About the Contributors

**Dolores Acevedo-Garcia** has a doctoral degree in public policy and demography. She joined the Harvard School of Public Health faculty in 1998. Her research interests include the effect of social determinants on health disparities, especially along racial and ethnic lines, and the role of nonhealth policies in reducing those disparities. In 2009, Acevedo-Garcia began a new position as a tenured associate professor at Northeastern University in the Bouvé College of Health Sciences. She also serves as associate director of the Institute on Urban Health Research at Northeastern, where she leads a research program on social determinants of health and racial/ethnic health disparities. She keeps an adjunct faculty position at the Harvard School of Public Health, where she participates in the Maternal and Child Health Studies Concentration.

**Estela Mara Bensimon** is a professor of higher education and codirector of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. Her current research centers on issues of racial equity in higher education from the perspective of organizational learning and sociocultural practice theories. She is particularly interested in place-based, practitioner-driven inquiry as a means of organizational change in higher education. Bensimon has held leadership positions in the Association for the Study of Higher Education (president, 2005–06) and in the American Education Research Association's Division on Postsecondary Education (vice president, 1992–94). She has served on the boards of the American Association for Higher Education and the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Bensimon was associate dean of the Rossier School of Education from 1996 to 2000 and a Fulbright Scholar to Mexico in 2002. She earned her doctorate in higher education from Teachers College at Columbia University.

**Ariel H. Bierbaum** is the program director at the Center for Cities and Schools (CC&S) at the University of California at Berkeley. She works on research efforts

with regional partners, local city agencies and districts, and the California Department of Education on issues of school siting, cross-jurisdictional collaboration, and other educational impacts of regional and local planning policies. She also oversees the Engaging Students and Schools Initiative, which examines expanding stakeholder participation in public-planning practice to include youth, families, and schools. Bierbaum brings ten years of academic and professional experience in city and regional planning, city government, strategic planning and communications, community engagement, and university-community relations. She holds a master's degree in city planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a bachelor's degree in urban studies from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Robin Bishop** works with Estela Bensimon as a research assistant at the Center for Urban Education. She is enrolled in the University of Southern California's doctoral program in urban education policy. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University at Northridge and her master's degree in student-affairs counseling from the University of California at Los Angeles. Bishop spent three years as the assistant director of academic advisement at Mount St. Mary's College in downtown Los Angeles. She later transitioned to teaching, serving as an instructor of psychology and developmental mathematics. Bishop's research interests include culturally responsive pedagogy, effective teaching strategies for the success of underprepared students, and achieving racial equity in student outcomes.

**Angela Glover Blackwell** is the founder and chief executive officer of PolicyLink, which was established in 1999 to advance economic and social equity. Under her leadership PolicyLink has become a leading voice in the movement to use public policy to improve access and opportunity for low-income people and communities of color. A renowned community-building activist and advocate, Blackwell served as senior vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation, where she oversaw the foundation's Domestic and Cultural divisions. A lawyer by training, Blackwell gained national recognition as founder of the Oakland (California) Urban Strategies Council, where she pioneered new approaches to neighborhood revitalization. From 1977 to 1987 she was a partner at Public Advocates, a nationally known public-interest law firm. She is the coauthor of *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America's Future* and a contributor to *Ending Poverty in America: How to Restore the American Dream*. Blackwell earned a bachelor's degree from Howard University and a law degree from the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley. She serves on numerous boards and served as cochair of a task force on poverty for the Center for American Progress.

**Sandra L. Bloom** is a board-certified psychiatrist, a graduate of Temple University School of Medicine, and was recently awarded the Temple University School of Medicine Alumni Achievement Award. In addition to her faculty position at the School of Public Health at Drexel University, she is president of CommunityWorks, an organizational consulting firm committed to the development of nonviolent environments. Bloom currently serves as Distinguished Fellow of the Andrus Children's Center in Yonkers, New York. From 1980 to 2001 she was the founder and executive director of the Sanctuary programs, inpatient psychiatric programs for the treatment of trauma-related emotional disorders. In partnership with Andrus

Children's Center, Bloom has established a training institute, the Sanctuary Leadership Development Institute, to train a wide variety of programs in the Sanctuary Model. This model is now applied in residential treatment programs for children, domestic violence shelters, group homes, and homeless shelters, and is used in other settings as a method of organizational development. She is a past president of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. She is author of *Creating Sanctuary: Toward the Evolution of Sane Societies* and coauthor of *Bearing Witness: Violence and Collective Responsibility*.

**Susan J. Colby** is a founding partner of the Bridgespan Group's San Francisco office, where she leads the organization's work in K-12 education and foundation strategy. She focuses on client and knowledge-related activities with a particular emphasis on disadvantaged populations; she has engaged with foundations on major strategy and organization issues and has also consulted to a variety of nonprofit organizations—from smaller, local community-based organizations to larger national agencies. Before joining Bridgespan, Colby served as copresident of the Sustainable Development Sector at Pharmacia (previously Monsanto). She also worked for ten years at McKinsey & Company, where she cofounded and co-led the North American Environment Practice. Colby began her consulting career at Bain & Company, after receiving her bachelor's degree from American University (cum laude) and her master's degree in business administration from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business.

**Gilberto Q. Conchas** obtained a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He is an associate professor of education and Chancellor's Fellow at the University of California at Irvine. Before UCI, Conchas was an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He most recently served as senior program officer with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, managing the research portfolio on U.S. inequity. The focus of his research is urban school success, social inequality and education, and educational policy and reform. Conchas is the author of *The Color of Success* and the coauthor of *Small Schools and Urban Youth*. He is currently working on his third book (coauthored with James Diego Vigil), *StreetSmart SchoolSmart: Urban Poverty and the Education of Adolescent Boys*. Conchas has been a visiting scholar at the University of Barcelona, the University of Southern California, San Francisco State University, and the University of Washington.

**Theodore Corbin** is an assistant professor of emergency medicine at the Drexel University College of Medicine. He is also the founder and director of Healing Hurt People, a trauma-informed intervention for victims of interpersonal violence. He received his bachelor's degree from Lincoln University in Lincoln, Pennsylvania, and spent two years teaching biology to students at a public high school in the South Bronx, New York. Corbin earned his medical degree at The Medical College of Pennsylvania/The Hahnemann School of Medicine in Philadelphia and completed his residency in emergency medicine at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He received his master's of public policy degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of International Affairs at Princeton University. He is board-certified in emergency medicine. Prior to coming to Drexel, Corbin was on the faculty of the Jefferson Medical College, where he also served as assistant director of the emer-

gency medicine residency program. He is also a Soros Physician Advocacy Fellow. His current interests center around youth violence prevention in Philadelphia, trauma-informed practice in public health, health disparities, and access to health care for vulnerable populations.

**Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield** is a senior policy analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Her focus is on access to and success in adult education, English as a second language, and postsecondary education and training for low-skilled adults and youth. Duke-Benfield analyzes and advocates for federal and state workforce and education policies that better serve low-income adults and provides technical assistance to state and local advocates and governments in these areas. She spearheads CLASP's work around Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act), the Higher Education Act, and related federal postsecondary legislation. Previously, she was a research associate at the Urban Institute, where she contributed to several evaluations of state-level welfare reform and antipoverty programs. Duke-Benfield holds a bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College as well as a master's degree from Emory University.

**Susan Eaton** is research director at the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School. Her scholarly and research interests center around the causes and cures for unequal opportunities for racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities in the United States. Eaton is particularly concerned about the challenges of schooling and childrearing in high-poverty, urban neighborhoods. She is the author of *The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial*; *The Other Boston Busing Story: What's Won and Lost Across the Boundary Line*; and (with Gary Orfield) *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. She holds a doctorate in education from Harvard University, where she was assistant director at the Project on School Desegregation. For a decade Eaton was a staff reporter at daily newspapers in Massachusetts and Connecticut, where she won several awards for her writing about public education. Her writing appears regularly in a variety of scholarly and popular publications.

**Christopher Edley Jr.** joined the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley, as dean and professor of law in 2004, after twenty-three years as a professor at Harvard Law School. He earned a law degree and a master's degree in public policy from Harvard, where he served as an editor and officer of the *Harvard Law Review*. Edley's academic work is primarily in the areas of civil rights and administrative law. He was cofounder of the Harvard Civil Rights Project. His publications include *Not All Black and White: Affirmative Action, Race, and American Values* and *Administrative Law: Rethinking Judicial Control of Bureaucracy*. Previous positions have included associate director at the White House Office of Management and Budget; special counsel to the president, directing the White House review of affirmative action; consultant to President Clinton's advisory board on the Race Initiative; and congressional appointee on the bipartisan U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. He was a member of the Carter-Ford National Commission on Federal Election Reform. He is also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Public Administration, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the American Law Institute. At the University of California at Berkeley, he is founder and faculty director of the Chief Justice Earl Warren



Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity. He serves as senior policy adviser to Mark Yudof, the president of the University of California system.

**Edward Fergus** is deputy director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University. A former high school teacher, he continues to provide technical assistance and analysis on education policy and research to school districts. Fergus has published various articles on disproportionality in special education as well as race and ethnicity in schools, and he is the author of *Skin Color and Identity Formation: Perceptions of Opportunity and Academic Orientation among Mexican and Puerto Rican Youth*. He is on the board of various organizations, including the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and Yonkers Partners in Education. He was previously an education and research analyst at the National Technical Assistance Center for Community Schools at the Children's Aid Society and a program evaluator with Metis Associates. Fergus is currently the coprincipal investigator of a study of single-sex schools for boys of color (funded by the Gates Foundation), the New York State Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality, and various other research and programmatic endeavors focused on disproportionality and educational opportunity. He received his doctorate and master's degree in social foundations and educational policy from the University of Michigan. Fergus earned his bachelor's degree in political science and a teaching certificate from Beloit College.

**Shawn Ginwright** is an associate professor of education in the Africana Studies Department and a senior research associate for the Cesar Chavez Institute for Public Policy at San Francisco State University. In 1989 he founded Leadership Excellence, Inc., an innovative youth development agency located in Oakland, California, that trains African American youths to address pressing social and community problems. In 1999 he received his doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley. Ginwright's research examines the ways in which youths in urban communities navigate through the constraints of poverty and struggle to create equality and justice in their schools and communities. He is the author of *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America*; *Black in School: Afrocentric Reform, Black Youth, and the Promise of Hip-Hop Culture*; and coeditor of *Beyond Resistance! Youth Resistance and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America's Youth*. Ginwright has published extensively on issues related to urban youths in such journals as *Social Problems*, *Social Justice*, *Urban Review*, and *New Directions in Youth Development*. He is a highly sought speaker for national and international audiences.

**Jarvis Ray Givens** was born and raised by his mother and grandmother in Compton, California. Upon completing high school, he attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he earned his bachelor's of science in business administration from the Walter A. Haas School of Business, with a minor in African American Studies. During his undergraduate years he was deeply involved in community organizing through his fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha and many other community-based organizations. As a student at Berkeley, he was selected as a Mellon Mays Fellow. In 2010 he began a doctoral program at the University of California at Berkeley in the Department of African American Studies. Currently Givens's research interests revolve around the sociohistorical analysis of the Mil-

lion Man March of 1995 and community organizing in African American urban communities after the modern civil rights movement.

**Frank Harris III** is assistant professor of postsecondary educational leadership and student affairs at San Diego State University. His research is broadly focused on student development in higher education and explores questions related to the social construction of gender and race on college campuses, college men and masculinities, and racial and ethnic disparities in college student outcomes. His scholarship has been published in the *Journal of College Student Development*, *Journal of Men's Studies*, *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, and a range of other journals and edited books. He is coeditor (with Shaun R. Harper) of *College Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research, and Implications for Practice*. Before joining the faculty at San Diego State, Harris spent nearly ten years as a student affairs educator and college administrator. His most recent administrative appointment was associate director of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. Harris earned a bachelor's degree in communication studies from Loyola Marymount University, a master's degree in speech communication from California State University at Northridge, and a doctorate in higher education from the University of Southern California.

**Linda Harris** is the director of Youth Policy at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). She has more than twenty-five years of experience in youth and workforce development policy, research, and administration at the local, state, and national levels. Her expertise centers on disconnected and disadvantaged youth in high-poverty communities. She cochairs the Campaign for Youth, an alliance of national organizations that seeks to raise awareness about the 32 percent of youth who drop out of school and fall outside of the labor-market mainstream. Harris also played a lead role in establishing the Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth (CCRY) network, a vehicle for peer-to-peer exchange among communities that are engaged in cross-system programming for high-risk youth. Her publications include *Creating Postsecondary Pathways to Good Jobs for Young High School Dropouts*; *Learning from the Youth Opportunity Experience: Building Delivery Capacity in Distressed Communities*; *What's a Youngster to Do: The Education and Labor Market Plight of Youth in High Poverty Communities*; and *Making the Workforce—Justice Connection for Re-entering Youth Offenders*. Before joining CLASP, Harris served as director of the Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Employment Development and as administrator for the Baltimore City Private Industry Council. She has provided consulting and technical support to several communities across the country on design and implementation of workforce programs for youth and adults. She has served on numerous state and national boards. Harris holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Morgan State University and a master's degree in urban and public affairs from Carnegie Mellon University.

**Waldo E. Johnson Jr.** is an associate professor at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration (SSA) and immediate past director of the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture (CSRPC). At SSA he teaches social welfare policy and human behavior in the social environment in the master's program and research methods in the master's and doctoral programs. He holds master's and doctoral degrees in social work from the University of Michigan

and the University of Chicago, respectively. A family research scholar, Johnson's substantive research focuses on male roles and involvement in African American families, nonresident fathers in fragile families, and the physical and psychosocial health statuses of African American males. As a research methodologist, he is interested in the use of qualitative research methods in guiding policy and practice research. He chairs the Commission on Research for the Council on Social Work Education and is a member of the Steering Committee for the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys and the Ford Foundation Scholars Network on Masculinity and the Wellbeing of African American Males. His is the author of *Social Work with African American Males: Health, Mental Health and Social Policy*.

**David L. Kirp** is a professor of public policy at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. His work ranges across the social policy landscape and he has been directly involved in policymaking, most recently as a member of the Presidential Transition Team in 2008. Kirp's current research focuses on "kids-first" policy. His fifteen books include *The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics* and *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: Higher Education Goes to Market*. His latest book is *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: Five Big Ideas to Transform Children's Lives*. A former *Sacramento Bee* associate editor, Kirp has written articles appearing in a wide variety of journals, magazines, and newspapers, including the *New York Times*, *The Nation*, and *American Prospect*. He serves on the board of Experience Corps, Friends of the Children, and the Coro Center for Civic Leadership, and he consults with public agencies, foundations, and nonprofits. Kirp is a recipient of Berkeley's Distinguished Teaching Award.

**Sarah Lawrence** is director of programs at the Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice at the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley. Her areas of interest are prisoner reentry, adult corrections, juvenile justice, and youth and gang violence. Her work focuses on improving the justice system and increasing public safety by linking criminal justice research and analysis with policymakers and building partnerships across diverse stakeholder groups. Lawrence previously served as director of research for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety, where she established a research and policy analysis department that provided state-level strategic and analytical support on public safety, criminal justice issues, and homeland security issues. In 2004 she served as senior policy analyst for the Governor's Commission on Corrections Reform for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Lawrence was a research associate in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where she authored several publications on prisoner reentry and parole reform. She has a master's degree in public policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and a bachelor's degree in engineering from Cornell University.

**María C. Ledesma** is an assistant professor in educational leadership and policy at the University of Utah's College of Education. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a master's degree in administration, planning, and social policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. While she was a doctoral student at the University of California at Los Angeles, Ledesma was student regent for the University of California's Board of Regents,

the first Latina to hold this post. She coordinated a systemwide study of the role and state of diversity within the University of California ten years after the passage of Proposition 209, which eliminated the use of race and ethnicity in public employment, contracting, and education within the state of California. The study produced a series of reports and recommendations focusing on campus climate as well as diversity among undergraduates, graduate students, professional school students, and faculty. Ledesma earned a doctorate in education from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles. She is a two-time award recipient from the Ford Foundation, having earned a Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship and a Ford Foundation Post-doctoral Fellowship. Her research interests include critical policy analysis, including critical analysis of race-conscious affirmative action policy in public selective institutions.

**Jennifer Lynn-Whaley** is a senior research associate at the Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice (BCCJ) at the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include alternatives to incarceration, juvenile justice policy, and the use of childhood neurodevelopmental science to inform prevention strategies for at-risk youth. Before joining BCCJ, she was the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative coordinator for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council in Washington, D.C., where she worked with stakeholders to reform juvenile detention practices. Previously, Lynn-Whaley was a program analyst for the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for Community Justice Programs in Washington, D.C. She designed and implemented the agency's intervention for violent offenders. She also worked for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice in Washington, D.C., as the program manager for Violence Against Women Grants and Crime Victims Assistance Grants. She served as a research assistant in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute and at the Violence Policy Center. Lynn-Whaley obtained her doctorate in criminal justice from American University. She graduated with her bachelor's degree in literature from the University of California at Santa Barbara's College of Creative Studies.

**Tia Elena Martinez** is a strategy consultant to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Previously, she was a manager in The Bridgespan Group's San Francisco office, where she led engagements in the areas of education, poverty, and civil rights and served as the firm's content expert on K-12 education. Before joining Bridgespan, Martinez served as a senior fellow at the Hewlett Foundation, where she coauthored a seminal paper on disconnected youth and worked on issues related to the children of immigrants in California. Before Hewlett, Martinez worked for the Corporation for Supportive Housing as a housing policy analyst, where she completed a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the provision of supportive housing to mentally ill, substance-abusing homeless adults in San Francisco. She has a bachelor's degree in history from Harvard University, a master's degree in public policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and a law degree from Stanford Law School.

**Nancy McArdle** is a researcher and author with more than twenty years' experience analyzing housing policy and demographics, migration and settlement patterns, racial segregation, and the intersection between civil rights and opportunity.

She received a master's of public policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and was a research analyst at Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies and research director of the Harvard Civil Rights Project's Metro Boston Equity Initiative. McArdle has served as an expert witness, providing analysis and testimony at trial in several major legal cases involving housing and school segregation. She is currently an adjunct associate professor at the Institute for Urban Health Research at Northeastern University and senior research analyst with DiversityData.org, a Web site allowing comparison of a wide range of socio-economic, demographic, and neighborhood indicators by race and ethnicity for all U.S. metropolitan areas. McArdle is a recent contributor to the books *Twenty-first Century Color Lines: Multiracial Change in Contemporary Society* and *The Integration Debate: Competing Futures for American Cities*.

**Deborah L. McKoy** is the executive director and founder of the Center for Cities and Schools in the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at the University of California, Berkeley. She is also a lecturer in Berkeley's Department of City and Regional Planning and Graduate School of Education. Her research and teaching focuses on the intersection of educational reform, urban and metropolitan planning, community development and public policy. Central to her work is understanding the critical role young people play in urban and metropolitan change and transformation. For nearly two decades she has been bridging the worlds of research, policy, and practice through a wide range of professional experiences including: consultant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; chief of economic development at the New York City Housing Authority; director of refugee services for CAMBA, a New York nonprofit organization; and consultant to the United Nation's Education For All initiative. McKoy has a master's degree in public policy and administration from Columbia University and a doctoral degree in educational policy, with a specialization in urban planning from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Milbrey McLaughlin** is the David Jacks Professor of Education and Public Policy at the School of Education at Stanford University. Her research combines studies of K–12 education policy in the United States and work on the broad question of community-school collaboration to support youth development. Her research on public education focuses on how school teaching is shaped by such “context” issues as organizational policy and the social-cultural conditions of the schools, districts, and communities. McLaughlin is involved with local efforts to engage whole communities, schools, community organizations and agencies, parents, and faith-based institutions in developing new strategies and capacity to promote youth development. She is codirector of the Center for Research on the Context of Teaching, an education research center that analyzes how teaching and learning are shaped by their contexts and the connection between teacher learning communities and educational reforms. She is also the founding director of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, a partnership between Stanford University and Bay Area communities to build new practices, knowledge, and capacity for youth development and learning.

**Monique Nakagawa** is a research associate at the Public Research Institute (PRI) at San Francisco State University. Raised in San Francisco's Visitacion Valley, her

interests lie at the intersection of poverty, environment, and quality of life; neighborhood knowledge; community indicators; and participatory research. Before joining PRI in 2000, she worked with low-income and minority communities on grassroots community development in San Francisco's Chinatown and Sixth Street Corridor, where she was an active member of the South of Market Problem Solving Council, a community-based participatory decision-making body. Nakagawa also has many years of involvement with cooperatives and collectives. She holds a master's degree in geography from San Francisco State University.

**Pedro Noguera**, Ph.D., is a professor in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University. He is also the executive director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education and the codirector of the Institute for the Study of Globalization and Education in Metropolitan Settings. An urban sociologist, Noguera's scholarship and research focus on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions in the urban environment. He has served as an adviser to and engaged in collaborative research with several large urban school districts throughout the United States. He has conducted research on issues related to education as well as economic and social development in the Caribbean, Latin America, and several other countries. Between 2000 and 2003, Noguera served as the Judith K. Dimon Professor of Communities and Schools at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. From 1990 to 2000 he was a professor in Social and Cultural Studies at the Graduate School of Education and the director of the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California at Berkeley.

**Theresa L. Osypuk** is a social epidemiologist who researches racial, socioeconomic, and nativity disparities in health, their geographic patterns, and causes. She is particularly interested in why place affects health and health disparities, including the role of racial residential segregation, neighborhood context, and social policies. Osypuk's research has appeared in leading epidemiology, social epidemiology, public health, and urban studies journals. She received her doctorate and master's degrees from the Harvard School of Public Health, and her postdoctoral training in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health and Society Scholars fellowship at the University of Michigan from 2005 through 2007. Osypuk is currently assistant professor at the Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University in Boston.

**Manuel Pastor** is professor of American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, where he also serves as director of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the Center for Sustainable Cities and codirector of the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. Founding director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Pastor holds a doctorate in economics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He has received fellowships from the Danforth, Guggenheim, and Kellogg foundations, and grants from the Irvine, Rockefeller, Hewlett, and Ford foundations as well as from the National Science Foundation, the California Environmental Protection Agency, the California Wellness Foundation, and many others. He served as a member of the Commission on Regions, appointed by California's Speaker of the State Assembly, and is currently a member of the

Regional Targets Advisory Committee for the California Air Resources Board. In recent years Pastor's research has focused on the economic, environmental, and social conditions facing low-income urban communities in the United States. His two most recent books are *This Could Be the Start of Something Big: Social Movements for Regional Equity and the Future of Metropolitan America*, with Chris Benner and Martha Matsuoka; and *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America's Future*, with Angela Glover Blackwell and Stewart Kwoh.

**David J. Pate Jr.** is an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, Helen Bader School of Social Welfare. His fields of special interest are welfare reform policy; child support enforcement policy; fatherhood; domestic violence; and the intersection of race, gender, and poverty. He has more than twenty-five years of direct service, management, and policy experience in the field of social work. Pate's research projects involve the use of qualitative research methods to examine the relationships of noncustodial fathers of children on welfare, their interactions with their children, the child support enforcement system, the mothers of their children, and the incarceration system. He received a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Detroit, a master's degree in social work from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, and a doctorate in social welfare at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Before his appointment at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, he served as the founder and executive director of the Center for Family Policy and Practice and held a postdoctoral research fellowship at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

**Robert Phillips** leads the efforts of the California Endowment, as the director of health and human services, to develop initiatives to create efficient, effective health and human services systems that promote the health of low-income communities and communities of color. He oversees all activities for this grant-making program. Phillips also leads the Boys and Young Men of Color component of its Building Healthy Communities agenda, an effort to improve the health status of young males and their families. Before joining the California Endowment in 2006, Phillips was a principal at Carter Phillips LLC, a public affairs firm that specializes in strategic communications and public affairs consulting; a senior associate at PolicyLink, a national nonprofit research and advocacy organization; a capital strategies regional coordinator and political coordinator and organizer for the Service Employees International Union in Oakland, California, and Washington D.C.; and a senior health policy analyst for the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C. Phillips received a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, a master's degree in public administration from the Maxwell School of Citizen and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, and a master's in public health from Harvard University's School of Public Health.

**Lisa Quay** is an education policy associate at the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley. Previously, she worked at the Bridgespan Group with a variety of education clients, including one of the nation's largest private foundations and a leading national child advocacy association. As a research assistant at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., Quay worked on large-scale policy evaluations, includ-

ing the widely cited national evaluation of abstinence-only education programs. She received her bachelor's degree in sociology with highest honors from Oberlin College.

**Belinda Reyes** is the director of the César Chávez Institute and associate professor of the Latina/o Studies Department at the College of Ethnic Studies of San Francisco State University. She was formerly an assistant professor and founding faculty member at the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts at the University of California at Merced and a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California. Her publications include *Holding the Line? The Effect of the Recent Border Build-up on Unauthorized Immigration*; *Taking the Oath: An Analysis of Naturalization in California and the United States*; and *A Portrait of Race and Ethnicity in California: An Assessment of Social and Economic Well-being*. In *Systems of Elections, Latino Representation, and Student Outcomes in Central California* and *Faculty, Managers, and Administrators in the University of California, 1996 to 2002*, Reyes has explored ethnic diversity in higher education and K-12 and the potential consequences of underrepresentation. Her research focuses on the policy issues confronting the Latino and immigrant population in the United States. She has been a senior program associate at PolicyLink, a research fellow at the University of Michigan, and a visiting scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. Reyes holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a doctorate in economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

**John A. Rich** was medical director for the Boston Public Health Commission before joining Drexel University's School of Public Health. He oversaw the clinical functions of the commission and developed initiatives to address emerging health problems. He was also associate professor of medicine and public health at Boston University and served as an attending physician at Boston Medical Center. Rich is an expert in inner-city health problems, particularly urban violence, men's health, and racial disparities. He is the founder and director of the Young Men's Health Clinic at Boston Medical Center. He serves as principal investigator on a number of grants funded by the Centers for Disease Control, including REACH Elders and Steps to a Healthy Boston. He received his bachelor's degree in English from Dartmouth College, his medical degree from Duke University Medical School, and completed his residency in internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. Rich also holds a master's degree in public health from the Harvard School of Public Health. He helped establish the Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice at the Drexel University School of Public Health. In 2006 he was awarded a MacArthur grant for his work addressing the primary health-care needs of young men in the inner city.

**Linda Rich** is the director of research at the Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice and the Healing Hurt People program at Drexel University's College of Medicine. She has more than twenty-five years of experience in psychotherapy, research, health policy analysis, and program planning. Her previous work at the Best Practices Institute focused on the creation of a training and professional development institute for a large-scale community-based parenting network; guiding a grant-request and funding process; and establishing a standardized evaluation



system for parenting education and support programs using performance measures as evaluation tools. Rich has worked in a range of nonprofit organizations in the human services field as a direct service provider (psychologist) in women's health and mental health settings, at the City of Philadelphia's Office of Children's Policy, in the National Health and Human Services Program at the Pew Charitable Trusts, and as a consultant for the Ford Foundation and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania. She holds a master's degree in community psychology from Temple University and a bachelor's degree from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Lindsay E. Rosenfeld** is a social epidemiologist with research interests in program and policy design that focus on the health impacts of "nonhealth" policies and programs, particularly concerning the built environment, urban planning and design, housing, neighborhoods, education, (im)migration, and health literacy. Her new team focuses on the social determinants of health and racial/ethnic health disparities at Northeastern University's Institute on Urban Health Research. She is an associate research scientist and an adjunct faculty member at Northeastern, where she teaches a course on race, ethnicity, and health. Rosenfeld is also a research fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health, where she focuses on health literacy. Throughout her career she has served in numerous research, policy, teaching, and community social-service capacities—passionate about translating research into policy. These include being a founding member of the Boston Child Health Impact Assessment Working Group, a second-grade teacher in Compton, California, and cofounder and coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Consortium on Urban Planning and Public Health. Rosenfeld earned her bachelor's degree in women's studies from Brown University and her master's degree and doctorate in public health from the Harvard School of Public Health.

**Jorge Ruiz de Velasco** is program officer for Educational Opportunity and Scholarship at the Ford Foundation. Previously he was the associate director and director of education at the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley. His work focuses on the study and promotion of change in public schools and community colleges, the implications of education reform for disadvantaged students, education law and policy, and the effect of immigration on schools and communities. Before his Berkeley appointment, Ruiz de Velasco served as director of the Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice at the Stanford School of Education. He has also served as a senior program officer at the James Irvine Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; as a senior research associate at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.; and as a civil rights attorney for the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. He holds a doctorate in political science and a master's degree in education administration and policy analysis from Stanford University, a law degree from the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley, and a bachelor's degree (cum laude) in government from Harvard University. He is a member of the California Bar.

**Natalie Slopen** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard Center on the Developing Child. She recently completed her doctorate in the Department of Society, Human Development, and Health at the Harvard School of Public Health. Her research focuses on socioeconomic, racial, and gender disparities in health, and how early

life conditions influence mental and physical health over the life course. Slopen's dissertation research focused on social and economic determinants of mental health among children, adolescents, and adults. She has also carried out research that examines associations between early life adversities and cardiovascular disease risk factors in adulthood. As a postdoctoral fellow at the Center on the Developing Child, Slopen engages in research on the biological and psychological effects of early stress and the mechanisms by which these experiences are embedded to create long-term mental and physical health risks. The long-term goal is to identify processes and conditions that can be targeted by interventions to reduce health disparities and promote child health. Slopen has a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Toronto and a master's degree in social sciences from the University of Chicago.

**James Diego Vigil** is a professor in the School of Social Ecology at the University of California at Irvine. His education includes a doctorate and a master's degree in anthropology from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). He has taught or held administrative positions as a visiting professor at Harvard University, as a professor of anthropology and director of the Center for the Study of Urban Poverty at UCLA for five years, and as a professor of anthropology and director of Ethnic Studies at the University of Southern California for fifteen years. His expertise is in urban street youth, urban psychology, socialization, and educational anthropology, as well as in the ethnohistory of Mexico and the southwestern United States. He has written several books: *From Indians to Chicanos: The Dynamics of Mexican American Culture*; *Personas Mexicanas: Chicano High Schoolers in a Changing Los Angeles*; *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California*; *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City*; *The Projects: Gang and Non-Gang Families in East Los Angeles*; and *Gang Redux*. Vigil also acts as a consultant and an expert witness in cultural defense in gang-related homicides.

**Jeffrey M. Vincent** is deputy director and cofounder of the Center for Cities & Schools at the University of California at Berkeley. The center works to promote high-quality education as an essential component of urban and metropolitan vitality to create equitable, healthy, and sustainable cities and schools for all. Vincent has a doctorate in city and regional planning from Berkeley and a master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Nebraska. His research interests lie at the intersection of land use planning, community development, and educational improvement, with a particular focus on how school facilities serve as educational and neighborhood assets. His recent research has looked at issues regarding school facility siting and design, housing and neighborhood redevelopment, state policies on school construction, joint use of schools, youth engagement in redevelopment, and transit-oriented development aimed at families. Vincent's research has appeared in numerous academic journals, and he is a contributor to *Segregation: The Rising Costs for America* and *School Siting and Healthy Communities: Why Where We Invest in School Facilities Matters*. Vincent is also a researcher with Building Educational Success Together (BEST), a national collaborative working to improve public school facilities.

**David R. Williams** is the Florence and Laura Norman Professor of Public Health at the Harvard School of Public Health and a professor of sociology, African studies, and African American studies at Harvard University. His first six years as a faculty member were at Yale University, and he spent fourteen years at the University of Michigan. Williams holds a master's in public health from Loma Linda University and a doctorate in sociology from the University of Michigan. He is an internationally recognized authority on the social influences on health and has special expertise in socioeconomic and racial disparities in health, the effects of racism on health, and the ways in which religious involvement can affect health. Williams is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2004 he received one of the inaugural Decade of Behavior Research Awards, and he has been a member of the MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health as well as staff director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America. The *Journal of Black Issues in Higher Education* ranked Williams as the Most Cited Black Scholar in the Social Sciences in 2008.

**Ann Wilson** is the project coordinator at the Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice. Previously, she worked for Philadelphia Health Management Corporation (PHMC), providing consultative services to the City of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services, with a focus on parenting education and support programs. While with PHMC, Wilson administered and helped establish the Institute for Family Professionals, a professional development institute for social service professionals who work with parents and caregivers in community-based settings in Philadelphia. Her prior experience includes Health and Human Services grant making at the Pew Charitable Trusts and arts administration at the University of the Arts. Wilson graduated from the Catholic University of America, where she studied English literature and piano.



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