Leadership Committee

Oakland/Berkeley/Alameda County CoC

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STRUCTURAL RACISM & HOMELESSNESS

Why Ending Homelessness Requires a Racial Equity Approach

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National Racial Disparities in Homelessness

Black/African Americans overrepresented by 3x

Pacific Islanders overrepresented by 2.6x

American Indians overrepresented by 2.5x

Hispanic/Latino ethnicity overrepresented by 1.2x

Sources: The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress & US Census Bureau 2019
Black Americans Overrepresented 3x Among Oakland Population Experiencing Homelessness

Figure 9. Total number of persons experiencing homelessness by race

City of Oakland Homeless Count n=4,071; Alameda County Homeless Count n=8,022
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: City of Oakland 2019 Homeless Census & Survey, Jurisdictional Report
Rising Awareness & New Research

Black Homeless and Burdened by L.A.'s Legacy of Racism

By Justil Kilcher, Tim Angell, Noah Singhwa and Jon Huang. Dec. 22, 2019

Time for Change: Findings from the SPARC Study on Race and Homelessness
The HOPE-HOME Study

Health Outcomes of People Experiencing Homelessness in Older Middle agE

- Funded by National Institute on Aging (NIA)
- Longitudinal cohort study in Oakland, CA
- 350 participants enrolled July 2013 to June 2014, following participants every six months
- Additional 100 participants 2017-2018
- Homeless in Oakland, 50 and older at study entry
The HOPE-HOME Study

Median age at study entry: 57 (range 50-80)

44% never homeless prior to age 50

80% Black American

77% Men
Racial Discrimination in the Life Course of Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness: HOPE-HOME

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Racial discrimination in the life course of older adults experiencing homelessness: results from the HOPE HOME study

Derek W. Paul Jr., Kelly R. Knight, Pamela Olsen, John Weeks, Irene H. Yen and Margot B. Kushel

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ABSTRACT
Over 2.5 million people experience homelessness yearly in the United States. Black persons are overrepresented by three-fold among those experiencing homelessness but little research has examined the relationship between race and homelessness. We aimed to understand the relationship between race and the experience of homelessness for older adults. We used grounded theory methodology to analyze in-depth qualitative interviews (n = 63) of persons experiencing homelessness. We recruited participants who were enrolled in two sub-studies of the Health Outcomes of People Experiencing Homelessness in Older Middle Age (HOPE HOME) Study in Oakland California. We identified two major themes within interviews with Black participants (n = 52) related to race: (1) participants experienced overt racial discrimination in early life and (2) structural racism precipitated and perpetuated adult homelessness. Further, we identified sub-themes of structural racism that contributed to participants becoming or staying homeless: criminal justice discrimination, employment discrimination, exposure to violence, premature death, and limited family wealth. We developed a theoretical model of how these elements of structural racism may increase susceptibility to homelessness. These relationships between racial discrimination and homelessness may serve as targets for policies aimed at preventing homelessness.
Racial Discrimination in the Life Course of Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness: HOPE- HOME

In depth interviews with 65 HOPE-HOME participants.

Interviews explored:
- childhood
- first episode of homelessness
- relationships with family
- experience of being homeless

Interviewers did NOT explicitly ask about race or racism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Participant demographics, (n = 65).</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men, %</td>
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<td>Women, %</td>
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<td>Transgender Women, %</td>
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<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>White, %</td>
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<td>Latino, %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other, %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian and Pacific Islander</td>
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Qualitative Analysis Using Grounded Theory Methodology

- Data Collection
- Immersion in Data
- Development of Codes (recurrent themes)
- Theoretical Memos On Emerging Social Phenomena
- Contextualization Findings
- Consensus Discussions
Overt Discrimination in Childhood

It was during that Brown versus Board of Education. They put us in a school in B. [predominantly White neighborhood], which was insane. Between the train station and the school there were a bunch of [White] guys waiting with bats and chains...the cops would look at us and see what was going on and would just drive away. You know, what scared me is that one [Black] guy they caught and beat him so bad that he just had a hole in his face, all his teeth, everything was gone, his lips, everything. It scared me so much. I said, “I’m not coming back to this school.”

- HOPE-HOPE Participant, Black, Man, Age 59
Criminal Justice Discrimination

“I signed up for Section 8 before and we got denied. I probably got denied because I have a felony record. I went to jail for somethin’ I didn’t do.”

- HOPE-HOPE Participant, Black, Man, Age 57

“She just looked at me and she said, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry, we don’t house criminals.’ So if you have any type of outstanding warrants or anything it will affect your housing.”

- HOPE-HOPE Participant, Black, Man, Age 52
Employment Discrimination

I was working in W. and there was a lot of racial tension. And when they had cutbacks most of the minorities got let loose [laid off], and some of us was hired before the other people ... we had a real nice crew, and you can, you can just tell when it’s racial. And [White] guys [that] came on after us, stayed, but me and the Asian guys got cut loose because they said cutbacks and stuff, but I think that the guy I was working for, I think he just, was racist.

- HOPE-HOPE Participant, Black, Man, Age 54
Health Disparities

_All my close friends are dead. Which is sad. Like I said, I grew up in the 50s and the 60s and the 70s, and they was doin’ drugs, alcohol. A lot of my friends died of alcoholism or drug overdose or just dead._

- HOPE-HOPE Participant, Black, Man, Age 66

_And other people that I knew, I heard, who were close to my same age, to my age, I mean, and they were just dying’, not from gunshot wounds or anything like that, from illness._

- HOPE-HOPE Participant, Black, Woman, Age 57
Limited Family Wealth

But there’s really no one that actually sees me come in and go out [of my daughter’s apartment] – because when I’m there, I don’t make a lot of noise. I go in and I stay inside and I just take it easy so – and she doesn’t have a lot of friends in the building that come in and say, hey, your dad’s here! So a lot of people don’t know, and I don’t know if there’s a security camera. I really don’t want to jeopardize my daughter’s [‘s] [housing].

- HOPE-HOME Participant, Black, Man, 55
Results & Conclusions

▪ Criminal justice discrimination led directly to housing loss or sustained ineligibility for subsidized housing.

▪ Employment discrimination and job loss precipitated homelessness.

▪ Loss of family members and friends depleted the social network and increased susceptibility to homelessness.

▪ Family networks were low income, had limited family wealth, and could not protect participants from homelessness.
A Model of Structural Racism in the Pathway to Homelessness
Recommendations & Next Steps

▪ Decrease barriers to obtaining subsidized and free-market housing for formerly incarcerated persons

▪ Increase access to legal assistance for persons facing employment and housing discrimination

▪ Increase assistance to renters facing eviction and enforcement of the Fair Housing Act

▪ Invest in initiatives aimed at alleviating health disparities

▪ Promote family wealth for low income families, including assistance with homeownership.
Consider Disparate Impact In Coordinated Entry

- Homelessness interaction between
  - individual vulnerabilities (i.e. mental health, substance use)
  - Structural factors (availability affordable housing, availability high paying jobs for unskilled workers, racism)
  - Presence or absence of safety net
- When structural/safety net factors less favorable, fewer individual vulnerabilities lead to homelessness
Consider Disparate Impact In Coordinated Entry

- Due to structural racism, Black Americans with fewer individual factors are at high risk of homelessness

- Coordinated entry programs that give priority based on individual factors COULD worsen racial equity
  
  - Need to track outcomes to assess for unintended consequences
  
  - Strategies to increase equity
    
    - Consider area deprivation index of last housing
    
    - Consider ADI of childhood home (or similar) marker for family wealth
    
    - Consider incarceration hx (because disparate) as barrier to housing and thus priority
Conclusions

▪ Structural racism is key driver of homelessness

▪ Ongoing need to develop anti-racist policies to prevent and end homelessness

▪ Ensure that efforts do not unintentionally worsen racial inequities
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1/24/2020
Oakland-Berkeley-Alameda County Equity Analysis Plan
Equity Work Group Members

- City of Oakland Department of Race and Equity
- City of Oakland Department of Human Services
- Alameda County Public Health Department
- EveryOne Home
- BARHII
- Supervisor Wilma Chan’s Office
- Alameda County Office of Homeless Care and Coordination.
Equity Analysis Plan

- **Phase 1: Inform system modeling**
  - Share available data
  - Conduct 7 focus groups
  - Analyze focus group data
  - Develop recommendations for homeless system planning and implementation

- **Phase 2: Longer term equity analysis (planned)**
  - Additional analysis of focus group data
  - Review of other aspects of homeless system such as coordinated entry
Implementing Racial Equity

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

~ James Baldwin
What is Equity?
**Equity** (*ek-wi-tee*), noun

• Just and fair inclusion.

• An equitable society is one in which all have access to what they need to participate and prosper.

• The goal of equity work is to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential.

• In equitable conditions race, or other social markers would **not** predict differences in life outcomes.
Working Assumptions

• Race matters. Almost every indicator of well-being shows troubling disparities by race

• Disparities are often created and maintained inadvertently through policies and practices

• It’s possible - and only possible - to close equity gaps by using strategies determined through an intentional focus on race

• If opportunities in all key areas of well-being are equitable, then equitable results will follow

• Given the right message, analysis, and tools, people will work toward racial equity
Focus on Changing Systems to Change the Outcomes...

“Disparities are often created and maintained inadvertently through policies and practices that contain barriers to opportunity.”
A Racial Equity Impact Analysis is a data driven, community involved, problem solving approach that, in addition to other factors, also examines benefits and burdens on communities most impacted by racial disparities, in designing and vetting potential solutions.
Racial Equity Impact Analysis

Step 1: Name the desired future condition – All residents of Alameda County are housed, economically secure and living in thriving, healthy communities (begin with the end in mind).

Step 2: Use disparity data to understand current conditions and drive inquiry – African American, Indigenous, Latinos and some Asian groups over represented in poverty, unemployment, unsheltered, living with poor health outcomes and shorter life expectancy.

Step 3: Work with the impacted community - to complete a root cause analysis to deepen understanding of the problem, and to determine what program elements, partnerships and resources that are needed to respond comprehensively.

Step 4: Design equity approaches that remove barriers, with rigorous performance measures – aim to address root causes of disparities and to remove barriers to access.

Step 5: Repeat Steps 2 - 5 as needed – in a continuous improvement loop until desired future conditions from Step 1 are achieved.

- African American: 11% (General Population) vs. 47% (Homeless Population)
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 1% (General Population) vs. 4% (Homeless Population)
- Asian: 32% (General Population) vs. 2% (Homeless Population)
- Multi-Racial: 2% (General Population) vs. 14% (Homeless Population)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 1% (General Population) vs. 2% (Homeless Population)
- White: 50% (General Population) vs. 31% (Homeless Population)
- Hispanic/Latinx: 22% (General Population) vs. 17% (Homeless Population)
- Non-Hispanic/Non-Latinx:
  - General Population: 76%
  - Homeless Population: 83%

Alameda County General Population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2018 QuickFacts) vs. Homeless Population (PIT Count, 2019)
Focus Group Feedback

A common concern was that rapid rehousing only provided temporary assistance.

“I want to have a permanent residence and if it’s not subsidized I don’t want it. What’s the use if I can’t afford it? What happens after 1 year if I don’t have the money? I end up right back where I started. I’m on SSDI and can’t work. Then everything you accumulate in the year, your personal belongings, get left behind.” – African American senior
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Emergency Shelter/ Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Rapid Rehousing</th>
<th>Permanent Supportive Housing</th>
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<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oakland-Berkeley-Alameda County HMIS, 10/1/2017-9/30/2018
Households Returning to Homelessness within Six Months of Exiting to Permanent Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent Returning to Homelessness within Six Months of Exiting to Permanent Housing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>White Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple Races</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oakland-Berkeley-Alameda County HMIS, 10/1/2017-9/30/2018
Criteria for Proposals that Advance Equity

- Have an intentional focus on closing racial disparities
- Are vetted and influenced by communities most impacted by disparities
- Remove barriers to access and successful life outcomes
- Contain measurements to track that those most impacted by racial disparities are better off as a result of the proposal
Leadership & Advancing Equity

“Actions speak louder than words.” Leaders who exemplify the change every opportunity they have, who build the new way of working into their practices, say volumes about how serious the organization is about the change.”
~ Andrea Shapiro, PhD, Creating Contagious Commitment

Monitor the system changes that will be proposed, use every opportunity to demonstrate the value of equity processes and outcomes.

Moving forward, arm yourself with a compelling case for, and highlight the dangers of not making change, that will address racial inequity.

Act to forge partnerships needed to buildout systems that have meaningful impacts, close racial disparities and end homelessness.
System Modeling Plan
System Modeling Meetings & Activities

- Work Group Meeting #4 – January 29th & 30th
- Equity Analysis Focus Groups – February
- Work Group Meeting #5 – February 26th
- Leadership Committee Meeting – February 28th – Initial Recommendations
- Equity Analysis Report Development
- Joint Work Group Meeting – March
- Leadership Committee Meeting – March – Final Recommendations