Racism as the Driver of Housing and Health Inequities

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Objectives

- Brief review of the evidence that links housing and health outcomes
- Understand housing stability and affordability inequities
- Discuss the root cause of housing inequities and historical policies that reinforces its existence
Health and Housing

Gentrification And The Health Of Low-Income Children In New York City

ABSTRACT Although the pace of gentrification has accelerated in cities across the US, little is known about the health consequences of growing up in gentrifying neighborhoods. We used New York State Medicaid claims data to track a cohort of low-income children born in the period 2006–08 for the nine years between January 2009 and December 2017. We compared the 2017 health outcomes of children who started out in low-income neighborhoods that gentrified in the period 2009–15 with those of children who started out in other low-income neighborhoods, controlling for individual child demographic characteristics, baseline neighborhood characteristics, and preexisting trends in neighborhood socioeconomic status. Our findings suggest that the experience of gentrification has no effects on children’s health status or diagnoses of asthma or obesity, when children are assessed at ages 9–11, but that it is associated with moderate increases in diagnoses of anxiety or depression—whether or not they are co-occurred among children living in market-rate neighborhoods.
Housing Affordability and Stability Inequities

- Black and Hispanic renters experience a higher rent burden
  - ~31% of Black and 28% of Hispanic renters

- Higher eviction rates for Black renters

- Lower rates of home ownership among Black and Hispanic communities

- Black households are more likely to live in older, crowded or substandard homes and experience homelessness

- Cascading of other financial and social hardships

But why??
Proxy for Structural and Systemic Racism
Race vs. Racism as a Social Determinant

• Race is a social construct, not based on biology
• Racism
  • prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior.
  • Can be -
    • Individual
    • Internalized
    • Systemic/Institutional
  • “When a racial group’s collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control, it is transformed into racism, a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actions.” – Robin DeAngelo, White Fragility
  • “But race is the child of racism, not the father.” – Ta-Nehisi Coates
Redlining

• A **federal policy** that facilitated the discriminatory pattern of disinvestment and obstructive lending practices to people of color

• “Graded” neighborhoods into four categories based largely on their racial makeup
  - A. Best
  - B. Still desirable
  - C. Definitely declining
  - D. Hazardous

• Neighborhoods with **minority occupants** were marked in red and considered high-risk for mortgage lenders, regardless of individual credit worthiness

• Excluded black families from obtaining mortgages and were subject to predatory lenders

• **Generational impacts yielding**
  - Wealth and income inequality gaps we see today
  - Persistent segregation and inequitable distribution of resources in communities of color (i.e. grocery stores, transportation access, healthcare)
  - “Zip code greater predictor of health than genetic code”

Source: Mapping Inequality, Redlining in New Deal America [https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/37.5495/-77.4626&opacity=0.8&city=richmond-va](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/37.5495/-77.4626&opacity=0.8&city=richmond-va)
Richmond, Virginia

Source: Mapping Inequality, Redlining in New Deal America  
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/37.5495/-77.4626&opacity=0.8&city=richmond-va

Source: VCU, Center on Society and Health  
https://societyhealth.vcu.edu/work/the-projects/mapsrichmond.html
COVID is no exception – Brooklyn, NY


Source: https://untappedcities.com/2020/05/06/interactive-map-the-coronavirus-cases-in-nyc-by-zip-code/
Exclusionary Zoning and Land Use

• Began in the early 1900s
  • Shape the built environment and stabilize land values

• Proxy to segregate communities with embedded social objectives

“Blacks should be quarantined in isolated slums in order to reduce incidents of civil disturbance, to prevent the spread of communicable disease in the the nearby White neighborhoods, and to protect property values among the White Majority.” – Baltimore Mayor J. Barry Mahool, 1910

• Racial covenants tied to real estate transactions

Source: https://www.minnpost.com/metro/2019/02/with-covenants-racism-was-written-into-minneapolis-housing-the-scars-are-still-visible/

Legacy of Segregation and Housing Injustice

- Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) movements around affordable housing
- Trump Administration repeal of HUD’s Affirmatively Affirming Fair Housing Rule (AFFH)
- Opportunity Zones
  - Concern that it benefits only wealthy investors
  - Could drive gentrification
A SYSTEM CANNOT FAIL those it was never designed to PROTECT.