

# *Religion, Spirituality, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Health*

**Presented by:**

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# Background

- Increasing number of individuals who identify as spiritual but not religious (SBNR) in the US (Pew, 2015)
- Increase in the number of individuals who identify with traditionally spiritual disciplines (e.g., Yoga).
- Significant number of individuals who have left traditional religious communities due to discrimination experienced because of their “non-heterosexual” sexual orientation.
- Increasing number of Millennials desire to reconcile faith and sexuality but feel excluded from religious organizations (Christian Post)

# Background

- Non-heterosexuals in particular who have been emotionally, mentally, and spiritually traumatized, marginalized, and stigmatized by some faith communities.
- Focusing on spirituality can be a superlative means with which to approach uniquely marginalized and “hidden” populations such as racial and sexual minorities.
- Focusing on spirituality can provide adequate, culturally competent, and culturally sensitive professional resources to assist persons struggling to bring into sync their sexuality and spirituality.

# Religion, Religiosity, and Sexuality

- ▶ What are your religious views regarding sexuality?
- ▶ *Where do these religious views come from?*
- ▶ *In what ways have these religious views changed or remained the same?*
- ▶ *Why or Why not?*

# Dictionary Definitions: “Spirituality”



- ▶ The quality or fact of being spiritual.
- ▶ Incorporeal or immaterial nature.
- ▶ Predominantly spiritual character as shown in thought, life, etc.; spiritual tendency or tone.
- ▶ Often, spiritualities, property or revenue of the church or of an ecclesiastic in his or her official capacity.

[Circa 1400]

# Dictionary Definitions: “Spirituality”

- ▶ Spirituality has long been dichotomized in our culture and society.
  - ▶ Married with religion or religious matters
  - ▶ Ethereal state of existence.
- ▶ These are un-embodied definitions of spirituality.
- ▶ Spirituality refers to anything relating to the Great Spiritual Director (God’s Holy Spirit)
- ▶ ***Spirituality refers to the embodied, ubiquitous, holy, authorized and inspirited entity that works in and through all of the universe-seen and unseen.***



# Other Definitions: Spirituality

- ▶ African American Culture is a sociological construct that identifies the spirituality of a people as the soul (“placeless place”) of the people.

## Black Spirituality

Communal  
Participatory  
Embodied  
Socially  
Conscious  
Contemplative

Relational  
Creative  
Mystical  
Holistic  
Integrative  
Ancestral\*

\*Theresa Taylor-Stinson, “Black Spirituality and the Art of Spiritual Direction,”

Presence, December, 2009, p.46.

# Dictionary Definitions: “Religion”

- ▶ Set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, esp. when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.
- ▶ Specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects: the Christian religion; the Buddhist religion.
- ▶ Body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices: a world council of religions.
- ▶ Life or state of a monk, nun, etc.: to enter religion.
- ▶ the practice of religious beliefs; ritual observance of faith.

*[Circa 1200]*



# Dictionary Definitions: “Morality”

- Conformity to the rules of right conduct; moral or virtuous conduct.
- Moral quality or character.
- Virtue in sexual matters; chastity.
- Doctrine or system of morals.

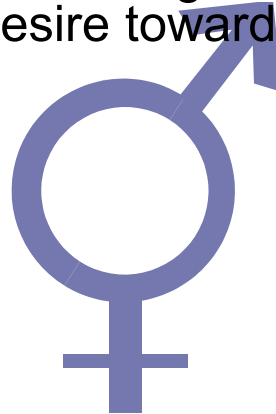
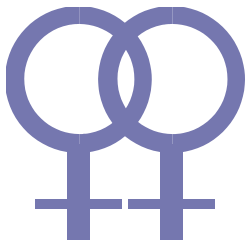


# Dictionary Definitions: “Sexuality”

- ▶ Sexual character; possession of the structural and functional traits of sex.
- ▶ Recognition of or emphasis upon sexual matters.
- ▶ Involvement in sexual activity.
- ▶ An organism's preparedness for engaging in sexual activity.

[Origin: 1790–1800]

- ▶ Bisexual(ity) -1824 : possessing characters of both sexes : HERMAPHRODITIC
- ▶ Homosexual(ity) -1892 : of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward another of the same sex
- ▶ Heterosexual(ity) -1892 : of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward the opposite sex

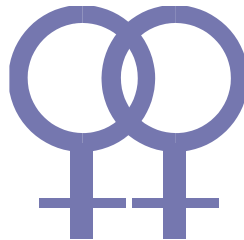
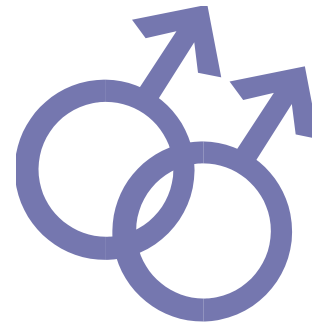
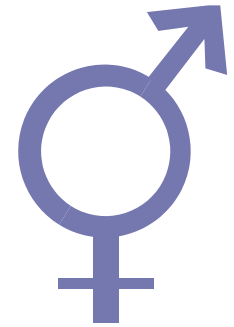


Spirituality and sexuality are intricately connected, infinitely complex, and both are gifts from God. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions; write down the first thing that comes to mind:

Sexuality	Spirituality
A good sexual experience sounds like:	A good spiritual experience sounds like:
A good sexual experience smells like:	A good spiritual experience smells like:
A good sexual experience tastes like:	A good spiritual experience tastes like:
A good sexual experience feels like:	A good spiritual experience feels like
A good sexual experience looks like:	A good spiritual experience looks like:

# Understanding Sexual Identity Expression

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtYuUL3OdUY>



# Understanding Sexual Identity Expression



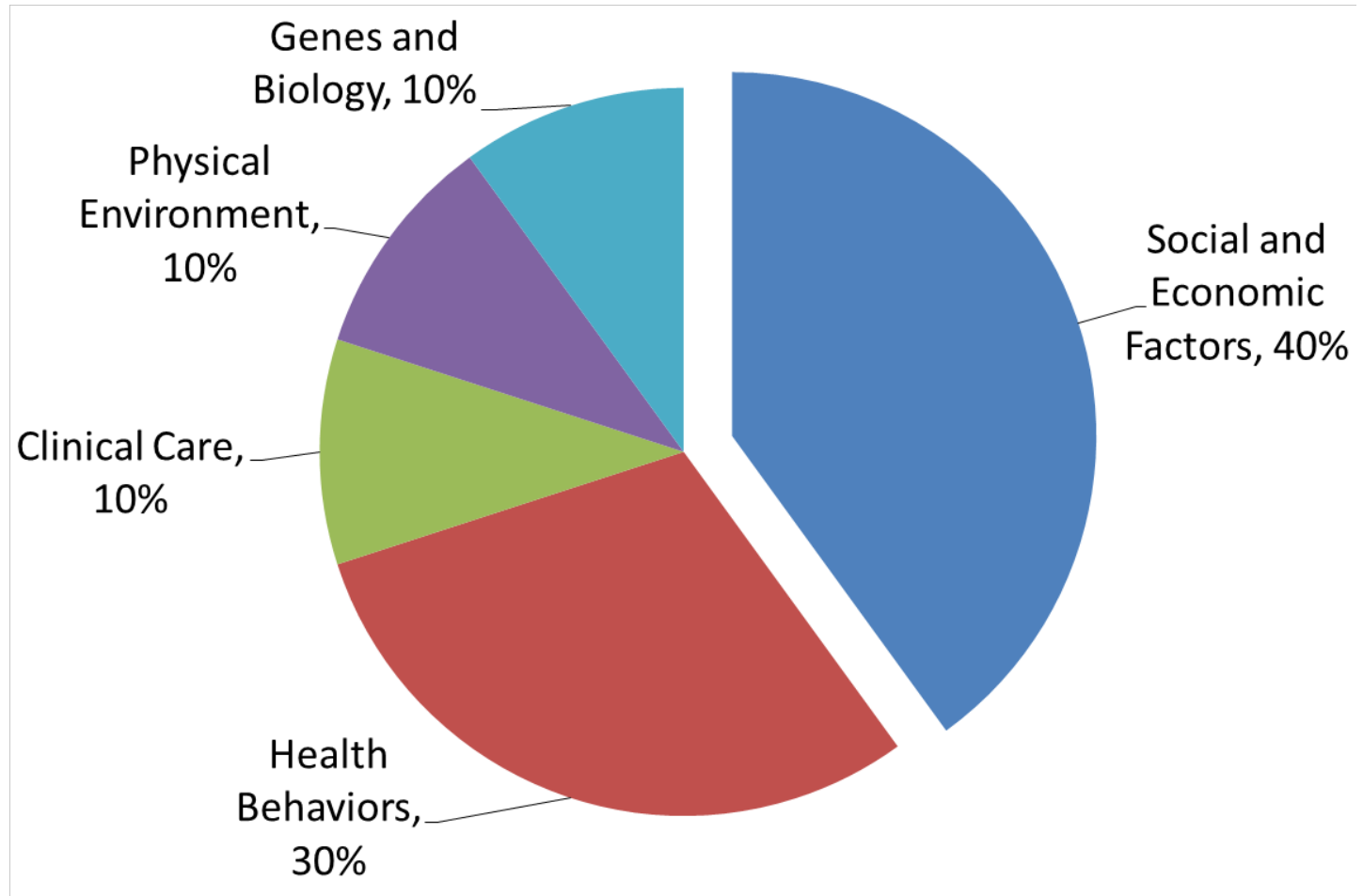
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Sexual\\_identity\\_symbols](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Sexual_identity_symbols)

## Terms to Avoid

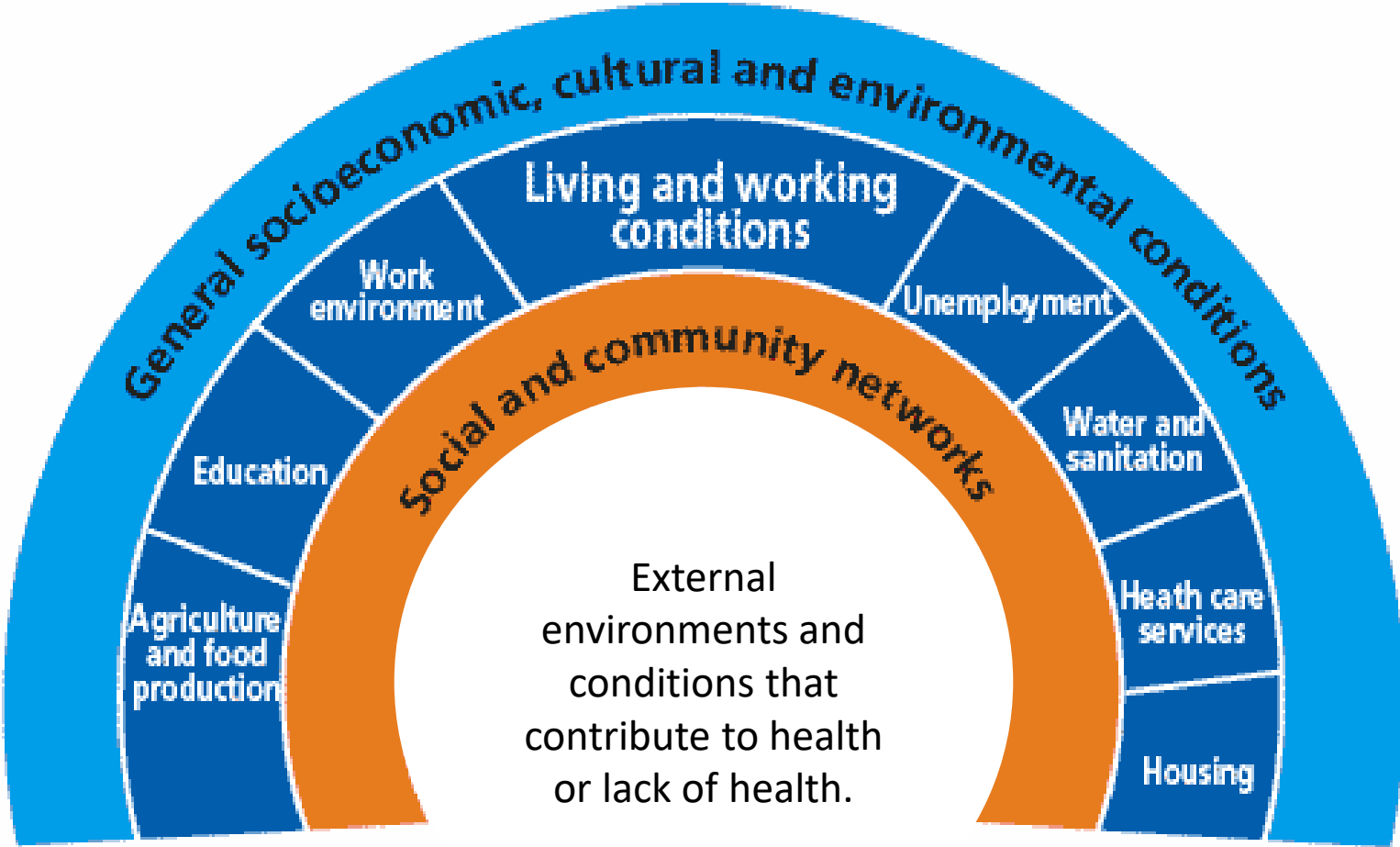
- ▶ Homosexual: See **gay, lesbian**
- ▶ Sexual preference: See **sexual orientation**.
- ▶ Transgendered/A transgender/Tranny: See **transgender**.
- ▶ Sex change: See **gender affirmation surgery**.



# Factors that determine health



# Social Determinants of Health





# Health Equity

Attainment of the highest level of health possible for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health disparities and health care disparities

# Health Inequity

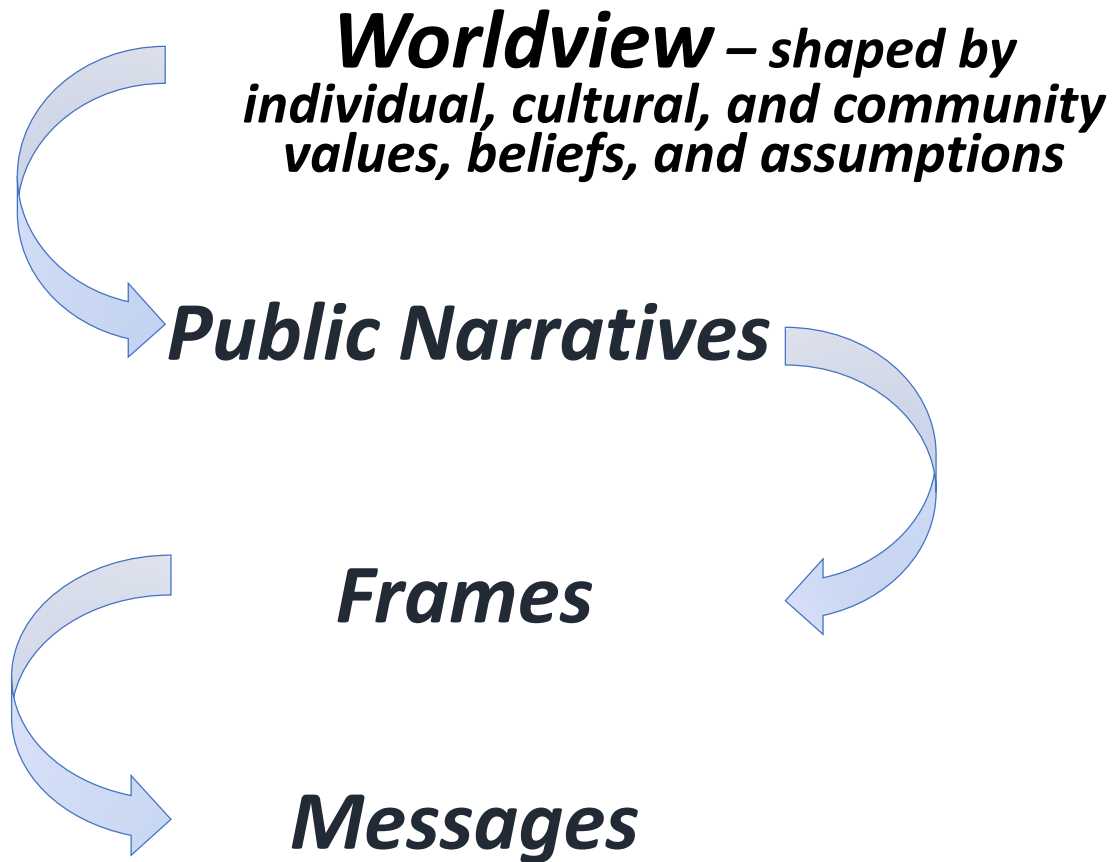
**Health Inequity**—Differences in health status between more and less socially and economically advantaged groups, caused by *systematic* differences in social conditions and processes that effectively determine health. Health inequities are *avoidable*, *unjust*, and therefore *actionable*.



# Advancing Health Equity: Achieving Optimal Health for All

- Expand the understanding about what creates health
- Strengthen community capacity to create their own healthy future
- Promote a Health in All Policies approach with health equity as the goal

# Expand the understanding about what creates health

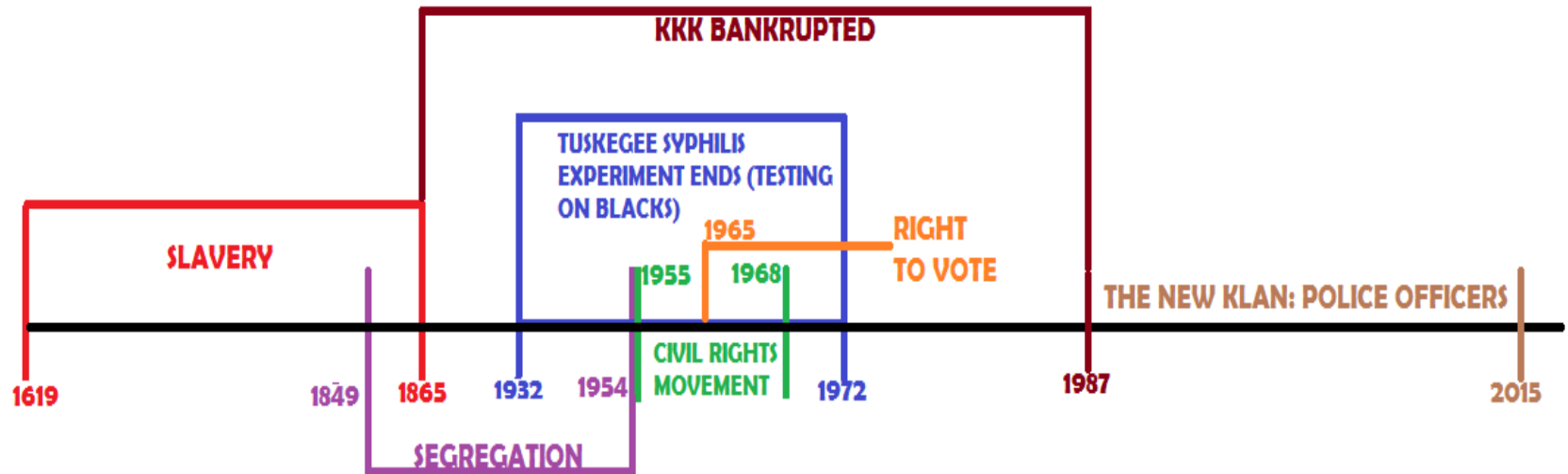




# Structural inequities

- Structures or systems of society — such as finance, housing, transportation, education, social opportunities, etc. — that are structured in such a way that they benefit one population unfairly (whether intended or not).

# Background to Health equity and structural racism:





# Background to Health equity and structural racism:

Structural racism is the normalization of an array of dynamics — historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal — that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color and American Indians.



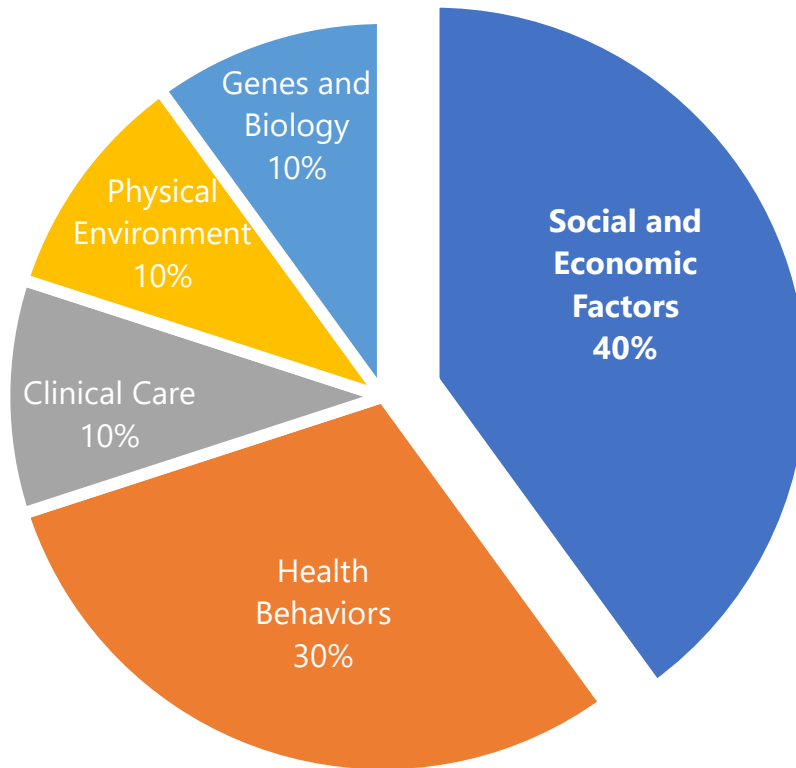


# Background to Health equity and structural racism:

- Social Construction of Race
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UZS8Wb4S5k>(5:30)
- Equality vs equity video/Structural Effects of Race  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBQx8FmOT\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBQx8FmOT_0)  
(4:19)
- [Race and Gerrymandering-How race is tied to neighborhood and privilege/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETR9qrVS17g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETR9qrVS17g) (6:19)
- Slavery to Mass Incarceration <https://eji.org/videos/slavery-to-mass-incarceration> (5:50)

# Consider What Creates Health

## Determinants of Health



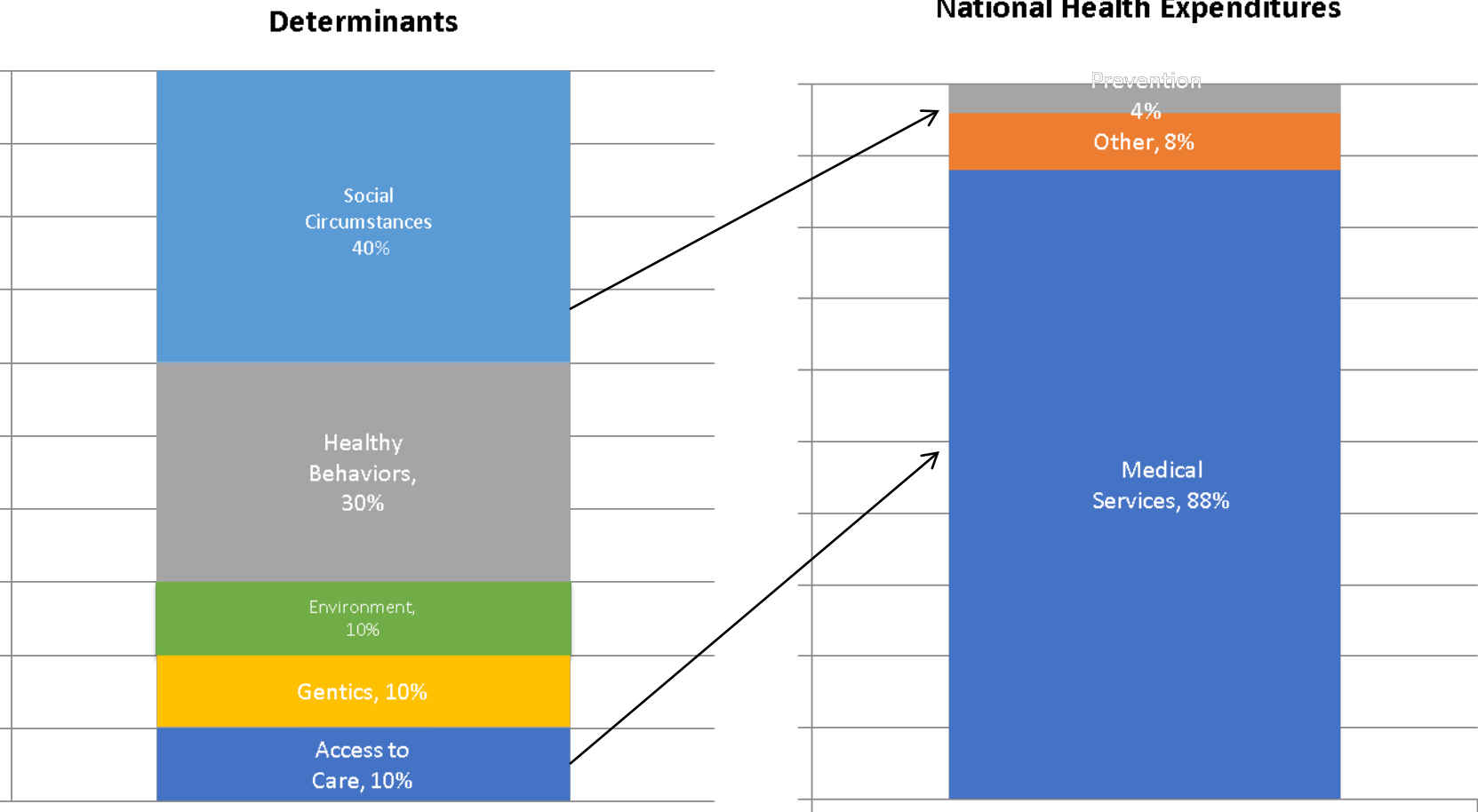
## • Necessary conditions for health (WHO)

- ☀ Peace
- ☀ Shelter
- ☀ Education
- ☀ Food
- ☀ Income
- ☀ Stable eco-system
- ☀ Sustainable resources
- ☀ **Mobility**
- ☀ Social justice and equity

Determinants of Health Model based on frameworks developed by: Tarlov AR. *Ann N Y Acad Sci* 1999; 896: 281-93; and Kindig D, Asada Y, Booske B. *JAMA* 2008; 299(17): 2081-2083.

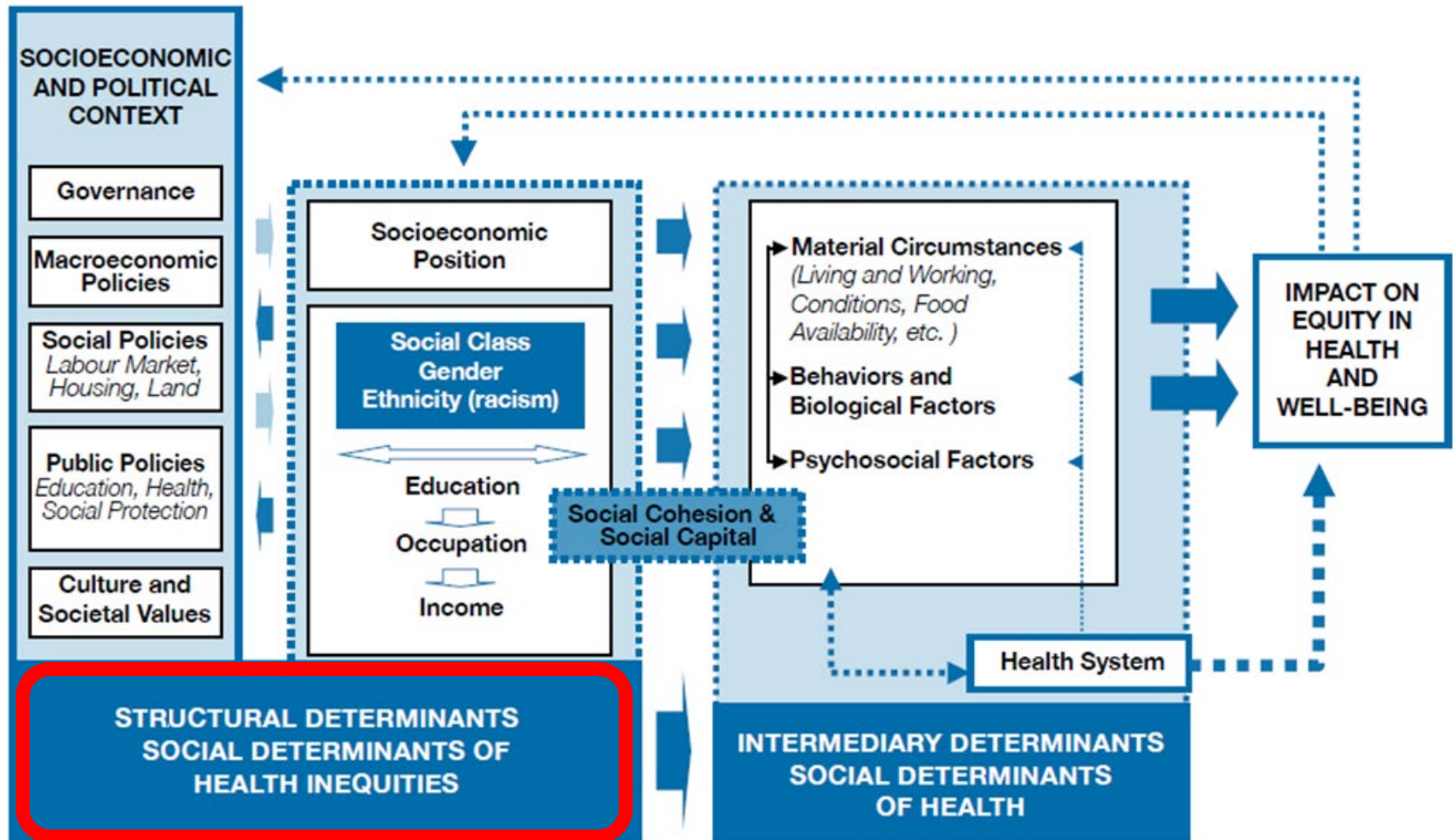
World Health Organization. Ottawa charter for health promotion. International Conference on Health Promotion: The Move Towards a New Public Health, November 17-21, 1986 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 1986. Accessed July 12, 2002 at <<http://www.who.int/hpr/archive/docs/ottawa.html>>.

# Spending Mismatch: Health Care and Other Key Determinants of Health



Source: NEHI, 2012

# Promote a Health in All Policies approach with health equity as the goal



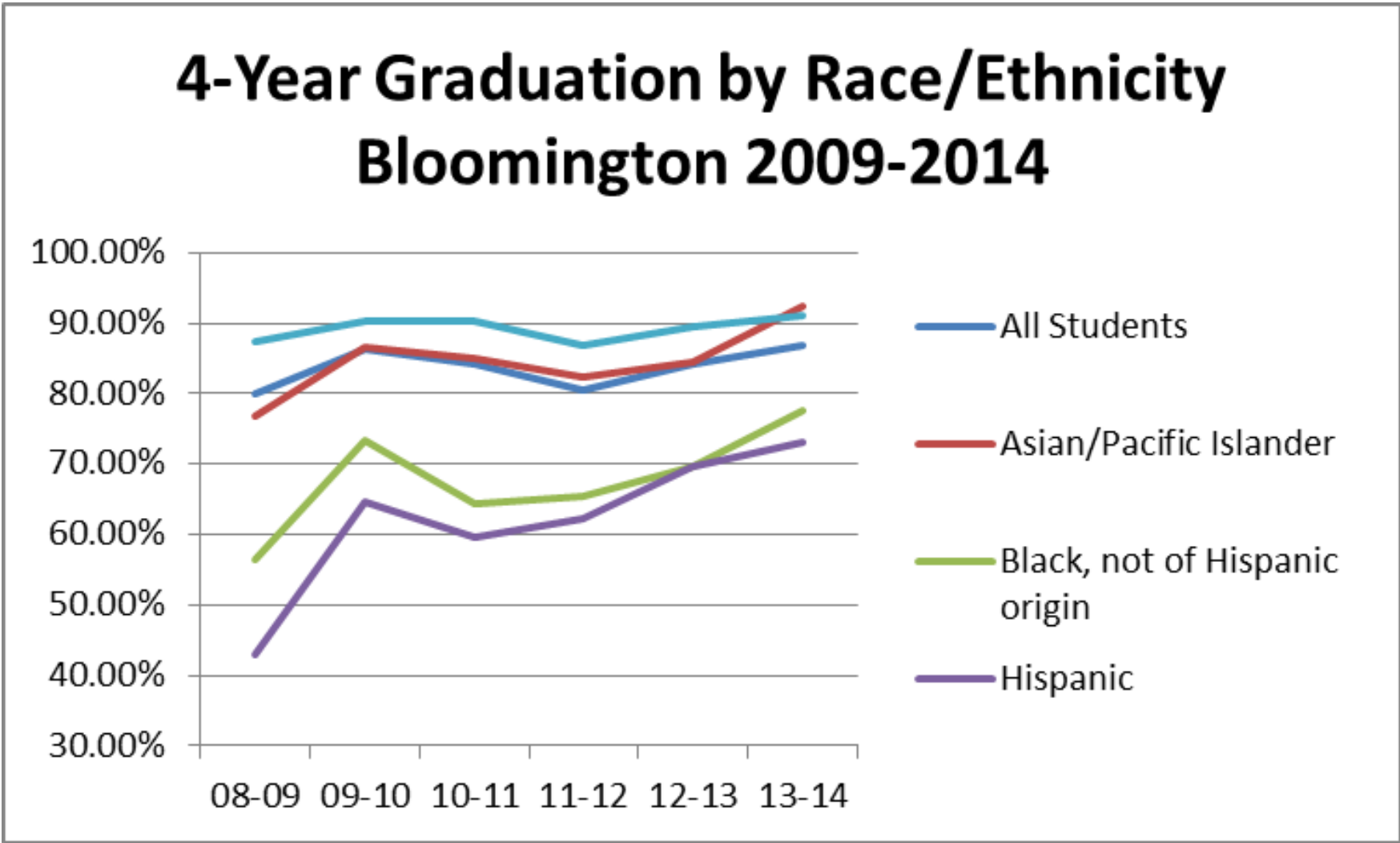


# What is Structural Inequity?

- Systematic or Structural elements of society that benefit one population unfairly.
  - Finance
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Education
  - Social Opportunities
  - ETC...

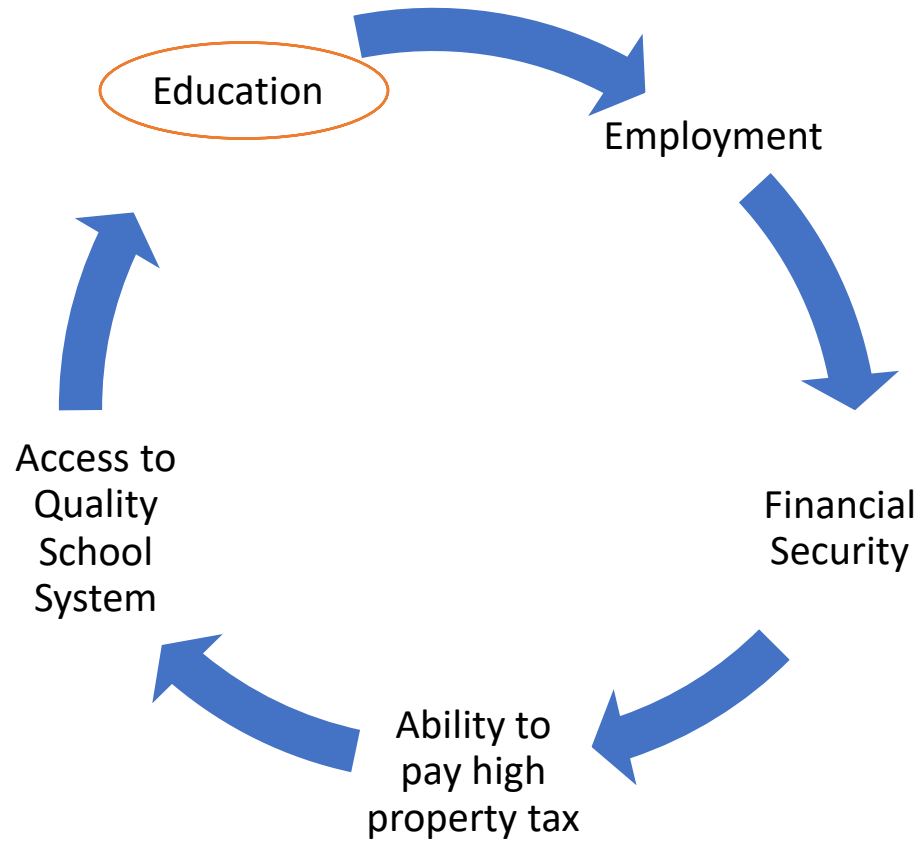


# Who graduates on time?



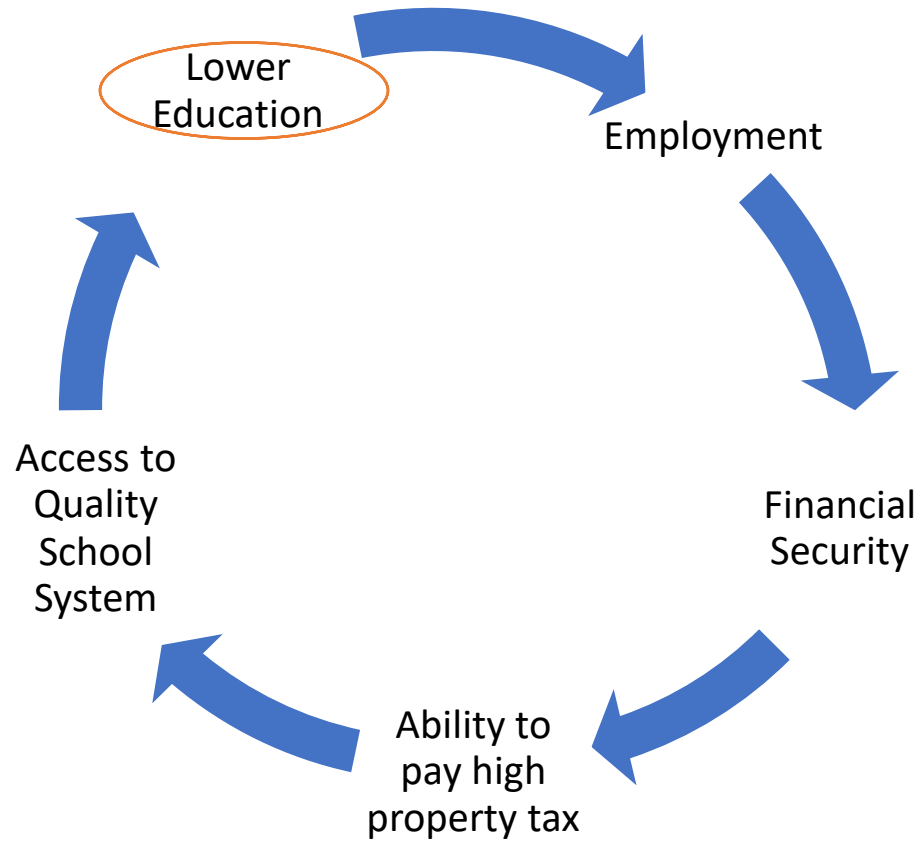


# Structural Inequity





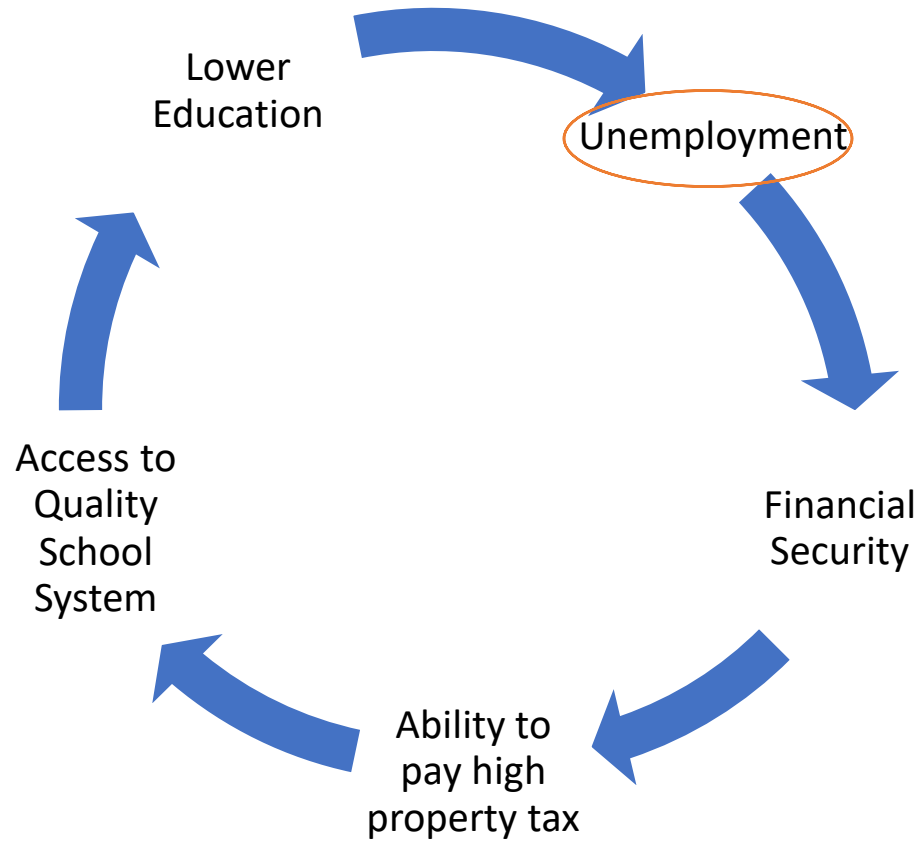
# Structural Inequity





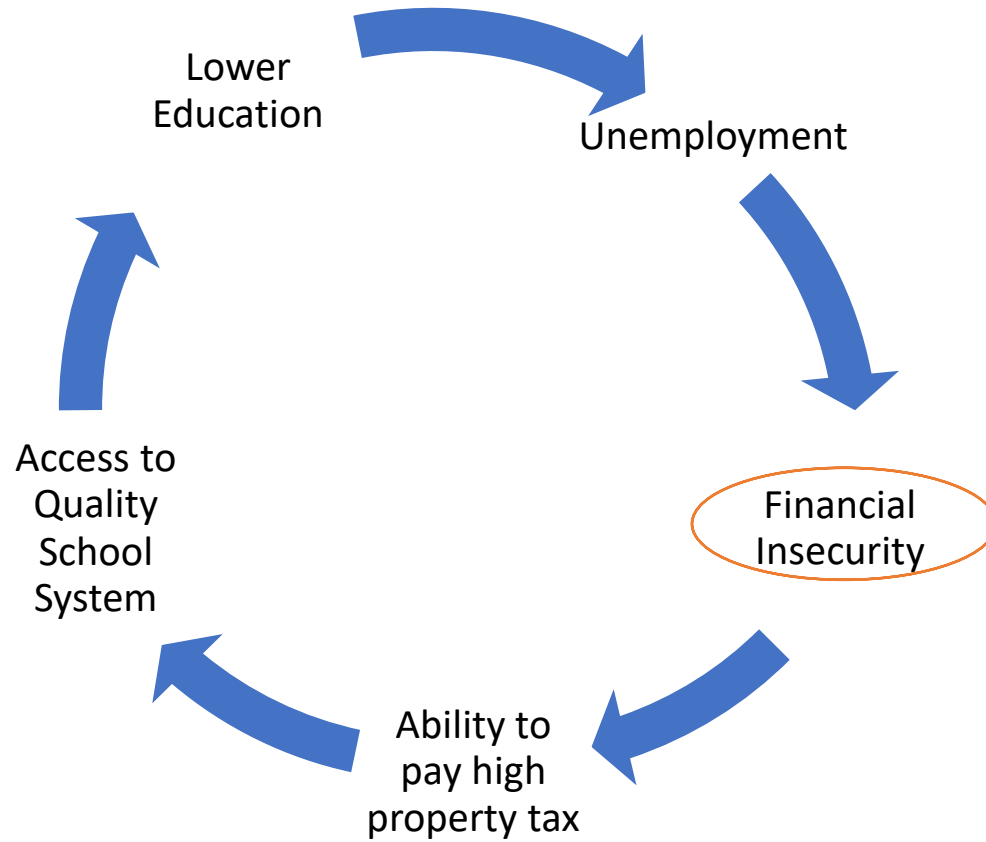


# Structural Inequity



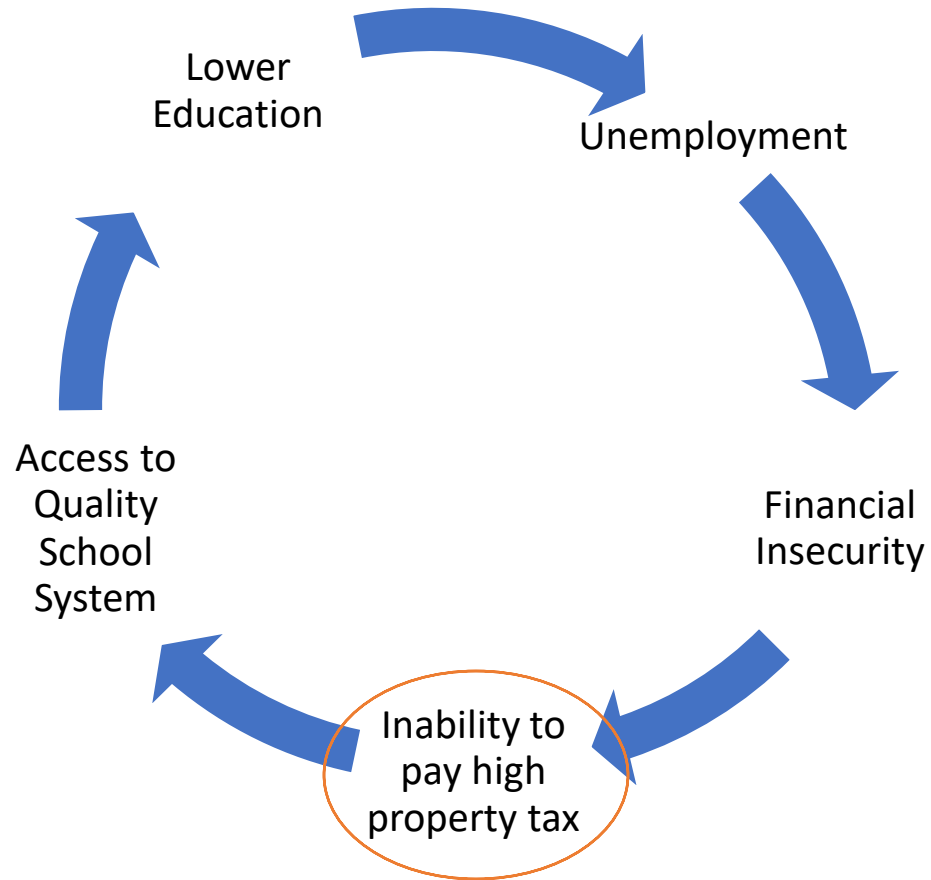


# Structural Inequity



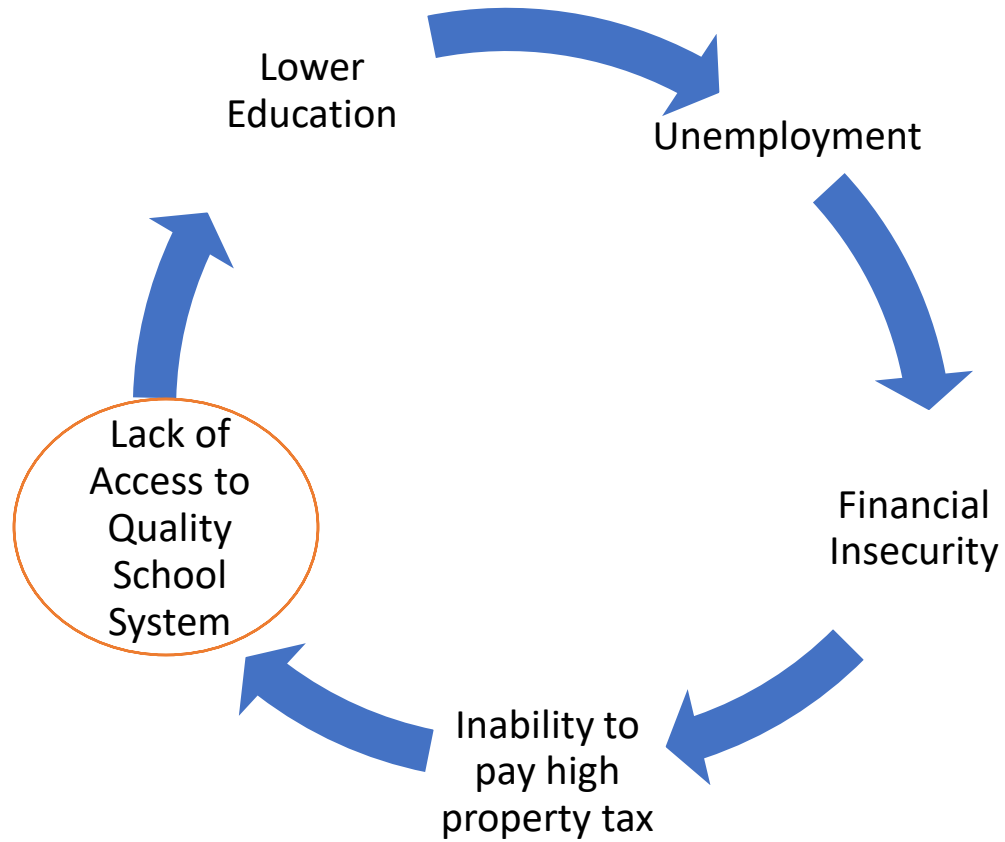


# Structural Inequity



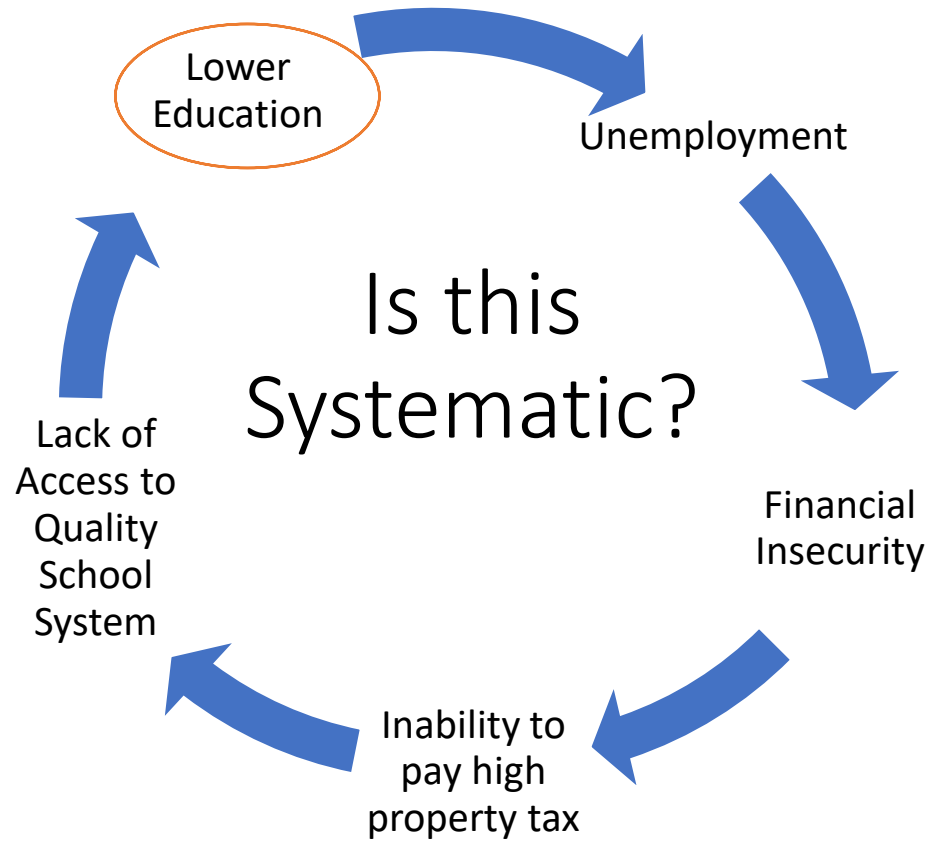


# Structural Inequity

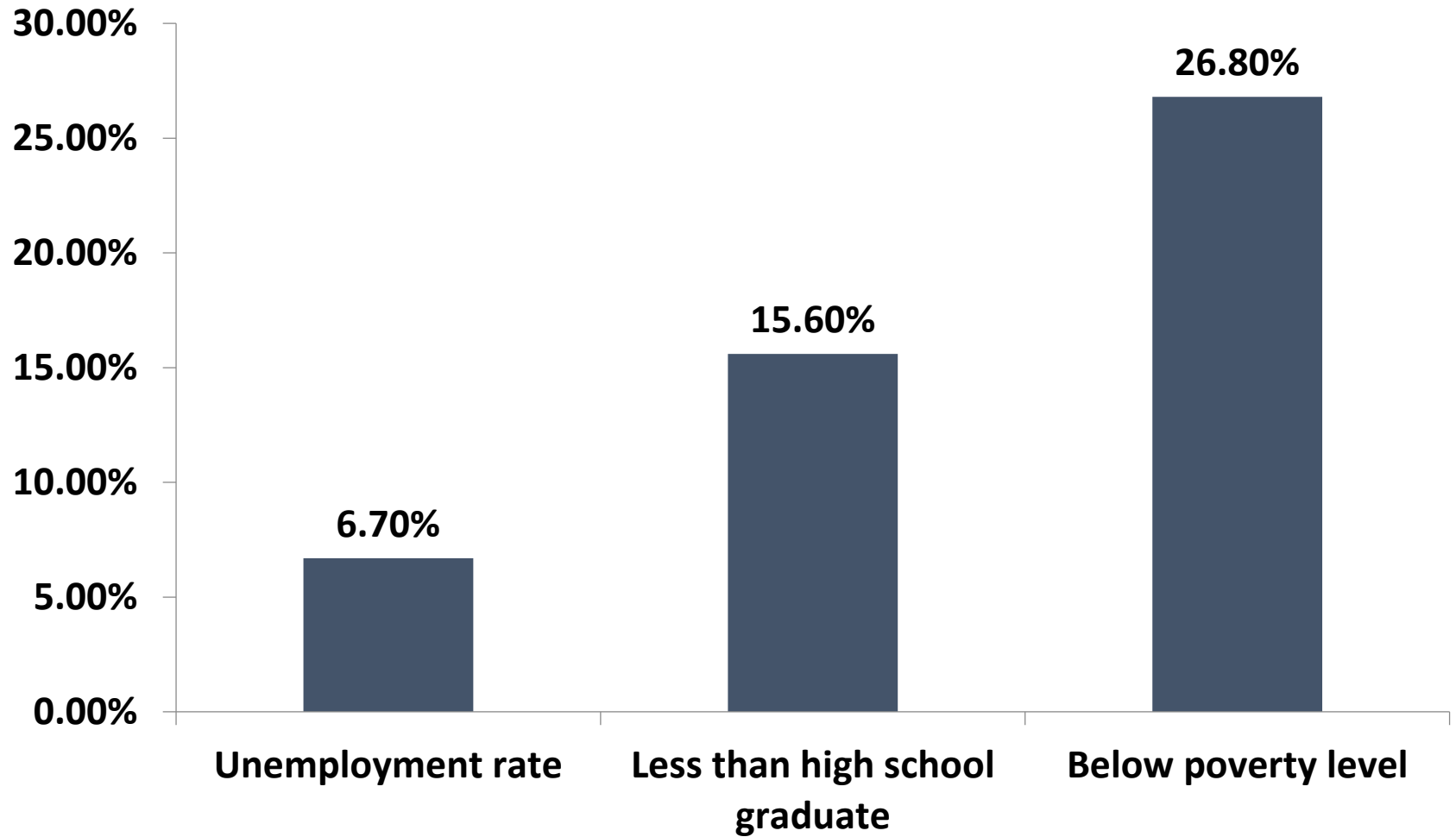




# Structural Inequity

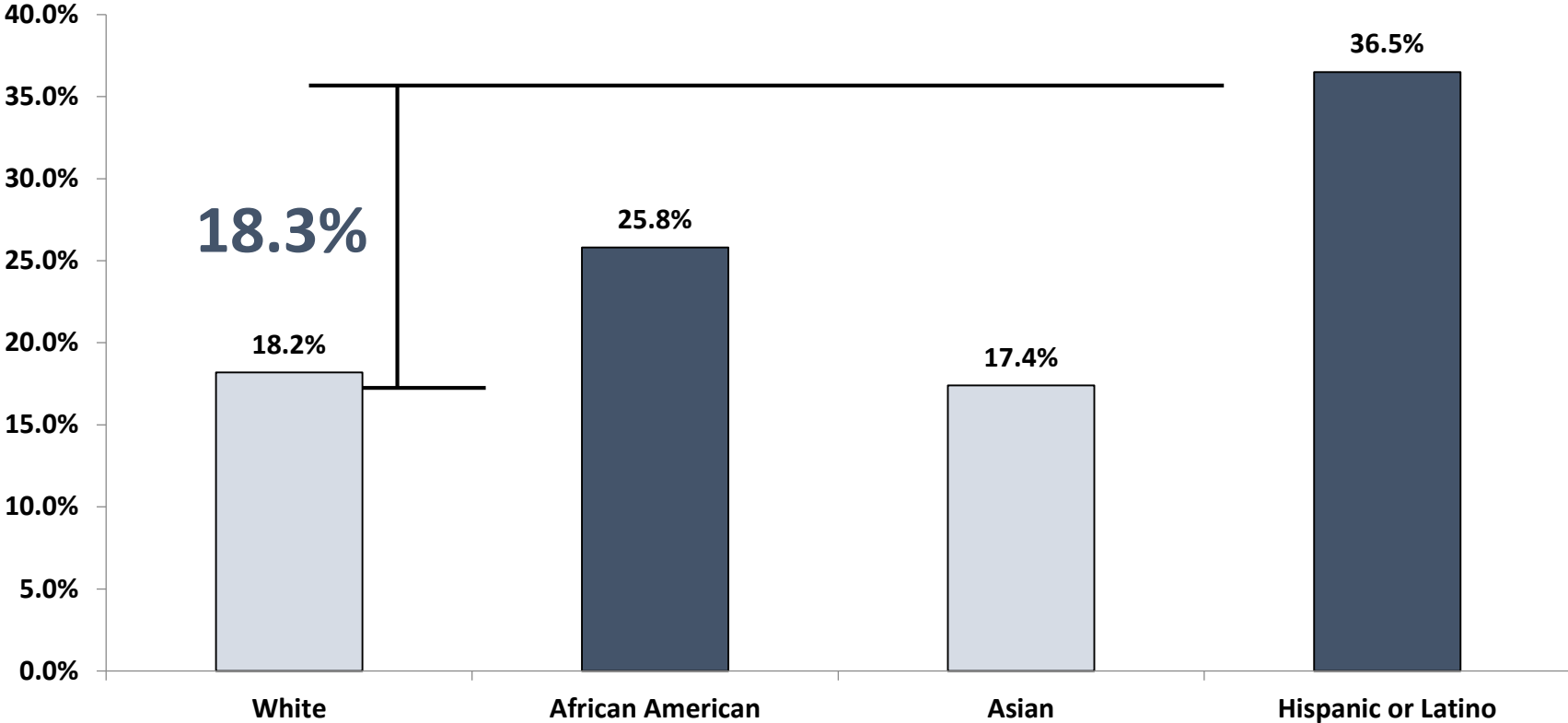


## Bloomington Unemployment Rate by Education and Poverty Level

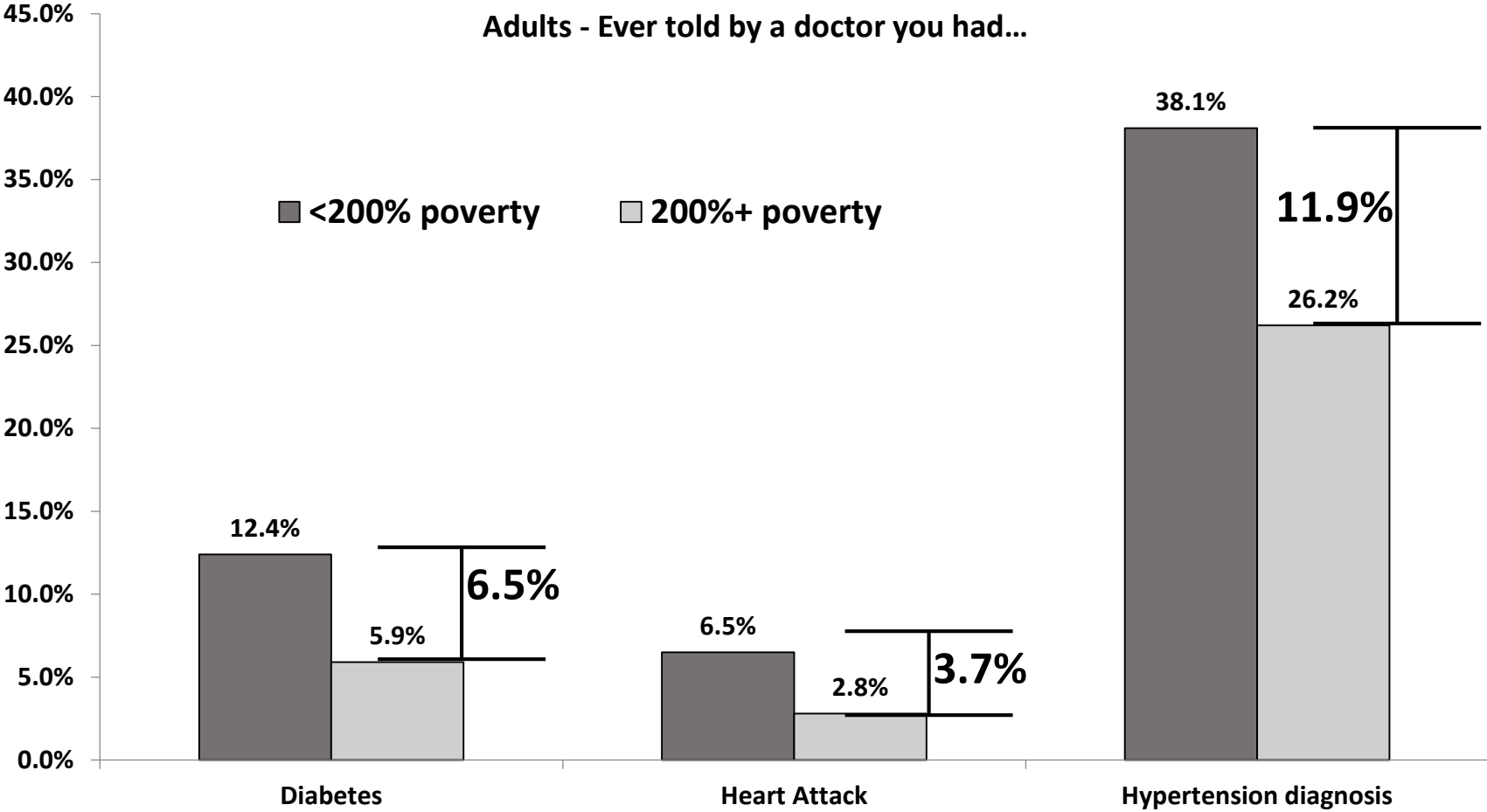


# Bloomington Overweight by Race/Ethnicity

Overweight or Obese by race/ethnicity  
8th, 9th and 11th grades 2013



# Chronic Disease by Income Adults Bloomington, Edina, Richfield and Eden Prairie







## What needs to be done

- Achieving health equity and eliminating health disparities requires valuing everyone and making intentional, consistent efforts to address avoidable systematic inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices.

# Research: Link with Religion, Spirituality, and Health

- Religiosity among Black MSM who used crack and cocaine was also associated with higher levels of risky behavior and may increase risk of HIV and STD infection (*Klobin, et., al., 2006; Parsons, 2003; Reisner, et., al., 2009; Stall, et. al, 2003*).
- Research found that unprotected anal intercourse, (UAI), and polysubstance use, were associated with higher religiosity scores, and lower levels of these risk behaviors were associated with higher spirituality scores (Watkins, et. al, 2015).

# Sexuality & the Spirit

Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas captures from Christian ethicist, James Nelson, in her book, Sexuality and the Black Church, sexuality is more than who one has sex with.

“Sexuality is a sign, symbol, and the means of our call to communication and communion. This is the most apparent in regard to other human beings and other body-selves. The mystery of our sexuality is the mystery of our need to reach out to embrace others both physically and spiritually...[Sexuality] is who we are as body-selves who experience the emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual need for intimate communion-**human and divine.**”

# Sexuality & the Spirit

- “If God wants to relate to the whole person and be known by the whole person, then our sexuality must clearly be part of what we bring to authentic relationship with God. Many Christians cannot accept theoretically that sexuality is positive and is the most important part of nature-thus we can bring into God’s presence.”
- Those that shared sexuality and engaged in sexual discussion experienced more authentic and healthy relationships with self and others.

(Jo Anastasiadis, “Whisperings of Intimacy: Sexuality, Spirituality, and Spiritual Direction,” *Presence*, December 2009, p.20).

# Sexuality & the Spirit

- Sexual stories can affect relationships with God and others as sexual sensations and images occur considerably with in one's prayer life.
- Because one's prayer life is at the center of spiritual direction, it is pertinent to incorporate ones spirituality and sexuality into spiritual direction practice, as God can and does speak to us in our sexual selves.\*

(Ferder and Heagle. "Your Sexual Self," *Presence*, May,1992)

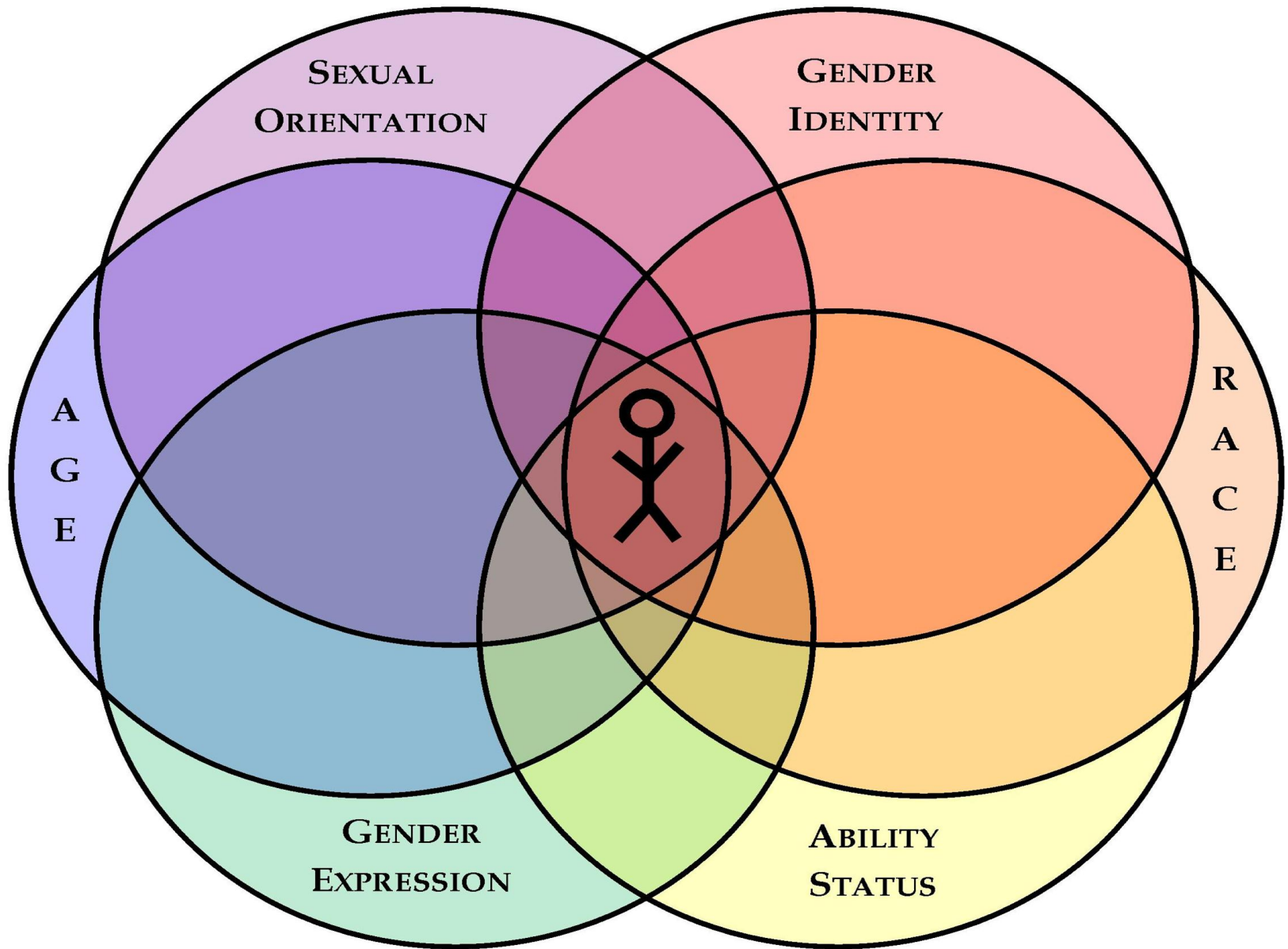
# Sexuality & the Spirit

- Addressing spirituality provides the vehicle to address the whole person-mind, body (sexuality), soul, and emotional self in order to guide an individual towards a deeper and meaningful relationship with God or Higher Power.
- Addressing an individual's sexuality can also have more positive results and perpetrate a richer and more effective spiritual direction relationship.
- Research has shown nearly ½ of those who discussed their sexuality perceived the discussion as negative; however, those individual's who shared their sexuality by engaging in sexual discussion and shared their experiences developed stronger, more authentic and healthy relationships with themselves and others. \*

\*Jo Anastasiadis, Whisperings of Intimacy: Sexuality, Spirituality, and Spiritual Direction, December 2009, p.20-21.  
Ibid, 22-23.

# Conclusion

- Not advocating a sole focus on an individual' s sexual orientation or sexuality.
- Perhaps the lack of discussion of sexuality in health care settings has further exacerbated the over focus on sex and the genesis of negative views of sex and sexuality, namely the castigation and vilification of “non-heterosexual” persons.
- Incorporating a germane discussion on an individual' s sexuality will open up a more authentic, pervasive, and in many cases (especially among persons of color and Millennials) necessary discussion of how one experiences and perceives the Holy Spirit.





# WHEN THE HEART and MIND WORK TOGETHER



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# Questions & Comments

