African American Male Initiative

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THE KIRWAN INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY
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Executive Summary
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For nearly two years, the W. K. Kellogg foundation has funded the Kirwan Institute to expand the knowledge base and academic scholarship on African American males. The major goals we have met in this work include: A) updating the review of social science literature on African American males; B) assembling and learning from a national advisory board of scholars on African American males; C) completing a mapping project on the isolation of African American males from opportunities, a goal not explicitly recorded in our grant proposal; and D) convening a national conference on African American males that will culminate in a published anthology of emergent research and literature on African American males. We organize this report using these four goals as section markers, followed by two sections for our recommendations and references. We conclude with an Appendix evaluating our work for the Kellogg Foundation.

A wide range of statistics reflects the plight of black men in America: their high rates of criminality, incarceration, alcohol and drug use, unwed parenting, and premature death; their low rates of legal employment, high school completion, college attendance, and active participation in the lives of their children. In this report, we bring to light many key research, advocacy and policy initiatives. It is critical, however, to position them within a larger, structural context that acknowledges the cumulative interaction of systemic, institutional and spatial barriers impacting black males. Truly transformative efforts on behalf of black males can only be grounded in a deep recognition of and prescriptive attention to this structural context. Creating a more cohesive “field” of researchers and advocates whose practices engage this context can strengthen efforts to subvert racial hierarchy, construct communities of opportunity, and promote democratic practices for African American males, as well as for all members of society.

A. Literature Review

One of our objectives was to update the literature on African American males. We did this by completing a comprehensive review of the relevant social science literature, including information on policies and programs for black males. As the last such review took place more than a decade ago, we worked to determine gaps in the emerging literature and areas that need greater energy. We also sought to identify structural solutions to the crises that African American males face.
The authors of the original review determined that research on black males was situated in four main areas: education; psychological issues; politics and economics; and demographic and statistical data. Although these issues remain salient more than ten years later, several emergent themes have broadened the research field. These include the identity construction of black males; the community/environment/geography link with black male developmental outcomes; the impact of homelessness; the role of “other fathers” or “social fathers”; and the influence of music on the racial identity and academic achievement of black males.

Our analytic review of the literature has revealed that much of the research and scholarship on black males has been rooted in a “cultural” or “deficit” model in which disparities are attributed to black males themselves rather than to their environments or to institutional arrangements. Of course, there is often a complex interaction between the cultural and personal, on the one hand, and the institutional and environmental, on the other, an interaction the literature has largely ignored. In light of the overuse of the deficit framework, we have too little research that examines how structural factors impact outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and mental/public health for males. Furthermore, much of the research also concentrates on “young black males,” ignoring investigations regarding older males or young adolescent. Finally, the research is sparse on African American males who manage to successfully overcome the structural barriers they face. We bring attention to some of these barriers in our section on mapping the opportunity structures of African American males.

**Recent Literature**

**1. Education**

- Studies continue to show that teachers perceive males to be academically inferior, overly aggressive and lacking adequate leadership and social skills.

- Successful teacher interaction with black males involves smaller classes, proactive contact by teachers with their parents, and increased feedback to parents about their children’s progress and status.

- Several structural factors contribute to the disproportionate number of black males being suspended from school, including zero tolerance policies and the criminalization of male behavior.

- Gifted education classes are typically segregated environments in which students are chosen on the basis of standard IQ test scores rather than on the basis of other forms and measures of intelligence. These classes also too often feature teaching biases that favor whites over blacks.
**Policy Recommendations**

**Pre-school Policies**

- Efforts should be made to increase the academic involvement of fathers at all levels in their children’s education, especially at the pre-school level. School activities for black fathers should include both formal and informal opportunities so they can develop relationships with school personnel.

- Parents should be engaged in pre-school level activities that offer opportunities to increase their academic skills so they are better prepared to help their children. Studies have shown that low-income black parents tutored in mathematics improve the academic outcomes of their children.

- The components of highly successful programs that improve school outcomes should be examined and replicated. The Perry School Program and the Abecedarian project are examples of successful programs whose components included early-education, family support, home visits, group meetings with parents, and activities focused on social, emotional, cognitive and language areas for children.

**Elementary School Policies**

- Mandatory cultural competency courses and in-service training for teachers should be put in place that includes information on the learning styles and cultural background of many African American male students. Training should also include assisting teachers in recognizing and understanding their own biases and prejudices about African American males (and other historically marginalized groups).

- Strategic plans should be made to recruit and retain more black male teachers. Currently, black males represent 1% of the teaching force (Lewis, 2006). Recommendations to help with the recruitment and retention of male teachers include assigning male teachers a mentor, targeting black male high school students for recruitment into the teaching profession, increasing collaboration with 2-year institutions since most males attend community colleges, and using teacher preparatory programs to increase black male PRAXIS scores.

- Culturally specific programming that is attentive to learning styles.

- School personnel should keep records on the number of black male students who enroll and persist in gifted classes.

- After-school funding should be provided for programs with an emphasis on academic competency and social activities for black males in non-school hours.
Middle School Policies

- A “safety valve” process should be implemented in schools with predominately African American male students to track the number of males recommended for suspension. When the suspension rates of black males reach a critical level, school personnel should be alerted and strongly consider enacting policies to reduce the number of black males suspended.

- School social workers should take a more active role in questioning referrals from teachers and administrators. All referrals should include previously established, uniform data in order to reduce the overrepresentation of black males in special education (Mills, 2003).

- Comprehensive reevaluation of the use of zero tolerance policies in middle schools should be undertaken.

- Single sex classes should be offered for black males in math and science classes; their progress should be monitored.

High School Policies

- Schools should place equal focus on the academic competency of black male students and on improving their high school graduation rates.

- A dropout prevention program utilizing successful models based on best practices that specifically target African American male students should be established.

- School counselors should be more readily available to students and their families in order to better educate them regarding options for higher education, as well as the college application and financial aid processes. College preparation programs should be offered to prepare students for successful college outcomes. In addition, viable alternatives (such as trade schools) should be presented to males who are not college bound. This information should be provided at the 9th and 10th grade levels, not just during the junior and senior years.

- Black male students should be strongly encouraged to enroll in gifted and AP classes, with efforts made to ensure the presence of a critical mass of black male students in those classes.

College

- College programs and interventions that support males beyond their first year of college should be established. Studies have shown that males disidentify with college as they move through their college years, which may contribute to their high attrition rates.
Measures must be taken to ensure that black males are both academically and socially integrated into college to increase their retention rates.

Supportive measures for African American males enrolled in two-year colleges should also be developed and implemented.

**Future Research Directions**

- Future research and evaluations should disaggregate program data to examine African American male outcomes.
- New studies should examine the influence of male teachers, both black and non-black, on black male student outcomes.
- White and other non-black teachers who have had success in teaching black male students should be identified, and their methods and approaches should be studied and highlighted.

2. **Identity**

- Examining multiple aspects of educational institutions is essential to understanding how black boys define who they are and how they internalize the perceptions of school personnel and classmates.
- The literature analyzing the effects of the “burden of acting white” on black students has yielded conflicting findings. Further exploration is required to determine if this dynamic is significant to black male identity.
- African American gay and bisexual men who identified more positively with both the African American and gay communities reported higher levels of self-esteem.

**Policy Recommendations**

- Racial identity models for black males should examine their combined experience of being both black and male. Current models focus on either race or gender.
- Programmatic support for black males should continue throughout their college years to buttress their self-concept and self-esteem.
Future Research Directions

- More work on the implications for black males of “acting white” is needed to resolve conflicting and inconclusive findings in the existing literature.

- Future research should consider how African American males develop their concept of self as both racial and gendered individuals, and examine the impact of this within a social-political context.

- Research should investigate the normative development of black males and their identity when compared to the development of other adolescents.

- Studies should be done on the environments in which black males are living and learning, and the historical, political, and social implications of these environments on black males.

3. Marriages and Family

- The “dysfunction” of single-female-headed households is central to past and current research on the antisocial development of black males. However, some studies show that black males residing in single-female-headed households do not have worse developmental outcomes than do those in other family structures. This inconsistency warrants further review.

- Constellation studies are examining extended family structures, including non-resident fathers, “other fathers,” and “social fathers.”

Policy Recommendations

- Child support enforcement policies should be flexible and offer employment and support services for fathers (Mincy & Sorenson, 1998).

- Parenthood for men may be problematic because of their own poor or absent relations with their fathers. Programs are needed to assist men in building linkages and resolving issues with their own fathers (Roy, 2006).

- Fatherhood initiatives often focus on either the needs of fathers or their children. Programs should attempt, in a meaningful way, to incorporate the needs of both fathers and their children and recognize the contributions of fathers beyond economic support (V. Gadsden, personal communication, Winter 2007).

- The stigma of single-parent families should be unraveled and the work-family link revalued by assuring economic security for all family forms.
Future Research Directions

- New investigations should address how black male fathers contribute to their children’s development, particularly in the home. In addition, future investigations should address the outcomes of black male children residing with single and divorced fathers.

- A new wave of historical scholarship should continue to challenge the dysfunction thesis of the single-mother-household and its impact on black males and the black family.

4. Mental Health

- African American adolescents are at a greater risk of experiencing behavioral and emotional problems such as depression than members of any other ethnic group because they disproportionately reside in dangerous, segregated, and opportunity-poor communities.

- Suicide has become a significant public health issue for African Americans.

- Many barriers prevent African American males from utilizing mental health services effectively.

- Black male involvement in out-of-school time activities may be protective for their mental health.

Policy Recommendations

- Mental health research should consider the influence of environmental stressors, and peer and family support, on the mental health of black males.

- Researchers should focus on the reasons for the increase in suicidal behavior.

Future Research Directions

- Future research should examine the risk and protective factors associated with depressive symptoms among African American males. This would be beneficial in developing prevention and intervention strategies for those at-risk for developing these symptoms.

- Future research should determine the roles of peers and family members in supporting males during mental health crises, since black males are less likely to depend on mental health workers for support.
5. Economics

- Skill shifts in the market have expanded opportunities for higher educated black males who are also less affected by immigration.

- Lack of employment for black males is often due to a spatial mismatch between where they live and where appropriate jobs are available, as well as to deindustrialization and employment discrimination.

- The lack of work and connection to socializing institutions have been shown to be just as important as poverty and lack of well paying jobs to the “social disorganization” many black males endure.

- African Americans who migrate to the South for jobs enjoy better economic outcomes than do those who remain outside the South or those who migrate westward.

Policy Recommendations

- The Earned Income Tax Credit should be expanded for low-income men and for noncustodial fathers who are current in their child support payments (Holzer, 2004).

- Classroom instruction should be linked to the job skills needed in the current labor market, i.e., Career Academies (Holzer, 2005).

- Access to effective programs such as the Job Corps and Youth Services Corps should be increased for males who drop out of high school (Holzer, 2005).

- Employment discrimination enforcement agencies should establish programs to monitor the practices of wage and employment discrimination and conduct random job audits at the national, state, and local levels (Coleman, 2003).

- Metropolitan areas should have full employment policies and initiatives such as empowerment zones to alter the distribution of jobs in these areas (Stoll, 1997).

- Develop institutional and social connectors for African American males.

Future Research Directions

- Research is needed to examine further the impact of male migration to the South and foreign immigration to the U.S. on black male employment.
6. Incarceration and Juvenile Justice

- Statistical findings still show alarmingly disproportionate rates of black male imprisonment which is related to discriminatory perceptions, expansion of punitive policies, low levels of education attainment and unemployment, and under-employment.

- Young black males receive more severe sentencing for most crimes than do members of other race-gender-age groups. Black youths are 48 times more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses than whites - for identical drug crimes. In some states, more than 90% of convicted drug offenders are people of color.

- Studies consistently indicate that people of all races use and sell drugs at remarkably similar rates. If there are significant differences in the surveys to be found, they tend to suggest that whites, particularly white youths, are more likely to engage in illegal drug dealing than people of color. Any notion that drug use among blacks is more severe or dangerous is belied by the data.

- Drug arrests climbed from 450,000 in 1975 to nearly 2 million in 2005, despite the fact that illegal drug use for most of that period was declining. African Americans make up only 13% of regular drug users in the United States, but are 63% of all drug offenders admitted to prison.

- More than 40% of young African American men believe they, personally, have been stopped by the police on the basis of race, and many others believe their family members have been.

- For those charged with first time drug offenses, black youths are 48 times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison. Latinos are 13 times more likely than whites to land in juvenile prison for a first time drug offense.

- Racial disadvantage accumulates as offenders advance through the system. Blacks account for 26% of all juvenile arrests nationally, but they account for 44% of juveniles who are detained, 46% of those who go to adult court, and 58% of those who end up in adult prison. The rates for whites are reversed. Whites comprise 71% of all juvenile arrests, but 53% of those detained, 50% of those going to adult court and 25% of those in adult prison.

Policy Recommendations

- “In order to fully account for the impact of the penal system on labor market inequality, research should include the effects of noncustodial supervision and the employment experience of convicts after release (Western & Pettit, 2000, pg.11).”

- Mandatory sentencing laws should be repealed (Mauer, 1999).
“Efforts to reduce crime should not just target the offender’s criminal behavior, but should also include targeting the offender’s family and community. These efforts should also include improving the offender’s self-concept and self-esteem (Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004, pg.95).”

Funding for community-based interventions should be increased (Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004).

Policies should rely on research rather than rhetoric. Lawmakers must weigh the potential intended and unintended consequences of proposed changes in crime and drug control policy.

An approach to criminal justice that balances the needs of society, victims, and inmates should be adopted.

Truth-in-Sentencing and Three Strikes laws that have proven ineffective in the fight against crime and drugs should be repealed.

The 100-to-1 powder cocaine/crack cocaine ratio and other drug sentencing laws that have incarcerated nonviolent offenders while failing to capture “drug kingpins” should be reexamined and challenged.

Nonviolent, non-dangerous drug addicts and offenders in the prison system should be diverted and provided improved treatment and support services.

Nonviolent and non-dangerous juveniles should be diverted from confinement and their job and training opportunities should be increased.

Future Research Directions

- Strategies to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline should be research-based.
- The ways that black men have been constructed as targets of public policy should be examined.
- Rehabilitation options in community-based programs for youth offenders should be explored and enhanced.
- Research should be conducted on how to best prepare former prisoners for licit employment.
- An audit should be conducted of private correctional institutions to determine the physical conditions of the inmate population and the effectiveness of inmate rehabilitation programs in these institutions.
- The impact of drug courts should be studied.
7. Homelessness

- Homelessness is a gendered phenomenon, with an estimated 80–90% of the indigent population being male. It has damaging effects on health and well-being.

- The rise in homelessness is due to a number of structural economic and geographical shifts, including deindustrialization without adequate support and resources in the community.

8. Music

- The influence of music on the attitudes and behaviors of black males has emerged as a significant research theme, with emphasis on the effects of exposure to rap music and videos as well as the possibilities of using music as a culturally relevant tool inside and outside of the classroom.

Future Research Directions

- Future research on the impact of music should not be limited to the negative effects that rap music has on black male behavior. There should also be an examination of the possibilities of using music as a culturally relevant tool inside and outside the classroom.

B. Advisory Board Interviews

To meet our second goal, we assembled a national advisory board to assist the project team with guiding the social science literature review. The Board includes representation from various social science disciplines whose research interests and project agendas focus on black males. The members worked to identify new directions in research, initiatives, and policies that would improve African American male outcomes. Because scheduling an actual meeting proved difficult, we conducted numerous face-to-face and telephone interviews that provided insights into: 1) gaps in the research literature; 2) initiatives and polices that are particularly helpful to African American males, and 3) successful outcomes as they conceive of them. We summarize the Board’s conclusions regarding major gaps in the research literature below.

Gaps in Research Literature

- The myopic lens of pathology should be replaced with research on structural barriers.

- The racial dynamics of policy development should be examined.

- More empirical work should be done, including work that does not rely on census data.
A need exists to disaggregate the research findings by gender or race and to look at the combined impact of race and gender on black males.

Much more attention must be paid to the resiliency of those black males who manage to succeed in the face of significant structural and institutional obstacles to success.

**C. African American Male Mapping Project**

Drawing upon the Kirwan Institute’s expertise, we completed a mapping project designed to show black males’ spatial proximity to a range of important social opportunities, and to place the constraints that many males face in a geographical perspective to create more targeted and transformative responses. We examined the state of opportunity for black males in seven large, diverse metropolitan regions: New York, NY; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Houston, TX; Atlanta, GA; Los Angeles, CA; and Washington D.C. The maps and observational report have been included in this report.

In each region examined, most African American males are spatially isolated within opportunity-deprived and distressed neighborhoods that are devoid of the resources most Americans take for granted.

The richness of these data provides a compelling new dimension for studying the relationship between African American males and opportunity in geographic, social, and economic terms, in both high and low opportunity areas. By understanding the mix of structural components in “very high opportunity” areas for black males (e.g., housing stability, childcare, criminal activity), critical solutions or policies may be implemented. Likewise, an understanding of how black males in “very low opportunity” areas persist and become successful can inform policies and solutions designed to assist in their development.

There is a growing body of literature and research on the importance of marginalized populations having physical and social access to a rich network of opportunities. It is not surprising then to find that access to opportunity matters for black males and that they are often concentrated in low opportunity communities. What may be surprising is that there is often great opportunity with better outcomes for black males in the southern part of the United States. This suggests the need for more targeted studies related to opportunity and black males as well as policies to more deliberately link black males to rich opportunity structures.

**Future Mapping Research Directions**

Future research should examine factors that contribute to African American male success across the opportunity spectrum rather than focusing only on males in very low-opportunity areas. Opportunity mapping may be the first step in conceptualizing future steps that contribute to the healthy development of black males. We argue that expanding and maintaining connections to the resources of opportunity is a key strategy for systematically improving the lives of African American males.
D. National Conference and Anthology

Based on the findings of the literature review and the conversations with the advisory board members, the Institute hosted a conference, entitled “African American Males: Beyond the School to Prison Pipeline and Moving toward Opportunity,” that examined the school-to-prison pipeline from a range of disciplinary perspectives. This was a highly successful conference attended by nearly four hundred people. Panels from the conference included: 1) African American Males and the Educational System; 2) The Impact of Health and the Economy on African American Males; 3) African American Males and Incarceration; and 4) The Dynamics of African American Male Opportunity.

We are assembling papers from the conference into an anthology for future publication. Topics include: schools and prisons, structural racism and street socialization, the educational risks of delinquent peer associations, and mental health issues.

E. Recommendations

Specific policy recommendations resulting from our literature review are in section E of this report. The recommendations in this section encompass strategies to support best practices and next steps for African American male scholarship and advocacy. Efforts to advance racial and ethnic justice, in general, and the welfare of African American males, in particular, have been too fragmentary, disjointed and sometimes counter-productive. We suggest organizing these strategies around the creation of a vibrant national African American Male Network that would facilitate more purposeful knowledge production, consensus building, and strategic collaboration within the universe of individuals and organizations already engaged in this work. Although the focus of this report is on the literature review and identifying gaps in the literature, we recognize that there is also a need to act—carefully and deliberately, based on what we know. Where things are still unclear, we suggest trying to gain greater clarity, not just in research, but also in well designed monitored pilots. For example, we suggest more closely linking black males to opportunity communities with social support.

To realize these vital objectives and create such a Network, we see a critical need for at least six components:

- Models of and support for collaboration within the African American Male field;
- a research advocacy database;
- support for racial justice research and advocacy centers;
- identification and support for transformative structural approaches vs. deficit models;
- program evaluation of promising African American male initiatives; and
development, support, and evaluation of a small number of comprehensive pilot projects in different parts of the country.

F. References

This section provides an exhaustive list of the journal articles, books and other sources utilized in this report.
African American Male

Mapping Project
C. African American Male Mapping Project

Introduction

Much of the social science literature on black males has identified a number of different social, political, and economic disparities between black males and other racial and gender subgroups (i.e., white males and black females). Despite the excess of studies on black male disparities, there is little research situating African American males within a larger social context. There are only a handful of studies which examine successful black male outcomes and even fewer across multiple contexts. What would educational outcomes for black males show if the lens used linked teacher preparation, neighborhood health, and employment viability? Due to the consistent lack of contextualization—a process necessary to understand the contemporary conditions of black men—the project research team used a GIS mapping strategy to visually represent the environmental factors affecting African American males. To generate an opportunity-focused map using GIS methods, researchers identify a number of indicators contributing to opportunity. For the present study, 15 indicators were selected. The indicators are then organized into a composite image. Once mapped, these images reveal where groups are located in relation to opportunity structures. By generating maps showing the relationship between African American males and opportunity, we can begin to frame black male opportunity structures in geographical perspective and create more targeted and transformative initiatives.

Not merely a simple indicator of well being, “opportunity” is defined here as the structures and environmental conditions that contribute to community stability and individual advancement. Spanning a range of economic and social factors such as sustainable employment, high-quality educational institutions and experiences, healthy and safe communities, stable and safe housing, and access to healthcare, “opportunity” is an entire environmental context consisting of structure, or the macro-level, and culture, or the micro-level. Access to structures of opportunity is critical to an individual’s success. Structures may mediate personal choice in implicit and explicit ways. An individual who has more structural barriers, and consequently less opportunity, may have a more limited way of exhibiting agency than those in areas of higher opportunity.

Geographical Isolation v. Connection to Opportunity

Considering a range of indicators, the mapping project illuminates a discernable pattern of African American male isolation in opportunity-deprived neighborhoods. Expanding and maintaining connections to the resources that create opportunity is a key strategy for systematically improving the lives of African American males. Central to this endeavor is the promotion of mobility for racially marginalized populations, engendering access to the benefits of opportunity-rich neighborhoods. As the research reviewed illustrates, connecting people to opportunity-rich communities promotes economic and educational access, and consequently success, especially for youth.
1. Data and Methodology Summary

Research on opportunity indicators was collected from seven large, racially and ethnically diverse metropolitan regions: New York, NY; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Houston, TX; Atlanta, GA; Los Angeles, CA; and Washington D.C. In these seven regions, researchers track the behavior and outcomes of a total population of 1,169,796 African American males.³

To analyze the geographical distribution of opportunity, the mapping team prepared a multivariate index using 15 indicators of opportunity. From this “opportunity index,” the team developed quintiles to rank neighborhoods based on their opportunity index score (very low, low, moderate, high, very high). The opportunity mapping methodology has been utilized at the Kirwan Institute for similar assessments in more than dozen other areas, and has been integrated into both policy advocacy and research.

The study measured opportunity through three primary indicators: education, economy/employment, and neighborhood health. In the education category, five indicators were used:

1. Census data on childhood poverty detailing the number of persons below the age of 18 who were at or below the 1999 poverty level

   Greater rates of childhood poverty were related to lower opportunity.

2. Census tract data on high school dropout rates showing the proportions of those people who are 25 and older and have not received a high school diploma or equivalency

   Greater numbers of high school dropouts were connected to lower opportunity.

3. Census tract data measuring the relationship between not having received a diploma and unemployment for those between the ages of 16 and 19

   Geographical areas with high populations of this group were associated with lower opportunity.

4. Census tract data measuring high school completion rates for people 25 and older

   Increased rates of high school completion were associated with higher opportunity.

³The analysis focused on young males due to the prevalence of research characterizing childhood as a significant time period for understanding the impacts of environmental factors on life outcomes and targeting interventions to improve opportunities for children. The analysis used a year 2000 Geolytics CensusCD to retrieve this data.
5. **School district statistics cataloging reading scores, math scores, and the percent of economically disadvantaged students**

Increased reading and math scores were associated with higher opportunity, while higher numbers of economically disadvantaged students were associated with lower opportunity.

The following indicators are used for the category of economy/employment:

1. **Census tract data detailing households receiving public assistance**

   Increased numbers of households receiving public assistance were associated with lower opportunity.

2. **Census tract data measuring median household income**

   Increased median household income was attributed with higher opportunity.

3. **Census tract data calculating gendered rates of unemployment**

   This measure examines the number of people over the age of 16 who are classified as unemployed. This indicator excludes those in the Armed Forces as well as those not seeking employment. Increased unemployment rates were associated with lower opportunity.

4. **Job change data recording the net change in number of employees in a zip code and the proportion of job change between a certain time period**

   Increased rates in job changing were correlated with areas of higher opportunity. This variable is a time-series measurement between the years 2000 to 2004.

The following indicators were used for the category of neighborhood health:

1. **Census tract data detailing the proportion of vacant residential property to housing units**

   Increased rates of vacant properties were indicative of lower opportunity.

2. **Census tract data measuring property values**

   Increased median home value was indicative of higher opportunity.

3. **Census tract data showing homeownership rates**

   All owner-occupied households were used as a measure of high opportunity. The more owner-occupied households that were present, the higher the opportunity in an area.
4. **Census data measuring non-childhood poverty rates**

Increased rates of poverty status (in proportion to the total population) were attributed a relationship to lower opportunity.

5. **Percentage of population change using a time-series measurement**

This demarcation captures the net change in the number of people within a specific census tract from the year 1990 to 2000. Census tracts were normalized to their respective year 2000 boundaries. Increased population rates were characterized as having a relationship to higher opportunity.

6. **Census tract data reporting local criminal activity**

Increased crime rates were associated with lower opportunity.

Each measure of opportunity was combined into a visual representation on the maps of each metropolitan area. Lighter colors represent areas of less opportunity, and darker colors represent those of greater opportunity. Each block of an area shown by the lightly colored borders is one census tract. The green dots in the maps represent the African American males, ages 14 and under. Contingent upon the map being used, the green dots represent a different number of African American males present in a given area. (Larger versions of the maps are made available in the concluding pages of this section.)

2. **Maps with Findings**

**Figure 1: Atlanta, GA Metropolitan Area**
Figure 1 illustrates the metropolitan area of Atlanta. In this area, the total population was 4,112,646. African American males age 14 and under totaled 160,745. Of this cohort, 55% were concentrated in areas of very low or low opportunity, while only 19% were located in areas of high or very high opportunity. African American females shared a similar geographical profile with black males, with 56% living in areas of low to very low opportunity. The number of black males and females who lived in these areas was almost equal for Atlanta. In contrast, 73% of white males lived in areas of high or very high opportunity, which was the highest proportion of the seven regions. Finally, only 12% of white males in Atlanta resided in areas of low or very low opportunity.

Figure 2: Chicago, IL Metropolitan Area

Figure 2 illustrates the metropolitan area of Chicago, IL. In this area, the total population was 8,272,768, and the number of African American males age 14 and under was 215,500. Of this sample, three out of four African American males (75%) lived in an area of low or very low opportunity, while only 10% lived in areas of high or very high opportunity. Black females were almost equally represented in areas of low to very low opportunity, with 76% residing in these areas and only 10% present in places of high to very high opportunity. In contrast, 14% of white males lived in areas of low to very low opportunity, while 69% of white males lived in areas of high to very high opportunity.
Figure 3: Detroit, MI Metropolitan Area

Figure 3 shows the metropolitan area of Detroit, MI. In this area, the total population was 4,441,551, and the number of African American males age 14 and under was 140,652. Of this sample, more than nine out of ten (92%) African American boys resided in an area of low or very low opportunity. This was the highest proportion of African American males out of any of the regions in areas of low opportunity. In contrast, only 3% of males were in areas of high or very high opportunity. Black females were equally represented in areas of low to very low opportunity, with 92% of females present in these areas and only 3% present in places of high to very high opportunity. In contrast, only 18% of white males lived in areas of low to very low opportunity, while 59% lived in contexts of high to very high opportunity.

Figure 4: Houston, TX Metropolitan Area
Figure 4 shows the metropolitan area of Houston, TX. In this area, the total population was 4,177,646, and the number of African American males age 14 and under was 98,760. Of this sample, more than half (56%) of African American boys lived in areas of low or very low opportunity; 24% lived in areas of high or very high opportunity. Again, black females were equally represented in areas of low to very low opportunity, with 56% residing in these areas and only 24% residing in places of high to very high opportunity. In contrast, 25% of white males were present in areas of low to very low opportunity, while 57% were present in contexts of high to very high opportunity. This number barely exceeds half of white males, a stark contrast to other regions where the proportion of white males in high opportunity areas was far higher.

Figure 5: Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA Metropolitan Area

Figure 5 illustrates the metropolitan area of Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA. In this area, the total population was 9,514,009, and the number of African American males age 14 and under was 118,771. Of this sample, 62% of African American boys were concentrated in an area of low or very low opportunity, while only 19% of males were found in areas of high or very high opportunity. Black females were equally represented in both areas and high opportunity. In contrast, 32% of white males were present in areas of low to very low opportunity, while 48% of lived high or very high opportunity areas. This number is the lowest number for white males in any of the regions examined.
Figure 6: New York, NY Metropolitan Area

Figure 6 illustrates the New York, NY metropolitan area. In this area, the total population was 9,314,235, and the number of African American males age 14 and under was 278,439. Of this sample, 68% of African American boys resided in areas of low or very low opportunity, while 18% of males were found in contexts of high or very high opportunity. Again, black females were equally represented in both sets of areas. In contrast, 25% of white males were present in areas of low to very low opportunity, while 56% were in areas of high to very high opportunity.

Figure 7: Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

Finally, Figure 7 illustrates the Washington DC metropolitan area. In this area, the total population was 4,923,153, and the number of African American males age 14 and under was
156,929. Of this sample, 65% of African American boys resided in an area of low or very low opportunity, while only 19% lived in contexts of high or very high opportunity. The corresponding numbers for black females were slightly worse: 68% were present in the low opportunity areas, 18% present in the high opportunity ones. For white males, those numbers were 14% and 66%, respectively.

**Conclusion**

As the data indicate, most African American males in each metropolitan area were spatially isolated from areas of high opportunity, as were African American females. In contrast, white males in each examined area lived in areas of higher opportunity more consistently than black males or females. In part, these already troubling conditions have been exacerbated by deindustrialization. Scholars suggest that black males have suffered the brunt of outsourcing effects in unskilled and semi-skilled employment as jobs migrate to outside accessible areas and increases in educational and skill requirements serve as further barriers to employment (Ferguson, 2005, Holzer, 2001, & Simpson, 2000). Michael A. Stoll (1998) advances that the drastic increase in unemployment for blacks (as well as Latinos) are due to “spatial mismatch” and job decentralization. He notes that these two groups have relatively limited access to growing employment areas and jobs closely matching their current cadre of skills. Stoll opines that spatial mismatch occurs with black males who moved to the suburbs because they are living in areas that border the inner city and job growth takes place in areas where blacks are not living, such as high opportunity exurbs. The preceding maps offer some support for the claims of these researchers.

These maps demonstrate the spatial isolation of African American males within opportunity deprived and distressed neighborhoods, communities that are devoid of the resources most Americans take for granted. Significantly, this data shows very similar opportunity representation ratios for black males and females, which should be a guide for further research.

The richness of these data provides a compelling new dimension for studying the relationship between African American males and opportunity in geographic, social, and economic terms in both the high and low opportunity areas. By understanding the mix of structural components in “very high opportunity” areas (i.e., housing stability, childcare, criminal activity) for black males, critical solutions or policies for males may be implemented. Likewise, by understanding how black males in “very low opportunity” areas still persist and become successful, policies and solutions to assist their development may also be made. Through understanding the social milieu in which black males develop and strategies they use to forge their lives, scholars can conceptualize promising interventions and solutions. For example, in Montgomery County, MD (an area of relatively high opportunity for African American males in Figure 7), more than a thousand black students passed Advanced Placement Tests in the Montgomery County High Schools (see: “Montgomery Hits a Testing Milestone for Black Students at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/12/03/AR2007120301878.html?sub =AR). This was the first school system to pass the one thousand test threshold in AP testing for African American students. However, since the research normally focuses on those black students who do not succeed (academically, in this example), achievements like this are often overlooked. It is also important to remember that Montgomery County has one of the longest-
running inclusive housing policies in the United States. This may explain why this area is so racially diverse, as well as why the maps (i.e., DC MSA) show a significant number of African American males in areas of high opportunity. Identifying these factors encourages the creation of more intentional and transformative interventions for African American students through cultivating the factors that lead to positive outcomes for youth.

Conducting research on areas that are better connected to opportunity illuminates how sustainable opportunity structures benefit all people, not just those in low opportunity areas. The Gautreaux Program in Chicago, a program which moved people from areas of concentrated poverty to areas of high opportunity, demonstrated that people who moved to low poverty, high opportunity suburbs were more likely to be in a college track program, more likely to attend a four-year college, more likely to be employed if not in college, less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to make more than $6.50 an hour and have employee benefits, compared to those who stayed in the poverty-stricken city areas. The Gautreaux Program research was the catalyst for research conducted on HUD’s “Moving to Opportunity Program,” which found that beneficial changes resulted in families within two to four years and had differential effects for boys and girls. The HUD research was cut off about halfway through the program, however, which left the longitudinal effects on people’s lives unexplored.

Future research should examine factors that contribute to African American male success across the opportunity spectrum, rather than focusing merely on males in the “very low opportunity” areas, because of the explicit links of their outcomes to the whole region. Further, research should also consider the similar proportionality between African American males and females, while remaining sensitive to gender-specific needs. Opportunity mapping may be the first step in conceptualizing future steps that contribute to the healthy development of black males.
Figure 8: Atlanta, GA Metropolitan Area

Atlanta MSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map

Legend
- Major Cities
- County Areas
- Water Features

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 9: Atlanta, GA Metropolitan Area with African American Males
Figure 10: Chicago, IL Metropolitan Area

Chicago PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map

Legend
- Major Cities
- County Areas
- Water Features

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 11: Chicago, IL Metropolitan Area with African American Males

Chicago PMSA
Neighborhood Opportunity Map and Distribution of African American Males

Legend
- County Areas
- Water Features
- African American Males
- 1 Dot = 1,200 Persons

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrads, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 12: Detroit, MI Metropolitan Area

Legend:
- Major Cities
- County Areas
- Water Features

Opportunity Index Ranking:
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 13: Detroit, MI Metropolitan Area with African American Males

Detroit PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map and Distribution of African American Males

Legend
- County Areas
- Water Features
- African American Males
- 1 Dot = 200 Persons

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 14: Houston, TX Metropolitan Area

Legend
- Major Cities
- County Areas
- Water Features

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Houston PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 15: Houston, TX Metropolitan Area with African American Males
Figure 16: Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA Metropolitan Area

Los Angeles PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map

Legend:
- Major Cities
- County Areas
- Water Features

Opportunity Index Ranking:
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 17: Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA Metropolitan Area with African American Males

Los Angeles PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map and Distribution of African American Males

Legend
- County Areas
- Water Features
- African American Males
- 1 Dot = 200 Persons

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 19: New York, NY Metropolitan Area with African American Males

New York, NY PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map and Distribution of African American Males

Legend
- County Areas
- Water Features
- African American Males
- 1 Dot = 500 Persons

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 20: Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

Washington D.C. PMSA Neighborhood Opportunity Map

Legend
- Major Cities
- County Areas
- Water Features

Opportunity Index Ranking
- Very Low Opportunity
- Low Opportunity
- Moderate Opportunity
- High Opportunity
- Very High Opportunity

Prepared by: The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, January 26, 2007
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, School Matters.org, Tetrad, Opportunity Analysis by Kirwan Institute
Figure 21: Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area with African American Males