



Structural Racism and Obesity: Housing

Roland J. Thorpe, Jr., PhD

rthorpe@jhu.edu

Exploring Strategies for Sustainable Systems-Wide Changes to Reduce the Prevalence of Obesity: A Virtual Workshop

April 8, 2021

“Sometimes racial data tell us
something we don’t know.
Other times we need racial
data to confirm something we
already seem to know.”

STRUCTURAL RACISM AND HEALTHY HOUSING: WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?



Structural
Racism and
Housing
Disparities

- Physical Housing Conditions
- Housing Affordability and Stability
- Segregation

Residential Segregation as a Fundamental Determinant of Racial Disparities





Pathways Linking Segregation to Health: Resource Deprivation

- Segregation creates differential access to health-supporting resources.
- Segregation is associated with
 - Less available full service restaurants and super markets.
 - Lower chance of access to high quality medical care
 - Fewer health clinics, physicians, and pharmacies



Pathways Linking Segregation to Health: Risk Exposure

- Segregation creates race differences in the “health risk profiles” of communities in which African Americans and other minorities often live.
-
- Segregation leads to:
 - Greater exposure to environmental toxins
 - Targeted availability of hazardous products (tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, etc.)
 - Combined with concentrated poverty, it can lead to high crime, low quality housing, and a more stressful environment

Racial/Ethnic Segregation and Housing

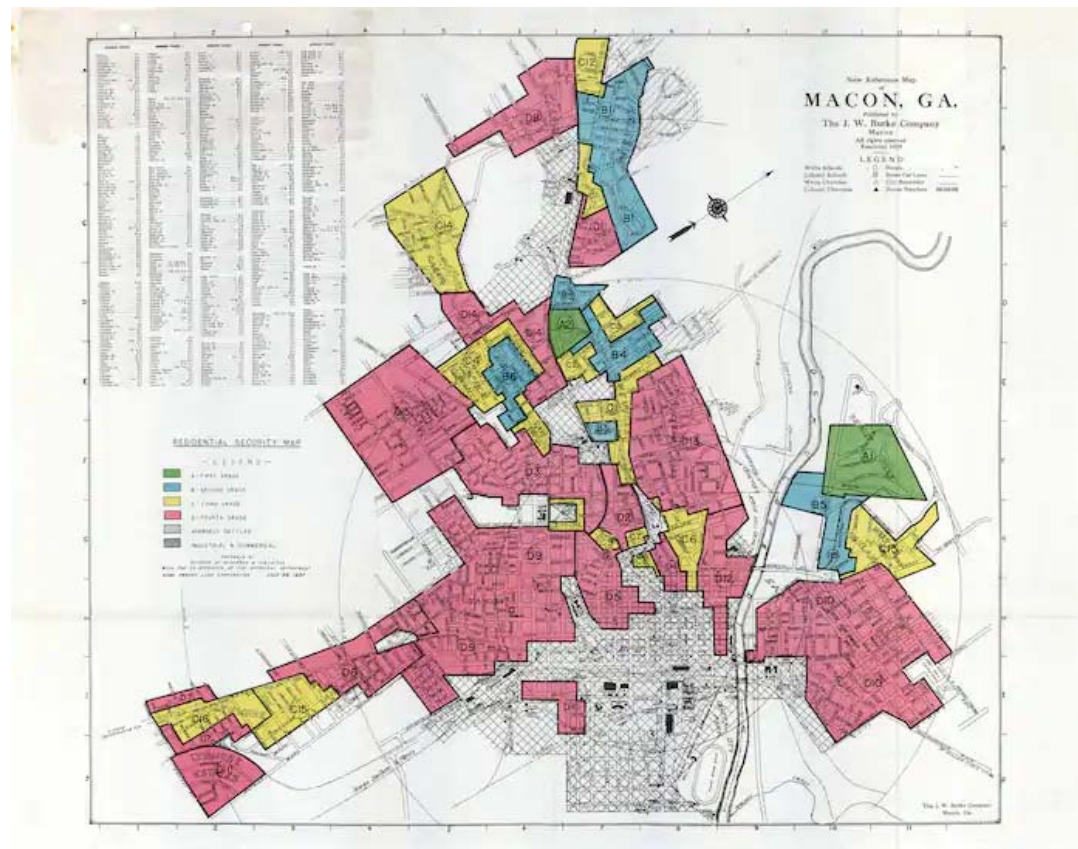
- Minorities tend to live in geographically distinct communities than whites that impacts housing.
- Racial segregation can lead to different environmental and social risk exposures.
- In addition to the risk exposures, there were other discriminatory practices that perpetuated housing disparities, namely redlining.

Homeowners' Loan Act of 1933 that created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC)

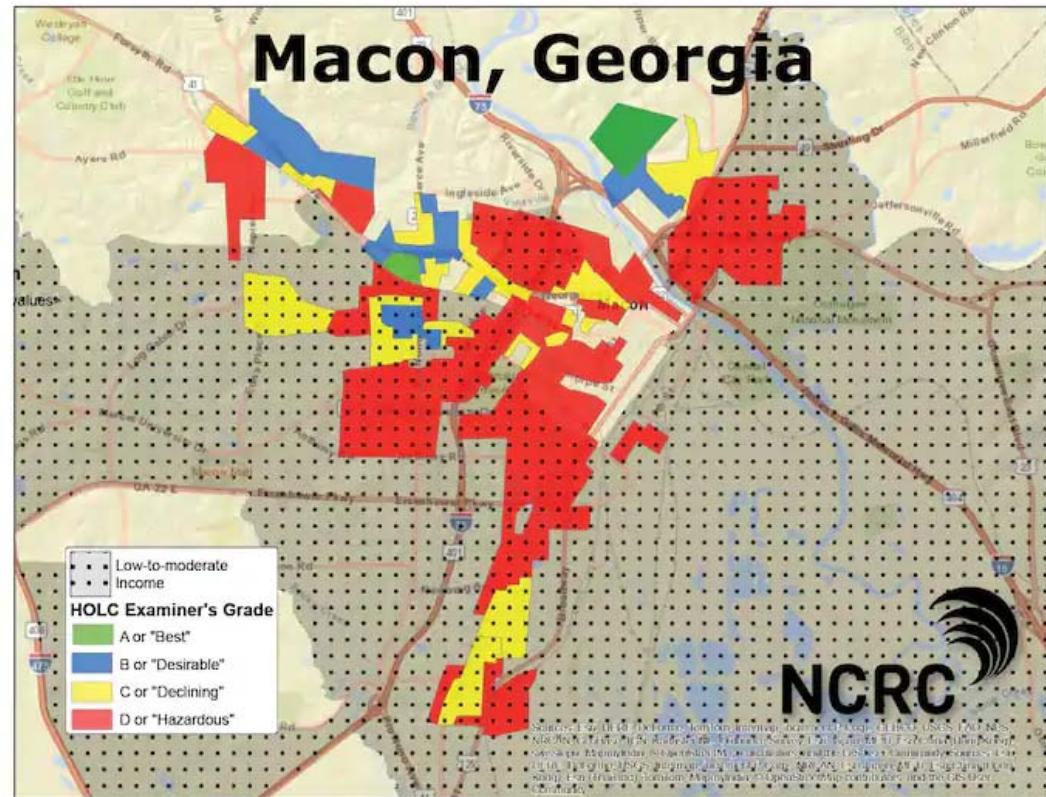
- The objective of the HOLC was to help refinance non-farm home mortgages that were at risk of foreclosure.
- Specifically, the HOLC bought upside-down mortgages from banks and issued new 15-year, amortized home mortgage loans to homeowners.

Source: Thorpe, Jr RJ, Norris KC, Beech BM, Bruce MA. 2019. "Racism Across the Life Course." In *Racism: Science & Tools for the Public Health Professional*, edited by CL Ford, DM Griffith, MA Bruce, and K Gilbert. Washington, DC: APHA.

HOLC
created
maps of at
least 239
U.S. cities.



Example of Lingering Effects of Redlining



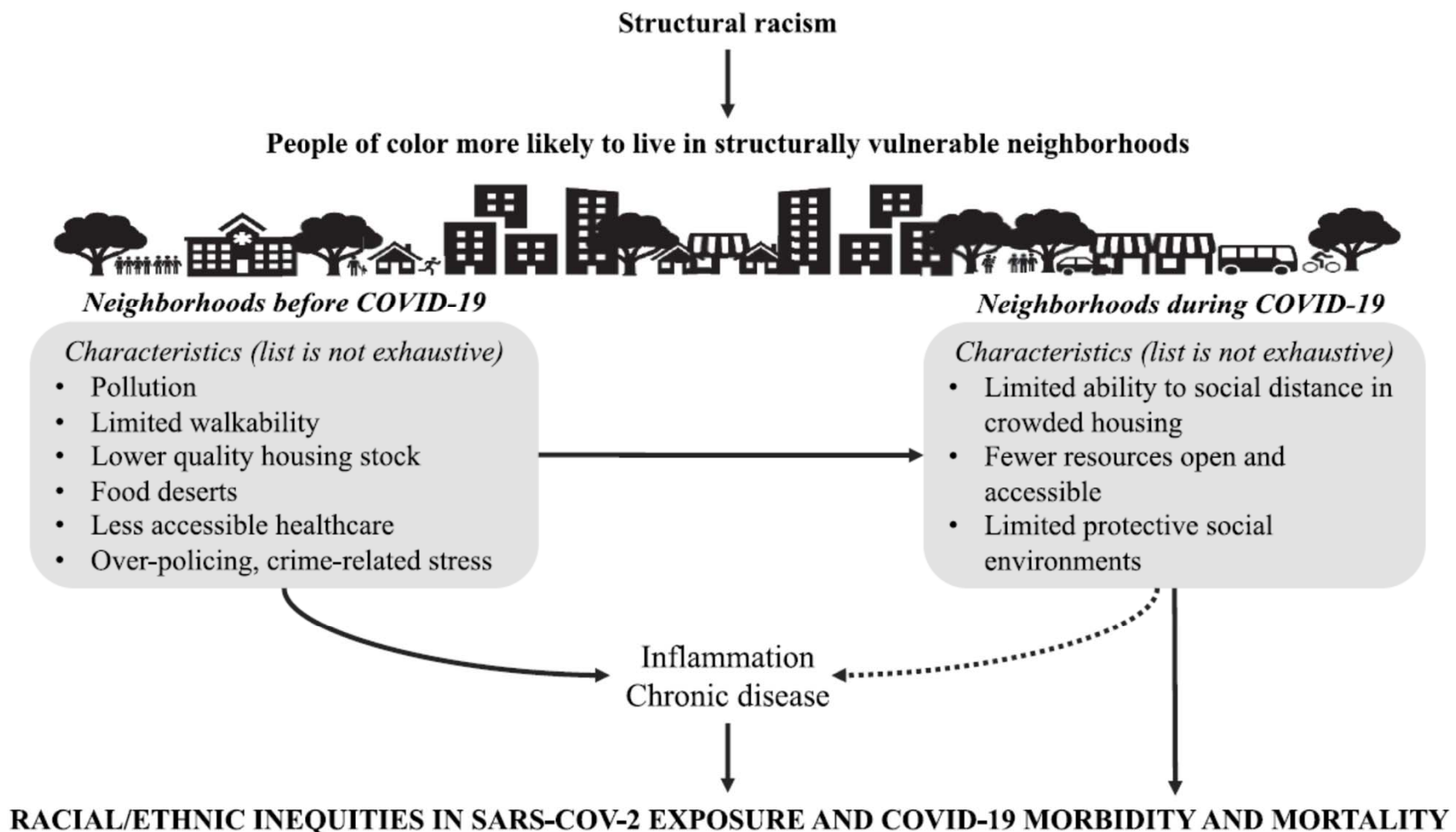


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for pathways through which neighbourhoods, shaped by structural racism, may contribute to racial/ethnic inequities in SARS-COV-2 exposure and COVID-19 morbidity and mortality.

Opportunities

“The pandemic presents and window of opportunity for achieving greater equity in health care of all vulnerable populations.”

Opportunities

- Improving housing affordability for people of color.
- Provide people of color with thriving wages.
- Invest in the communities with the individuals who live their input.
- Cross sector partnerships to facilitate a health equity in housing and communities



Structural Racism and Obesity: Housing

Roland J. Thorpe, Jr., PhD

rthorpe@jhu.edu

Exploring Strategies for Sustainable Systems-Wide Changes to Reduce the Prevalence of Obesity: A Virtual Workshop

April 8, 2021