Persistent Poverty in Kalamazoo
What Is it? How Does It Matter? How to Change the Social Processes that Sustain It

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June 10, 2018
The Toll of Structured Inequality in Kalamazoo

• By nearly every measure, economic and racial inequality take a toll on the health, educational and economic well-being of our community, whether we realize it or not.

• Despite our many resources and the long-standing good work of many individuals and organizations, we nonetheless compare unfavorably to most other American cities in indicators of equity and well-being.

• Following are summary data on the prevalence and patterns of inequality in our community.

• I conclude with some thoughts from a sociological perspective on what is required to eliminate structured inequality in Kalamazoo.
Poverty in Kalamazoo in National Perspective*

- 33 percent of all of city residents in poverty: 97th Percentile
- 41 percent of all Black residents of the city: 94th Percentile
- 27 percent of all White (not Hisp) residents: 98th Percentile
- 31% of all families with children under 18: 88th Percentile

* 2016 American Community Survey, 5 year averages for cities of 65,000 or more.
Child Poverty in Kalamazoo:*  
Percentile Ranking among All US Cities with at least 65,000 People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Poor</th>
<th>National Percentile Rank for Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Children:</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91st Percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Children**:</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93rd Percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Children**:</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81st Percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Children**:</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91st Percentile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* American Community Survey, 2016, 5 year averages  ** For cities with at least 40,000 White residents  
*** For cities with at least 10,000 Black residents;  **** For cities with at least 4,000 Hispanic residents
Child Poverty as Related to the American Ideal of Equal Opportunity for All

**Table 1: Adult outcomes by poverty status between the prenatal year and age five**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Income below the official U.S. poverty line</th>
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<tr>
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Note: Earnings and food stamp values are in 2005 dollars.

Source: Greg Duncan, Stanford University, Pathways, winter, 2011
### Health Status of Residents of Kalamazoo City Compared to 500 Largest U.S. Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>500 City Rank**</th>
<th>Percentile**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical health not good for at least two weeks during the past month</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>96/500</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever been told you have coronary heart disease</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>38/500</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever been told you have cancer</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>41/500</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt depressed or stressed for at least two weeks during the past month</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>71/500</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever been told you have asthma</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>26/500</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Age-adjusted, model-based estimates from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC.gov/500cities
** Higher is better.
Life Expectancy in Kalamazoo County

Black-White Gap at Birth

- **Kalamazoo: 5.4 years gap** - black-white gap in life expectancy at birth
- **US: 3.6 years** - black-white gap in life expectancy at birth

**White Life Expectancy: 78.8 Years**
- Equal to 52nd in world ranking
  - 51 Bahrain
  - 52 Kalamazoo (white)
  - 52 Chile
  - 53 Cyprus

**Black Life Expectancy: 73.3 Years**
- Equal to 132nd in world ranking
  - 131 Vietnam
  - 132 Kalamazoo (black)
  - 133 Bangladesh
  - 134 Nicaragua

Gap at Age 40 by Income Percentile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50th</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90th</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95th</td>
<td>89.0</td>
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- **5th to 95th percentile gap** 15.21  11.2
- **10th to 90th percentile gap** 12.79  7.22
- **25th to 75th percentile gap** 6.49  5.41

* Source: National Center for Health Statistics

* Source: Raj Chetty, The Health Inequality Project
High Poverty Neighborhoods*

• Concentrated Poverty (not just individual and family poverty):
  • Is hazardous to health
  • Undermines education outcomes
  • Increases the risk of involvement in criminal justice system

• 11 of 21 Kalamazoo Census Tracts Have Concentrated Poverty of at Least 30 Percent of Residents in Poverty;
• 7 tracts are over 40%;
• 4 tracts are over 50%

*American Community Survey, 2016, 5 yr. pooled estimates
Twelve of the 21 Census Tracts in the City Have Concentrated Poverty (at least 30 percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tract</th>
<th>Percent of All Persons in Poverty*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tract 1</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 2.01</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 2.02</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 3</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 5</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 6</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 11</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.04</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
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*American Community Survey 2016, 5 yr s1701
Racial/ethnic* and Health Characteristics*** of Kalamazoo’s Twelve High Poverty** Census Tracts and Nine Non-High Poverty Tracts

**12 High Poverty Tracts**
- Black and Mixed Race, 3
- Integrated, 3
- White, 6

- Poor physical health: 12%
- Psychological stress: 15%
- Asthma: 12%

**9 Non-High Poverty Tracts**
- White, 9

- Poor Physical Health: 13%
- Psychological Stress: 12%
- Asthma: 11%

* At least two-thirds of predominantly white and predominantly black/mixed tracts are composed of persons of those racial/ethnic backgrounds. In integrated tracts, fewer than two-thirds of residents are of any particular race/ethnic group.
**High poverty tracts have at least 30 percent of residents living in poverty.
***CDC 500 Cities (not age adjusted)
Top to Bottom Ranking of Kalamazoo County Public Schools by Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students, 2013

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a school accounts for 76 percent of the variation among Kalamazoo County public schools in the Michigan Department of Education’s 2013 Top-to-Bottom Ranking of all of the state’s public schools.

\[ R = .872 \]
\[ R^2 = .760 \]
Third Graders in Kalamazoo and Statewide who are Proficient in Reading by Economic Status*, 2009-10 to 2013-14

- In 2013-14, 74% of KPS third graders * were economically disadvantaged, compared to 51% statewide.
- Walker Institute tabulation based on data from: Michigan Department of Education  https://miseducation
Continuum from Ninth Grade Cohort of Kalamazoo Public Schools in 2007 to Post-Secondary Degree Completion, as of December, 2013

![Bar chart showing the progression from ninth grade cohort to post-secondary degree completion.](chart.png)
Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment

- **All Men**: 1 in 9
- **White Men**: 1 in 17
- **Black Men**: 1 in 3
- **Latino Men**: 1 in 6

- **All Women**: 1 in 56
- **White Women**: 1 in 111
- **Black Women**: 1 in 18
- **Latina Women**: 1 in 45

NOTES: C = at least some college; HS = completed high school or general equivalency diploma (GED); DO = no high school diploma or GED. 
SOURCE: Data from Pettit et al. (2009, Table 37).
The US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty*

• 12 percent of US Children are persistently poor (in poverty for more than half of their childhood years
  • 5% of white children persistently poor
  • 40% of black children persistently poor

• Predictors of Persistent Poverty
  • Living in High poverty, disadvantaged neighborhoods
  • Parents with low education levels and inconsistent involvement in workforce
  • Parent with a disability

*Escaping Poverty: Predictors of Persistently Poor Children’s Economic Success, by David Ellwood. The US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, based at The Urban Institute and is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
# Child Poverty as Related to the American Ideal of Equal Opportunity for All

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Additional Young Adult Outcomes for Persons Who were Persistently Poor as Children

• Only 16 percent consistently connected to employment or education

• Academic and cognitive gaps thought to be attributable, in part, to toxic stress related to early childhood poverty
• Policies to help persons just below or just above the poverty line should be different from those who are severely disadvantaged.

• Public policy in recent years has been geared more toward the near-poor at the expense of those in serious deprivation.

• Severe Disadvantage is characterized by:
  1. Persistent Poverty
  2. Deep Poverty
  3. Compounded Hardship that often includes
     a) Addictions
     b) Incarceration
     c) Violent victimization
     d) Other forms of toxic stress
Severe Disadvantage in Kalamazoo

• About 10% of Kalamazoo families are in deep poverty--have incomes less 50 percent of the federal poverty line

• The high poverty rate that persists even during the economic recovery suggests a high rate of persistent poverty.

• Evidence of prevalent compounded hardship includes:
  • Kalamazoo is above the 90th percentile for violent crime among US cities
  • Kalamazoo County has the highest rate of reported child neglect of any urban county in Michigan
  • The rate of involvement in the juvenile justice system for black children in the County is the highest in the state
What Would Mobility Out of Poverty Look Like?

• Economic Success
• Being Valued in the Community
• Power and Authority

Source: "Restoring the American Dream: What Would It Take to Dramatically Increase Mobility from Poverty?" By David Ellwood, Chair, US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, 2018
Proposed Strategies* of the US Partnership for Mobility Out of Poverty:

• Change the Narrative
  • no blaming the poor for their problems,
  • no rags to riches stories as proof that success only depends on personal initiative
  • No retreat to victimhood

• Create Access to Good Jobs

• Ensure that Zip Code is Not Destiny
  • reform juvenile justice, affordable housing, better financial services

• Provide support that empowers
  • Must engage citizens as partners in change

* Source: Restoring the American Dream, by David Ellwood
Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo

A new campaign to promote to promote:

- the healthy growth, development and learning of all our children
- Better access to well-paying jobs
- Strong, economically secure families
With sufficient determination, respect, humility, will, research-based strategies, evaluation, and resources

We have a Chance to Make a Difference