

The 6<sup>th</sup>  
Pathways from Poverty  
*Colloquium*

—Unpacking Poverty—  
*Students' Mental and Emotional Health*

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# Students' Emotional and Mental Health

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organized by the Pathways from Poverty Consortium  
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# Emotional and Mental Health of Students

- Different types of stress
- Different forms of trauma
- Mental health
- Impact on schools





# Family Stress



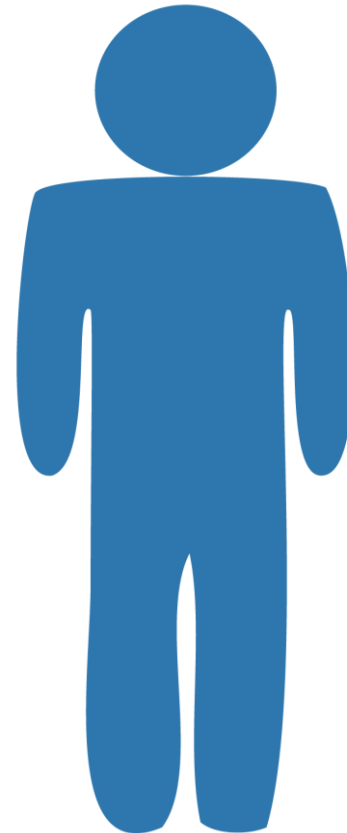
- Family stress theory posits that family stress strains the family's efforts to respond to the needs of its members
- A total of 638 African American adolescents living in predominantly low-income, urban communities participated in the study by completing self-report measures
  - Adolescents who reported higher rates of family stress were significantly more like to report
    - Mental health problems
    - Delinquent behaviors
    - Juvenile justice involvement
    - Drug use
    - Risky sex
    - Lower school engagement factors

Voisin, Elsaesser, Kim et al. 2016

# Institutional Betrayal



- Failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings by individuals
- Institutional actions and inactions
- Reported as the worst form of betrayal



- Violation of trust and dependency
- Interpersonal Violence
- Causes anxiety and trauma
- Denial exacerbates the problem

# West Baltimore Study



50 African Americans between 18-25 were interviewed regarding their experience growing up in West Baltimore

- Many felt a violation of trust and interpersonal violence
  - Police Department
  - School district
  - Government programs/ Public Officials
  - Realtors
  - Banks
  - Employers
  - Major Institutions in the City
- Viewed as other within these institutions
  - Associated with stereotypes
  - This otherness did not allow them to exchange resources, opportunities and capital
- Youth expressed that their parents felt the same way
  - Institutional betrayal was intergenerational



# Institutional Betrayal Helped Form Community/Family Stressors



- Increase of violence
- Increase of crime
- Police Brutality
- Hyper-incarceration
- Limited access to private services/poor public services
- Abundance of liquor stores
- Higher banking expenses
- Unhealthy environment
- Poor housing
- Underground economy
- Decayed physical conditions of the built environment
- Higher rates of unemployment/limited employment opportunities

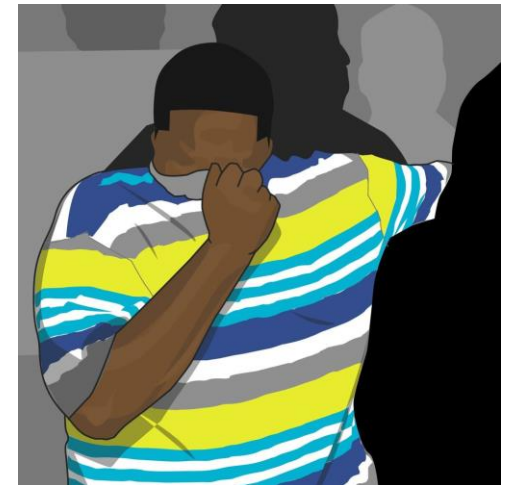


# Racial Stress



“Racial stress is race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that perceived to tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being”

- Racial stress is the emotional overload or shock to an individual's coping system before, during and after racial interactions
- Racial stress avoidance is more often nonverbal, it is not imperceptible. It can be seen in body movements, hesitation, eyesight aversions, stuttering, and a host of body, mind, and heart reactions





# Microaggressions

- Racial Microaggressions:
  - Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color
- Discrimination in the form of microaggression
  - Also known as modern, symbolic, or aversive racism
  - May be contributing to disparities in a way that is more insidious than traditional discrimination
  - Perpetrated by those with the power to define reality
  - Race, gender, sexuality, ability, social class
- Three types of interpersonal microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations.
  - Microassault are conscious degradations perpetrated by people who hold bigoted views-overt, traditional bigotry
  - Microinsults- common, as this type of microaggression is often hidden under the guise of a compliment
  - Microinvalidation are the hallmark of the power to define reality

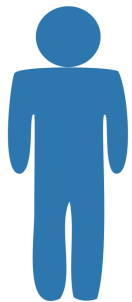
**Microaggressions**

**Community  
Stress**

**Family  
Stress**

**Institutional  
Betrayal**

**Economic  
Stress**



# Trauma



# Trauma



- Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event that was witnessed or occurred to an individual
- Causes intense fear and may involve a threat of physical harm or actual physical harm
- Some people have difficulty moving on with their lives after these events
- May have a profound effect on the physical and mental health
  - Longer term reactions include
    - Unpredictable emotions
    - Flashbacks
    - Strained relationships
    - Physical symptom
    - Headaches or nausea

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- medication  
assault stress  
post traumatic stress disorder  
neuroendocrinology  
numbing disturbance  
flashbacks  
veterans  
biochemical health problems  
occupational drug addiction  
cognitive  
disorder  
event behavioural  
shocking symptom  
falling mental  
defection  
irritable  
traumatic experience  
emotional  
prefrontal cortex  
cortex physical  
thoughts  
symptoms  
testing severe  
trauma  
military combat  
indicators  
psychological trauma  
hypervigilance  
guilty illnesses  
avoid  
horror  
anxious  
trigger  
violence  
memories  
reaction  
active  
disasters  
hippocampus  
screening exposure  
accidents  
deaths  
treatments  
psychological family  
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arousal  
targeted emotional numbing  
combat  
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- medication  
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 violence



# Trajectories of PTSD

- Study found that people who had three predictors were more vulnerable at experiencing PTSD
  - Sample of 981
  - Structured telephone surveys
  - Three-wave study of adults living in Detroit
- They discovered three indicators:
  - Socioeconomic disadvantage (e.g., lower income, unemployment)
  - More extensive trauma history (e.g., childhood abuse, greater number of traumatic events)
  - Fewer social resources (e.g., lower social support, lower perceived neighborhood quality) were associated with membership in trajectories with higher PTS, relative to the low trajectory



# Racial Trauma



- Racial trauma refers to the events of danger related to real or perceived experience of racial discrimination, threats of harm and injury, and humiliating and shaming events, in addition to witnessing harm to other ethno-racial because of real or perceived racism
- Racial trauma may result from racial harassment, witnessing racial violence, or experiencing institutional racism. The trauma may result in experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, feelings of humiliation, poor concentration, or irritability
- Race-based traumatic stress trauma differs from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in that victims are exposed to constant racial microaggressions

# Impact of Racial Trauma



- Increased vigilance and suspicion
  - suspicion of social institutions (schools, agencies, government), avoiding eye contact, only trusting person within our social and family relations
- Increased sensitivity to threat
  - defensive postures, avoiding new situations, heightened sensitivity to being disrespected and shamed and avoid taking risks
- Increased psychological and physiological symptoms
  - unresolved traumas increase chronic stress and decrease immune system functioning, shift brains to limbic system dominance, increase risks for depression and anxiety disorders, and disrupt child development and quality of emotional attachment in family and social relationships
- Increase alcohol and drug usage
  - drugs and alcohol are initially useful (real and perceived) in managing the pain and danger of unresolved traumas but become their own disease processes when dependency occurs

# Adverse Childhood Experiences



- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) studies examines the link between:
  - childhood experiences of abuse, neglect and family dysfunction
  - poor health outcomes in adulthood
- As the number of ACE (ACE score) increased, so did the risk for negative health outcomes
  - adoption of risk-taking behaviors,
  - chronic illness, disability
  - early death
- Individuals with four or more ACEs
  - increased risk for adult health problems

# ACE Questionnaire



- Abuse
  - Emotional abuse
  - Physical abuse
  - Sexual abuse
- Household Challenges
  - Intimate partner violence
  - Household substance abuse
  - Household mental illness
  - Parental separation or divorce
  - Incarcerated household member
- Extended ACEs (2015)\*
  - Witnessing violence
  - Felt discrimination
  - Lacked neighborhood safety
  - Bullied
  - Living in foster Care

# ACE of Low-Income Urban Youth



- Little work had been done to incorporate the voices of youth in understanding the range of adverse experiences that low-income urban children face
- Through focus groups, youth pointed to other adverse experiences
  - Victimization, economic hardship, peer relationships, discrimination, school, health and child welfare/juvenile justice system
  - Many agreed upon
    - Family members buying alcohol and drugs, lack of love and support in the family, single-parents homes, neighborhood crime, violence and death, negative adult behavior in the neighborhood and not enough money



**Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**

**Racial Stress**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**

**Microaggressions**

**Community Stress**

**Institutional Betrayal**

**Family Stress**

# Mental Health





# Mental Health

- Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices
- Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:
  - Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
  - Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
  - Family history of mental health problems





# Mental Health and Poverty

- Chris Hudson examined the Health records of 34,000 patients who have been hospitalized at least twice for mental illness over a period of 7 years. He found:
  - The lower the socioeconomic status of an individual, the higher is his or her risk of mental illness
  - The stresses associated with low socioeconomic status lead to higher mental illness
  - Higher unemployment, poverty and lack of housing affordability in poorer communities account for more than half of community differences in psychiatric hospitalization rates

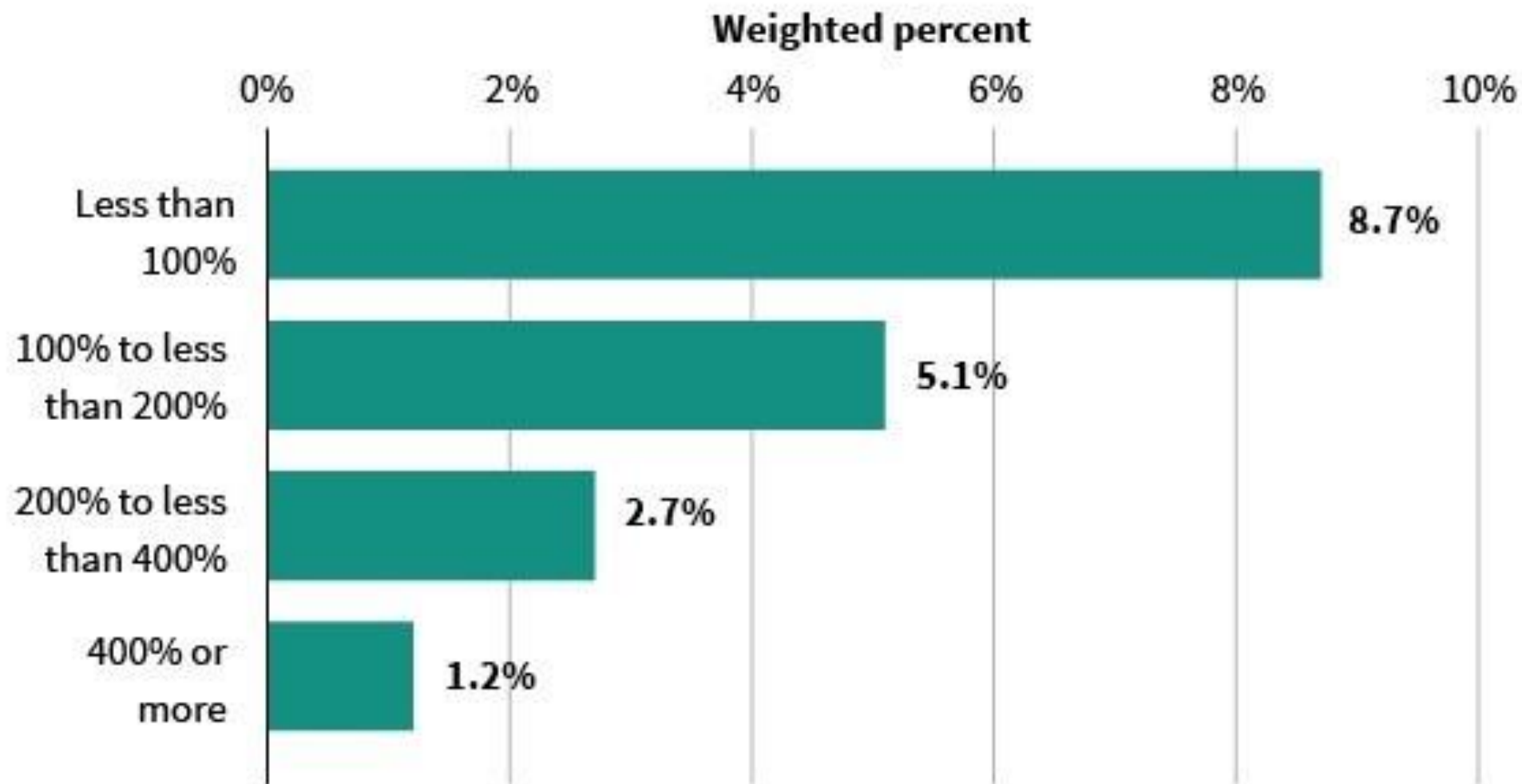


# Depression and Anxiety

- Participants included 571 urban, African American adolescents  
participant data were linked to census data using geo-coded home address information
  - Higher neighborhood poverty and unemployment rates predicted greater internalizing symptoms
  - Higher concentrations of African American and residentially stable residents in one's neighborhood related to fewer internalizing symptoms among adolescent residents via greater cumulative social support and perceptions of neighborhood cohesion.
  - Higher neighborhood poverty rates related to more depressive symptoms by potentially decreasing adolescents cumulative social support
  - Higher neighborhood unemployment rates predicted more symptoms of anxiety and depression through reduced perceptions of neighborhood cohesion
  - Adolescents who resided in more impoverished neighborhoods reported lower total levels of social support
  - African American adolescents residing in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of African American residents reported more total social support and perceived their neighborhoods as more supportive and cohesive

# Inequality and mental health

Adults with “serious psychological distress,” by income relative to federal poverty level



Sources: CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2009-13

THE HUFFINGTON POST



# African Americans and Mental Health

- Adult African Americans are 20 percent more likely to report serious psychological distress than adult whites
- African Americans living below poverty are three times more likely to report serious psychological distress than those living above poverty
- African Americans are nearly twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to be diagnosed with schizophrenia
- Lower income children are 1.86 times more likely to report an emotional or nervous condition in adult life. Lower income boys at age 7-8 years are 3.2 times more likely to do so



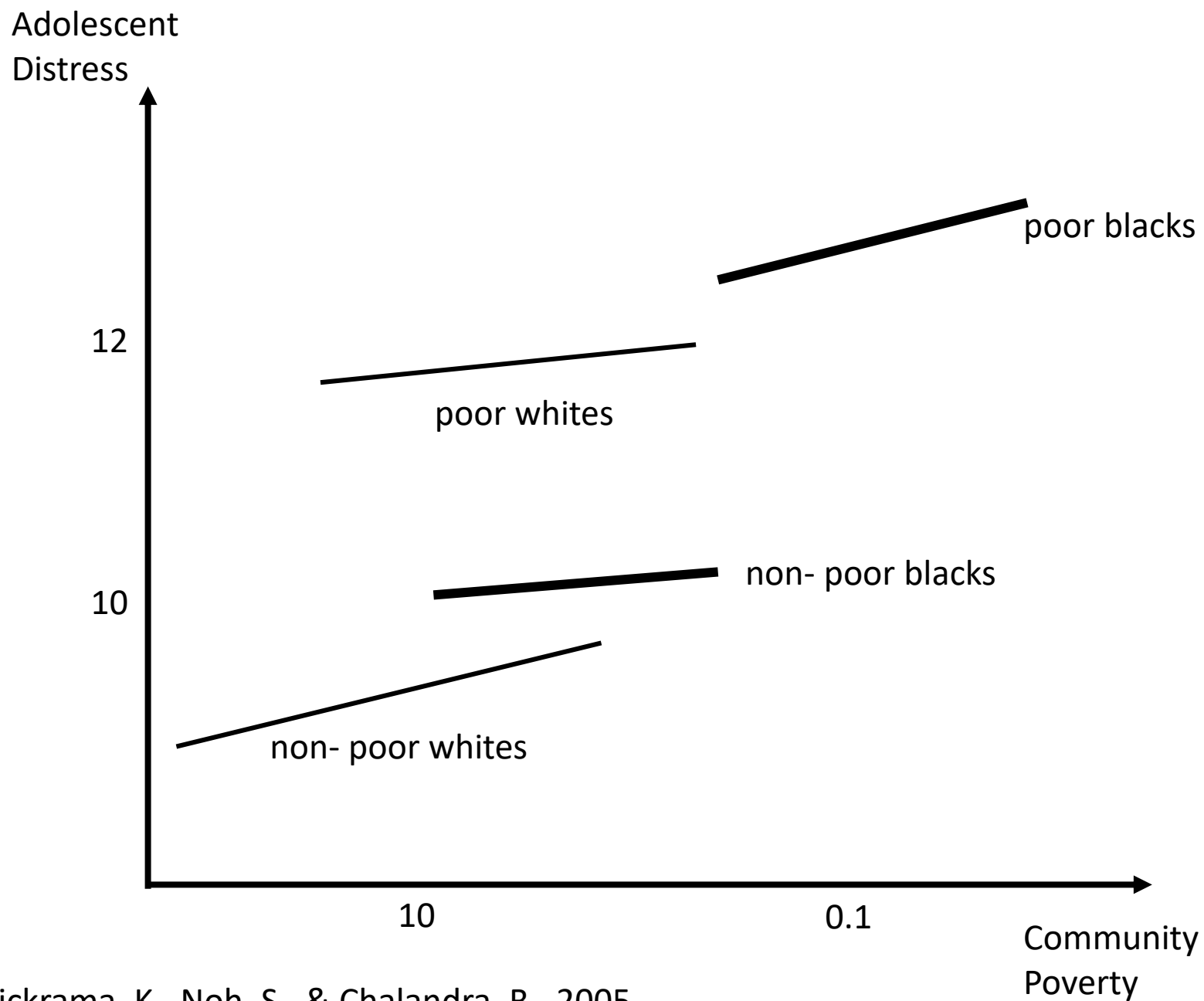
# Latinos and Mental Health

- Latinos are less likely to report mental illness
  - 15.9% Latinos, 18.8 % African American, 20.5% Whites and 16.1 % Asians
- Latino women have higher rates of depression
  - 46% women, 19.6% men
- Fewer Latinos seek help for mental illness
  - One in eleven contact a mental health specialist
  - One in five contact a general health care provider
- First and second generation Hispanics are significantly more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression than immigrants
- Rates of depression vary by country of origin
  - 27 % Latinos report high levels of depressive symptoms
  - 22.3 % Mexican
  - 38 % Puerto Rican



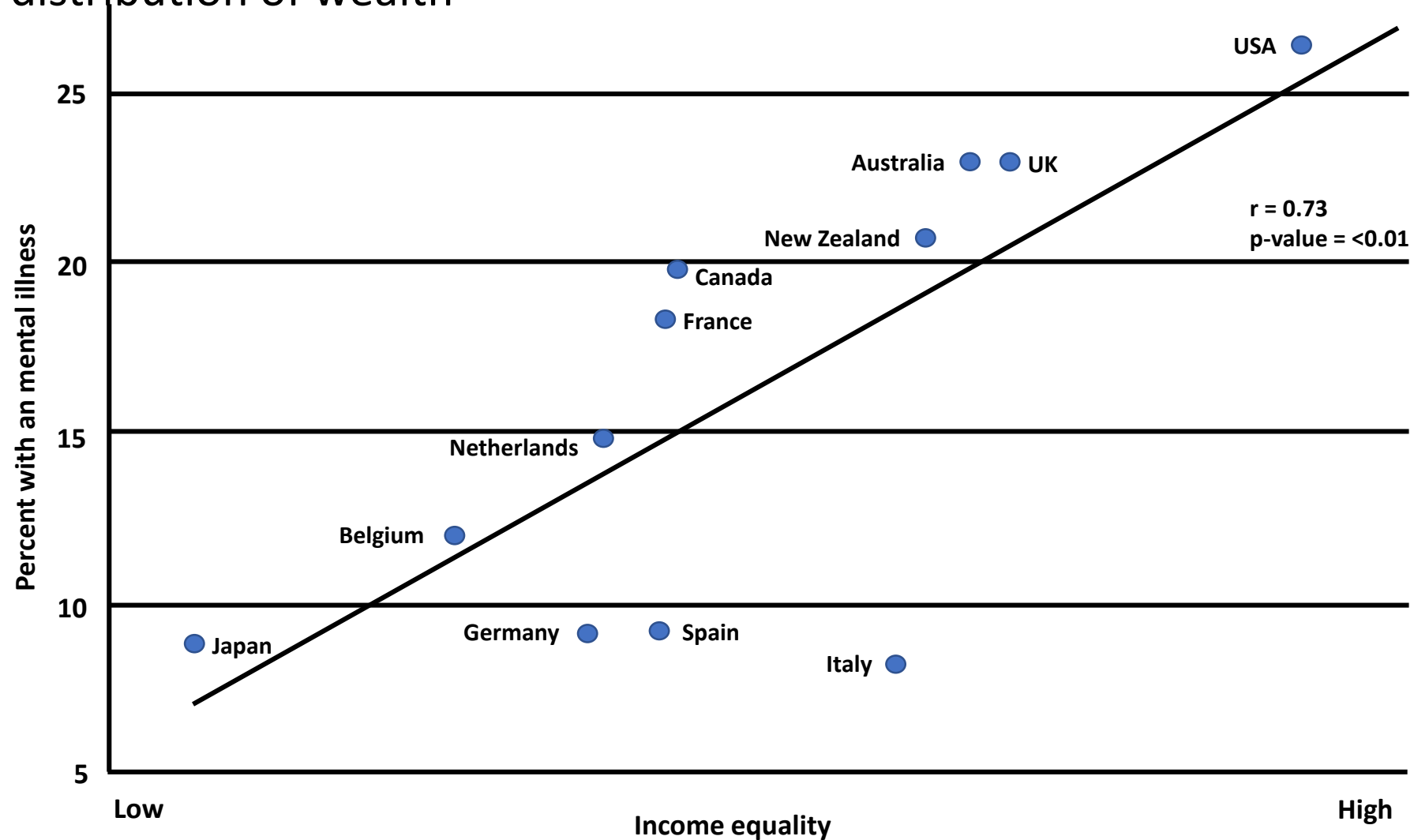
# Youth Attempting to Commit Suicide

- Hispanic students between grades 9-12 are at greater risk of attempting to commit suicide than their black and white peers
  - 18.9 percent Hispanic students have seriously considered suicide
  - 11.3 percent have attempted suicide
- African Americans are less likely than white people to die from suicide as teenagers; African Americans teenagers are more likely to attempt suicide than are white teenagers
  - 8.3 percent v. 6.2 percent



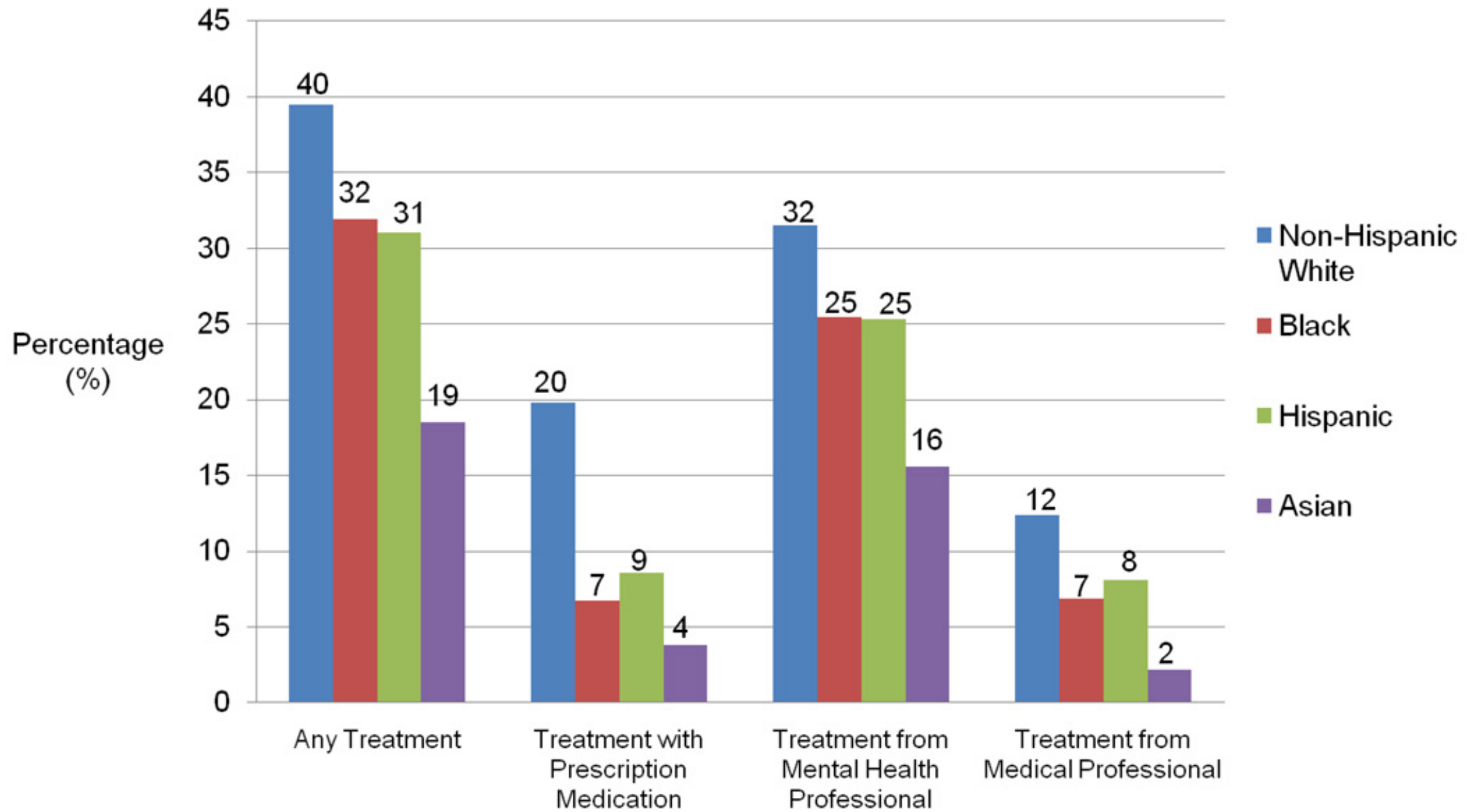
Wickrama, K., Noh, S., & Chalandra, B., 2005

The prevalence of mental illness is higher in countries with an unequal distribution of wealth



Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, The Spirit Level (2009) ~ The Equality Trust





# Impact on Schools



# Teachers' Stressors



Occupational stress significantly impacted teachers personal relationships and physical health

- Lack of resources
- Excessive workload
- School-Level disorganization
- Managing behavior problems
- Accountability policies
- Large class sizes
- Deteriorating conditions
- Large number of students with unmet needs
- Students' mental health needs

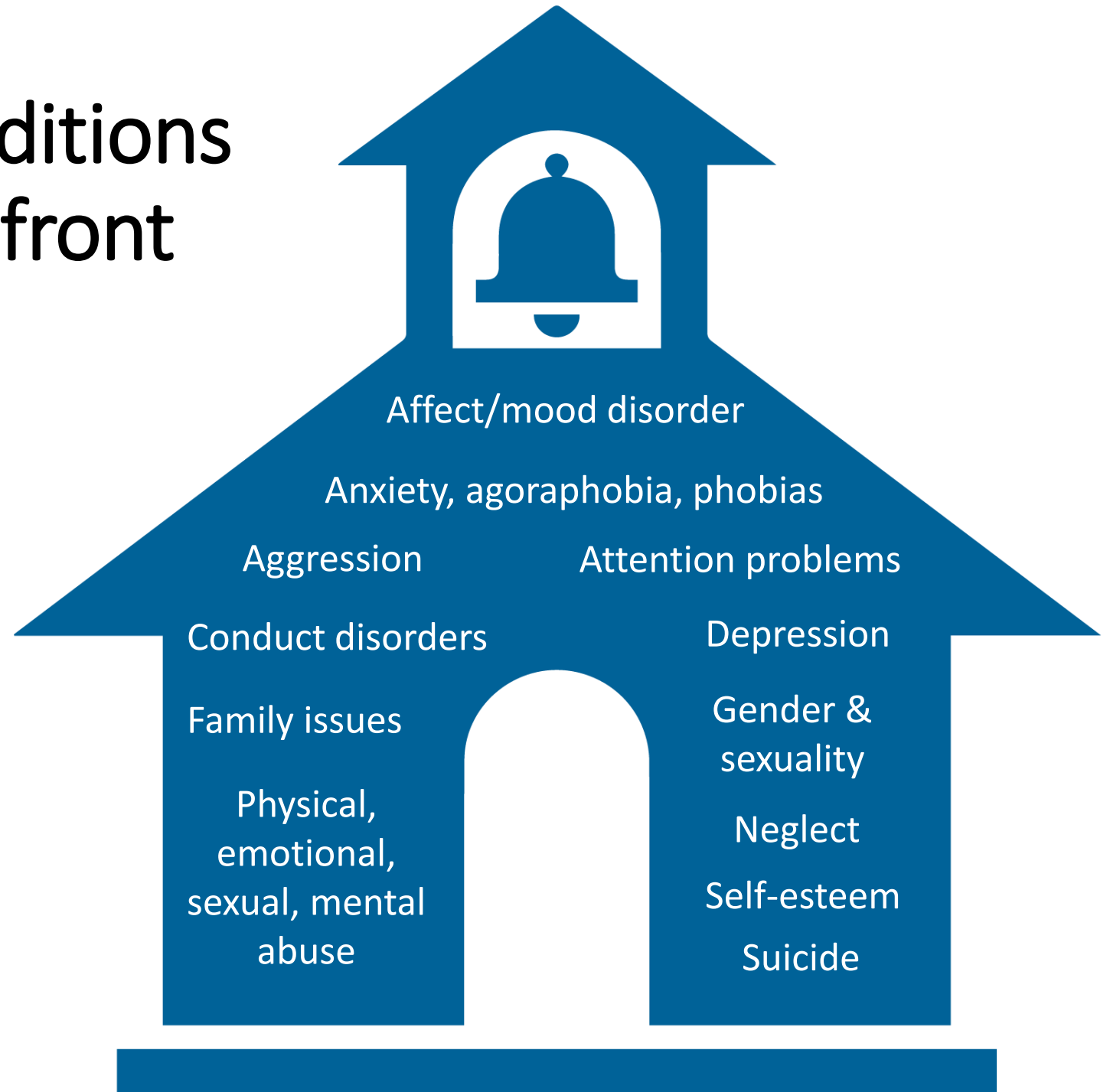


# Urban School Psychologist

- 72 psychologists in urban schools were asked an open-ended question: What are your greatest challenges as a school psychologist?
- “The caseload is extremely high and there is not enough time to complete all cases within compliance. As a result of the large caseload, there is no time to do counseling or consultation, therefore, the role as school psychologist is limited to testing, holding reviews, and paperwork.”

Greatest Challenge	Urban School Psychologists
• Large caseload	26
• Lack of funding/resources	22
• Lack of support from administration	13
• High demand for evaluations	8
• Improper placement of students in special education	7
• Lack of parental involvement	6

# Concerns and Conditions that Schools Confront



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