



# **A call to action to reconceptualize adverse childhood experiences among Black youth: Missing the forest for the trees**

**Making the “C-ACE” for a culturally-informed adverse childhood experiences framework to understand the pervasive mental health impact of racism on Black youth**

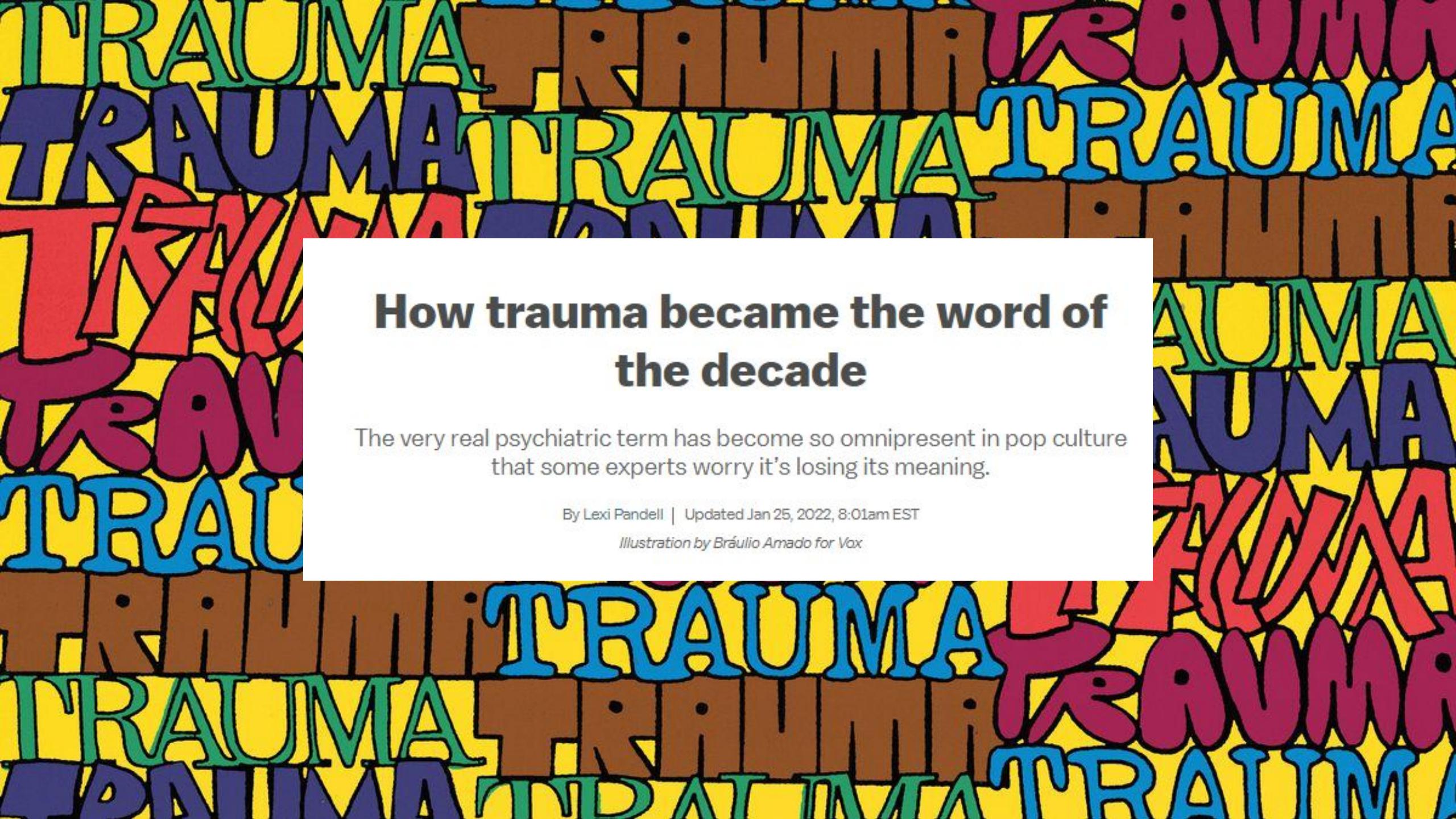
**Bernard, Calhoun, Banks, Halliday, Hughes-Halbert, & Danielson, 2021**

*Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma*

**Racial discrimination and other adverse childhood experiences as risk factors for internalizing mental health concerns among Black youth**

**Bernard, Smith, & Lanier, 2022**

*Journal of Traumatic Stress*



## How trauma became the word of the decade

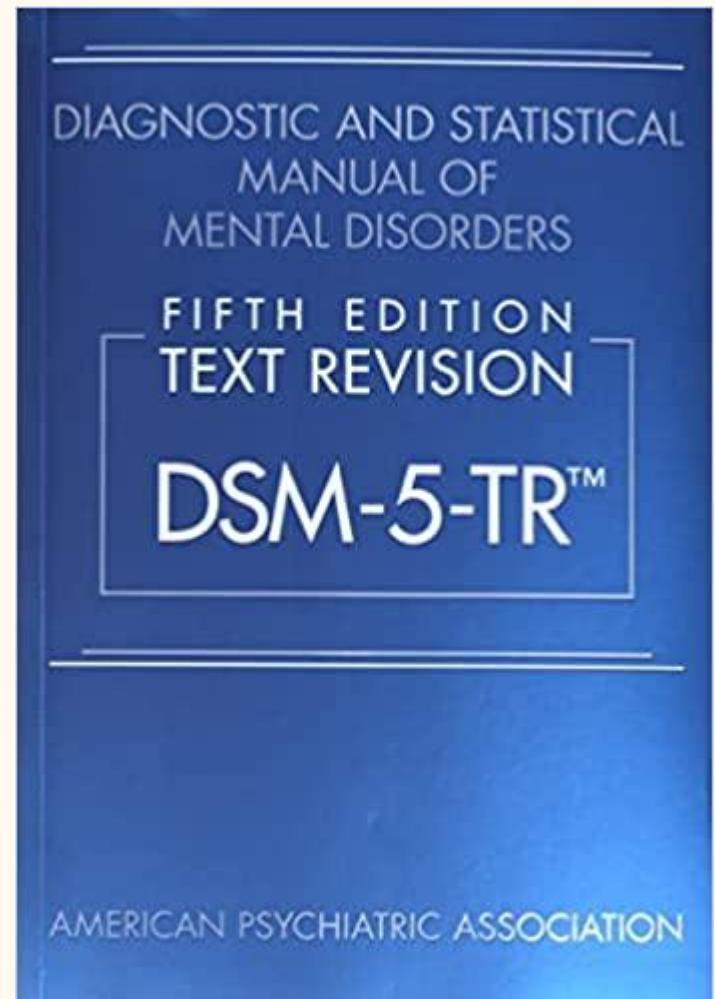
The very real psychiatric term has become so omnipresent in pop culture that some experts worry it's losing its meaning.

By Lexi Pandell | Updated Jan 25, 2022, 8:01am EST

*Illustration by Bráulio Amado for Vox*

Trauma is the experience of actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence.

-(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)



# POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIC EVENTS

**Natural Disasters**

**War, Terrorism, Political Violence**

**Serious Injury, Illness, Medical Procedures**

**Motor Vehicle Accidents, Crashes**

**Witnessing of Violence (home, community)**

**Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence**

**Physical Abuse, Physical Assault**

**Sexual Abuse, Sexual Assault, Rape**

**Neglect (physical, emotional, academic, medical)**

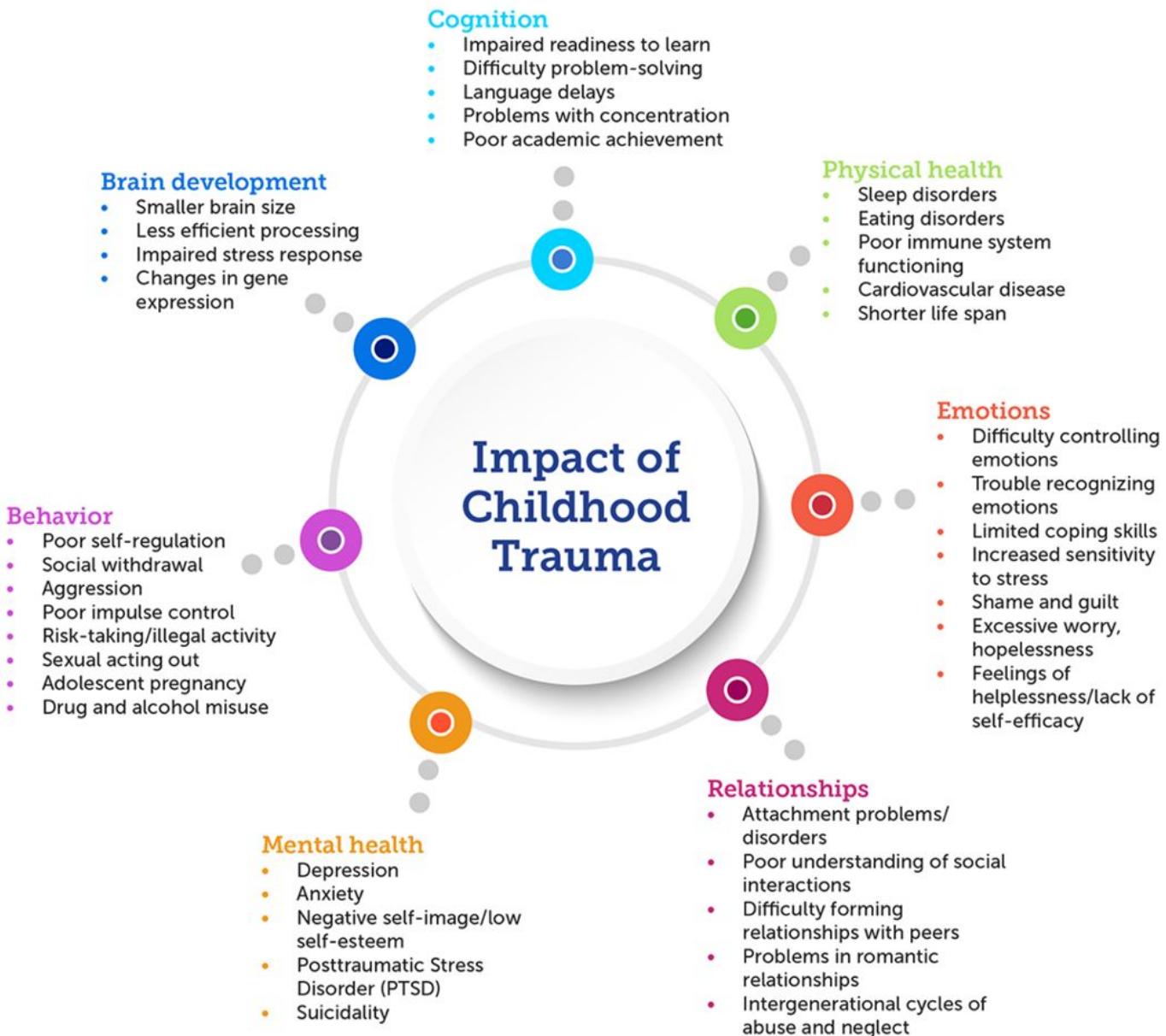
# Childhood Trauma Exposure

More than two thirds of children reported at least 1 traumatic event by 16 years of age

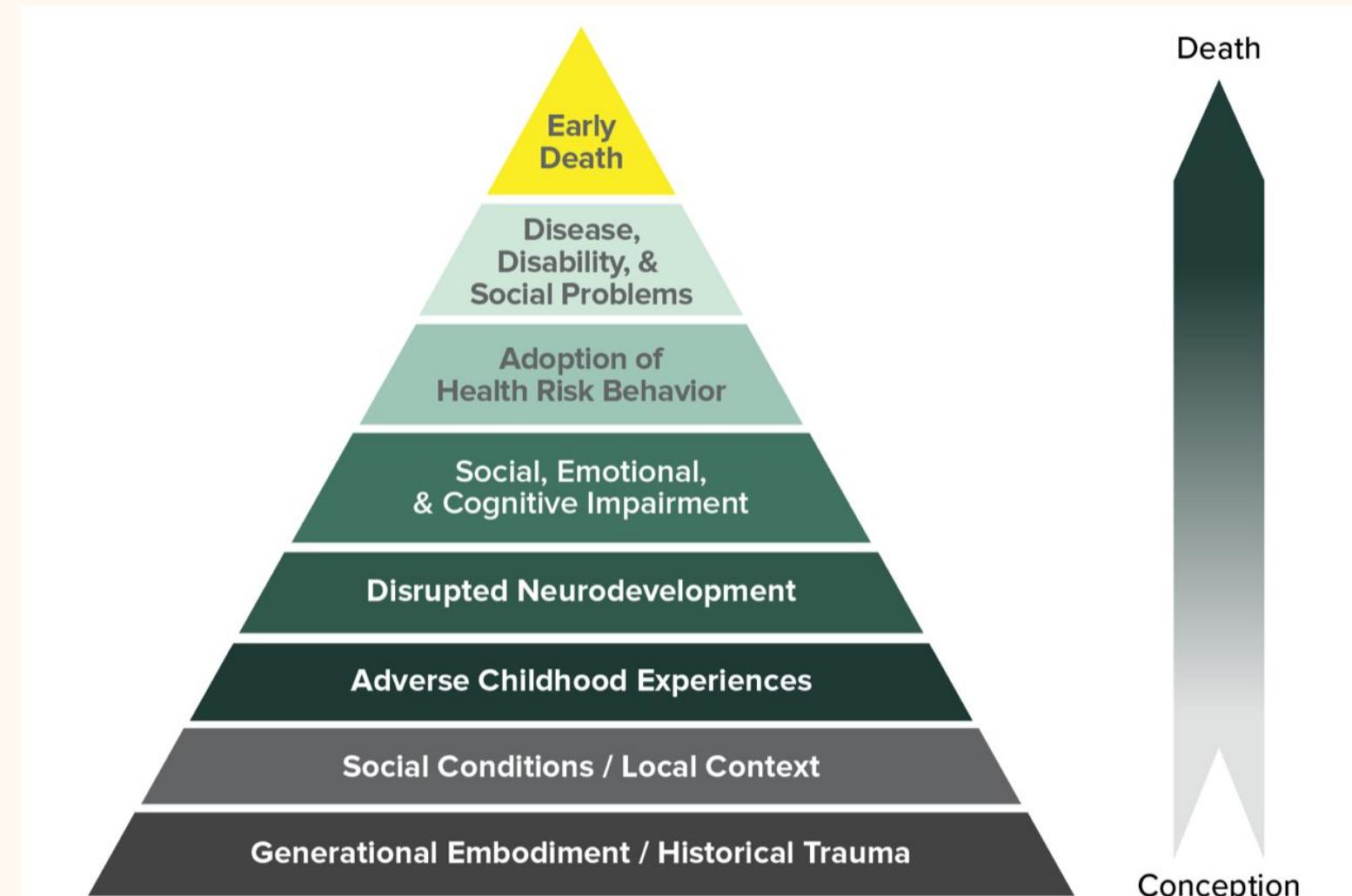


(Copeland et al., 2007)

# Impact of Childhood Trauma



# The Adverse Childhood Experiences Framework



Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.

*The three types of ACEs include*

**ABUSE**



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

**NEGLECT**



Physical



Emotional

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



Divorce

## WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

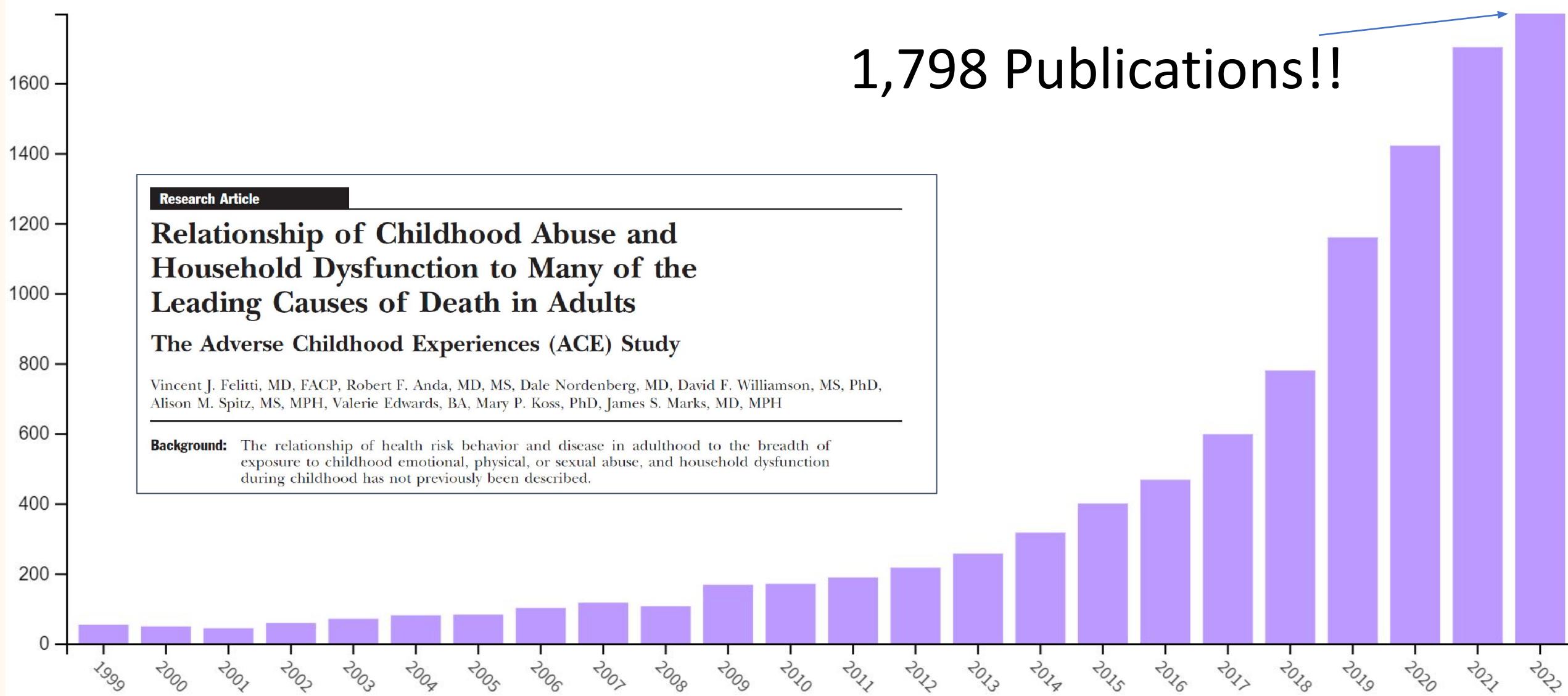
*As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes*



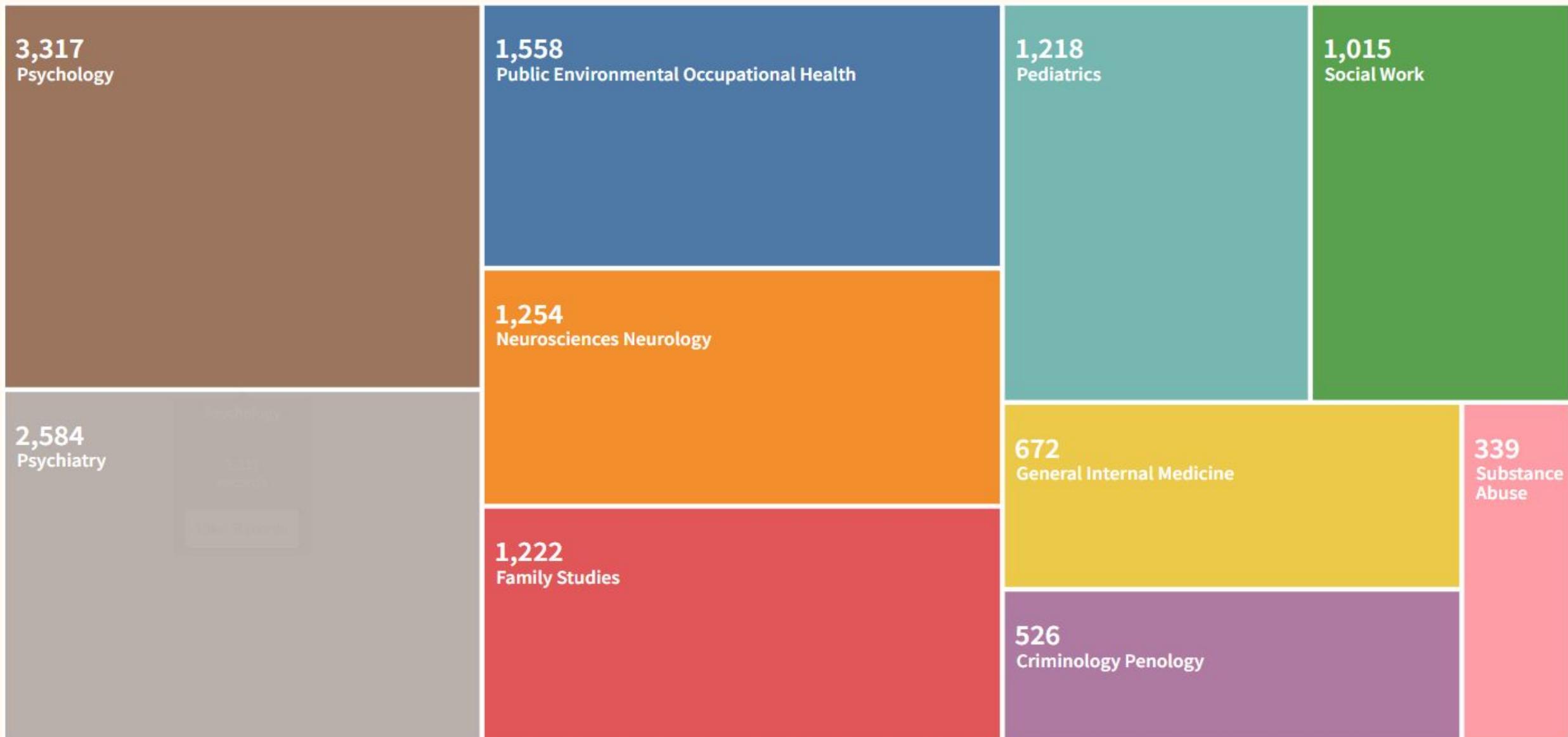


Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts

# Total ACEs Publications (1999-2022; Web of Science)

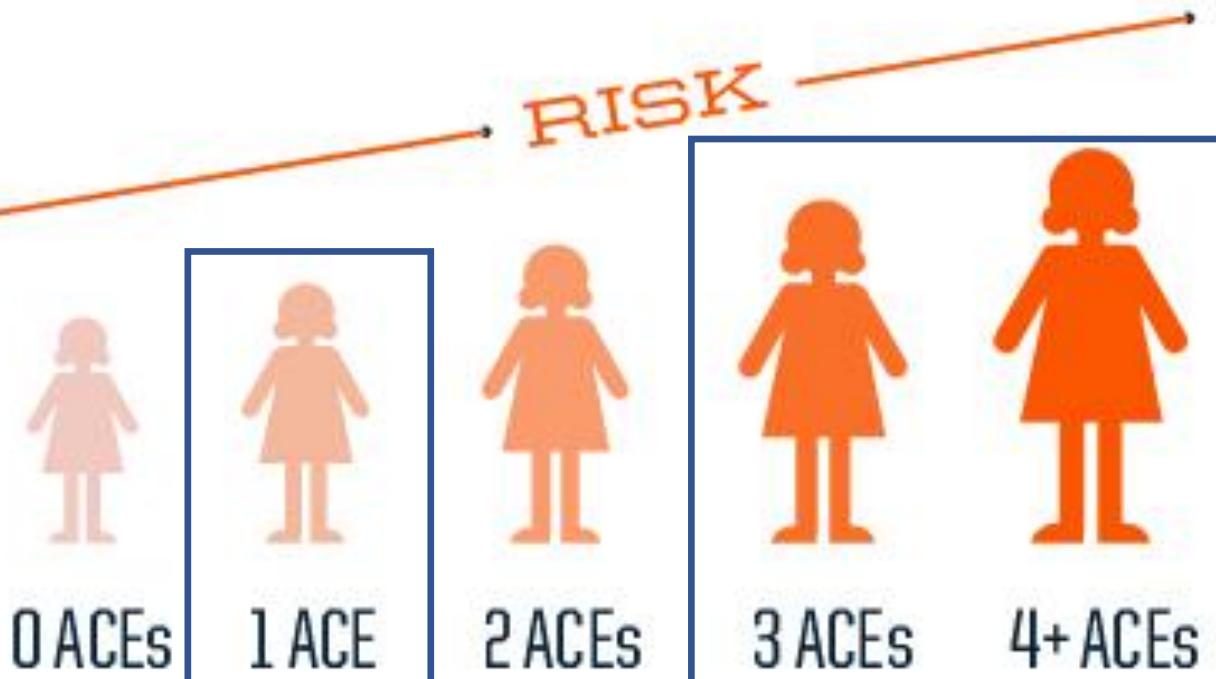


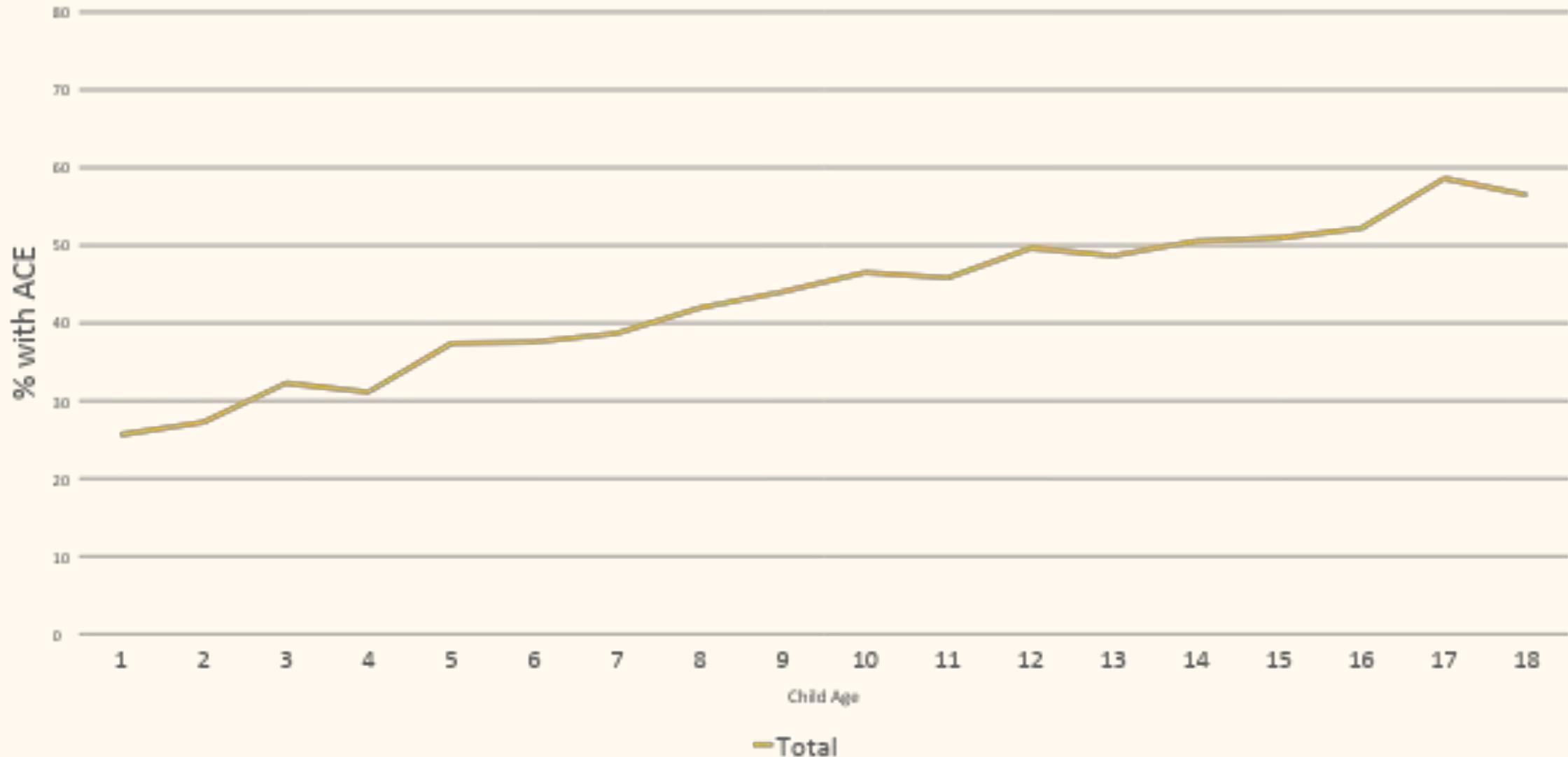
# ACEs Literature by Discipline (Web of Science)

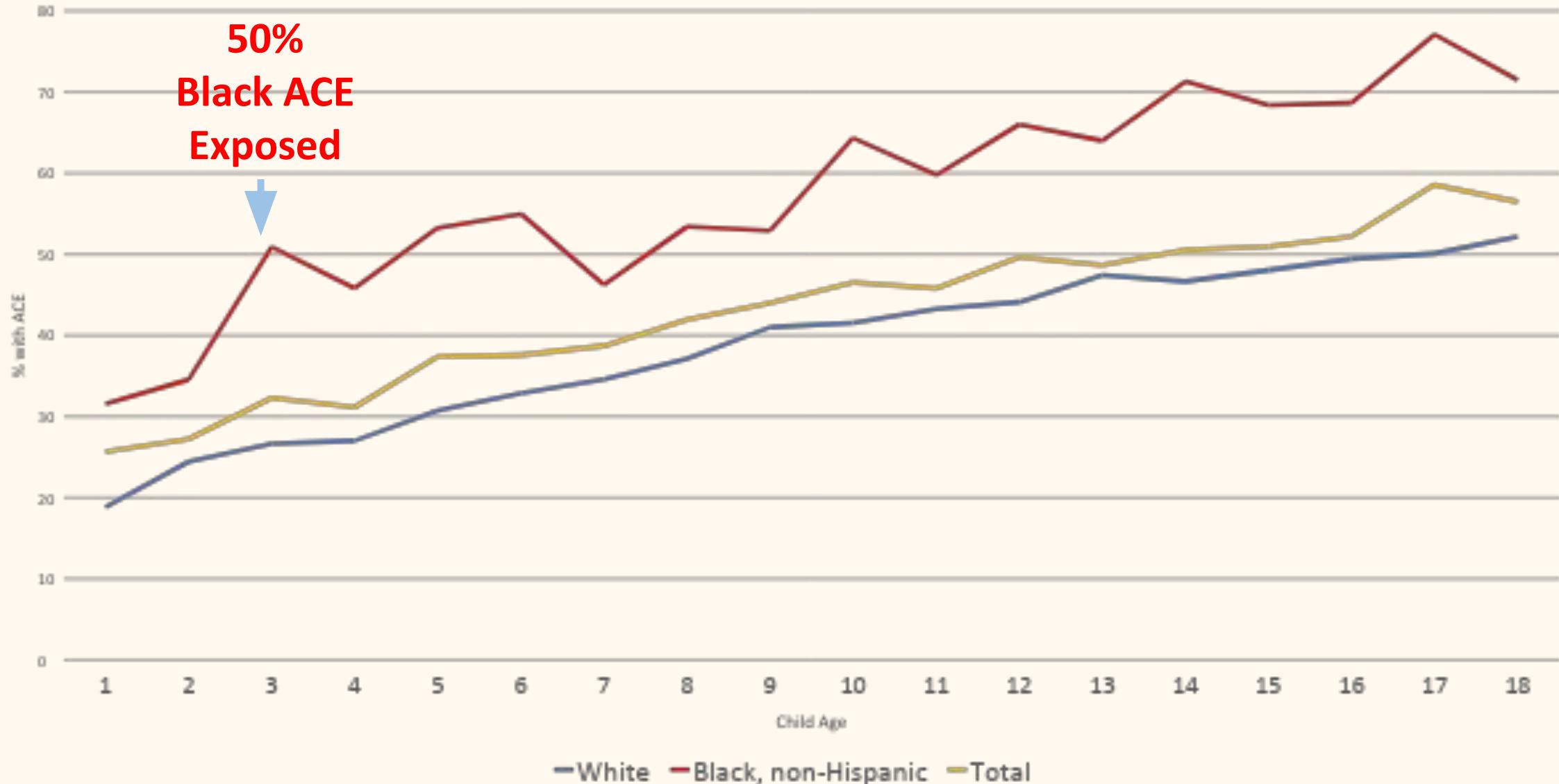


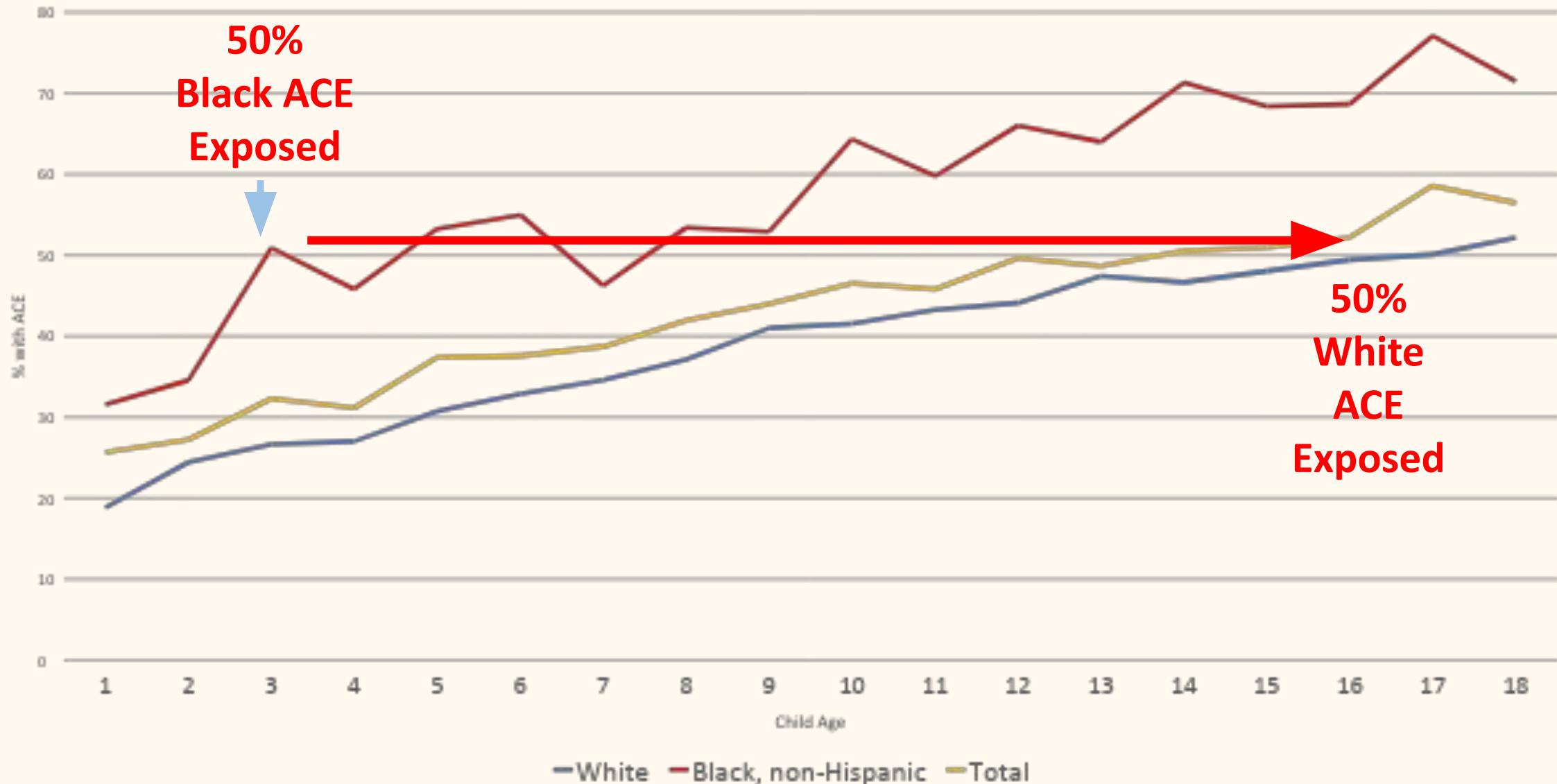
# WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

*As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes*

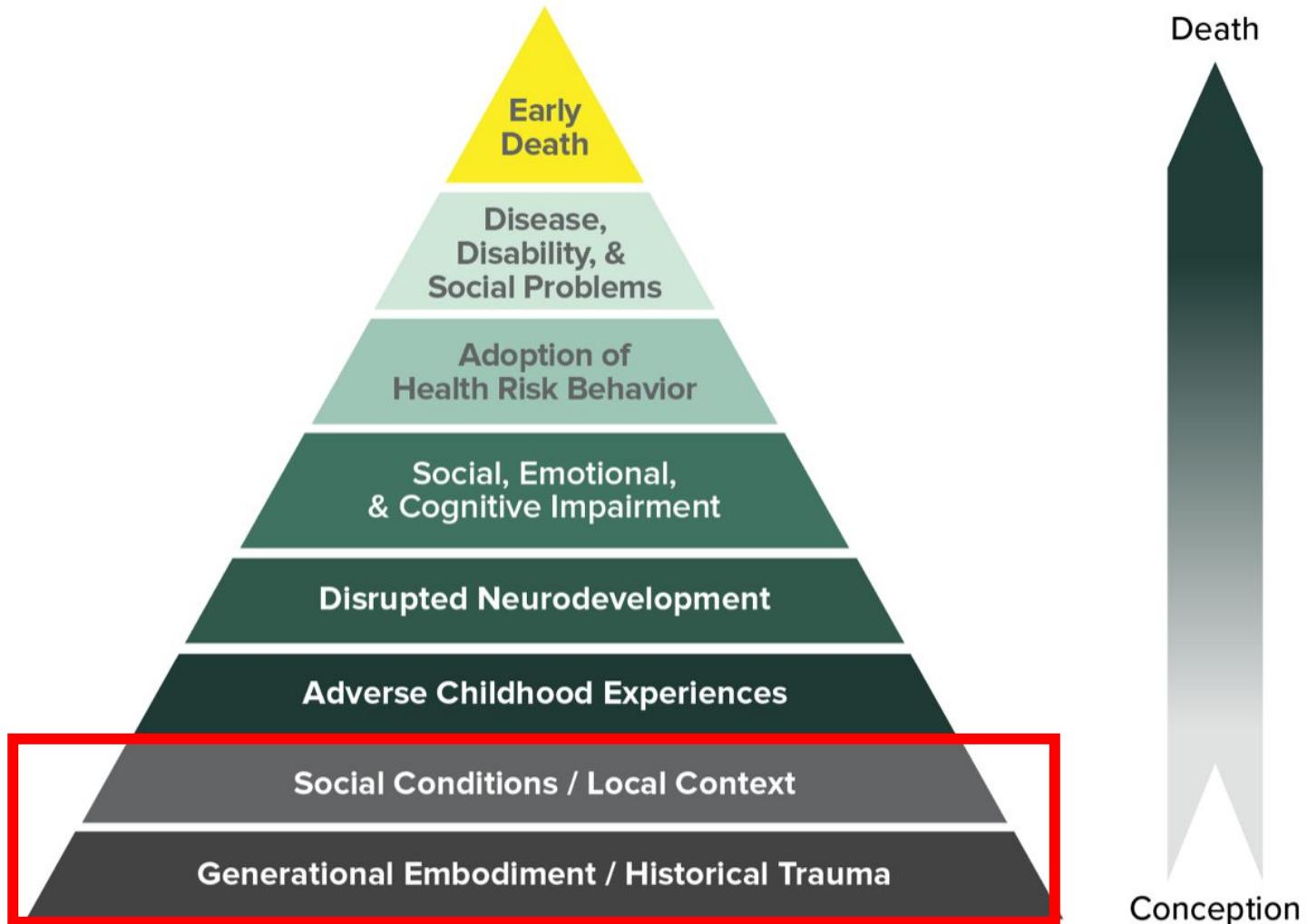








So, What Are We Missing?



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

# Historical Trauma

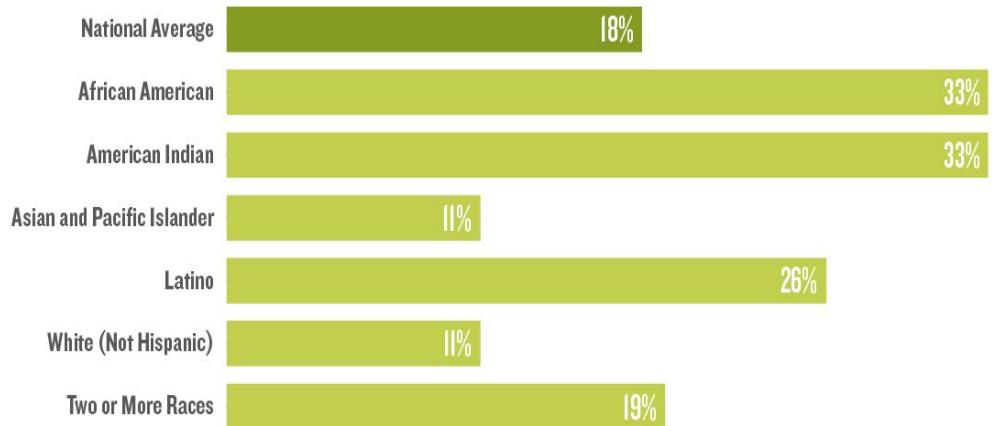
- The cumulative exposure to traumatic events that not only affect the individual, but continue to affect subsequent generations



Transatlantic Slave Trade  
Dots represent individual slave ships. The larger the dot, the more enslaved people on board.

# Social Conditions

## Children in Poverty by Race: 2017

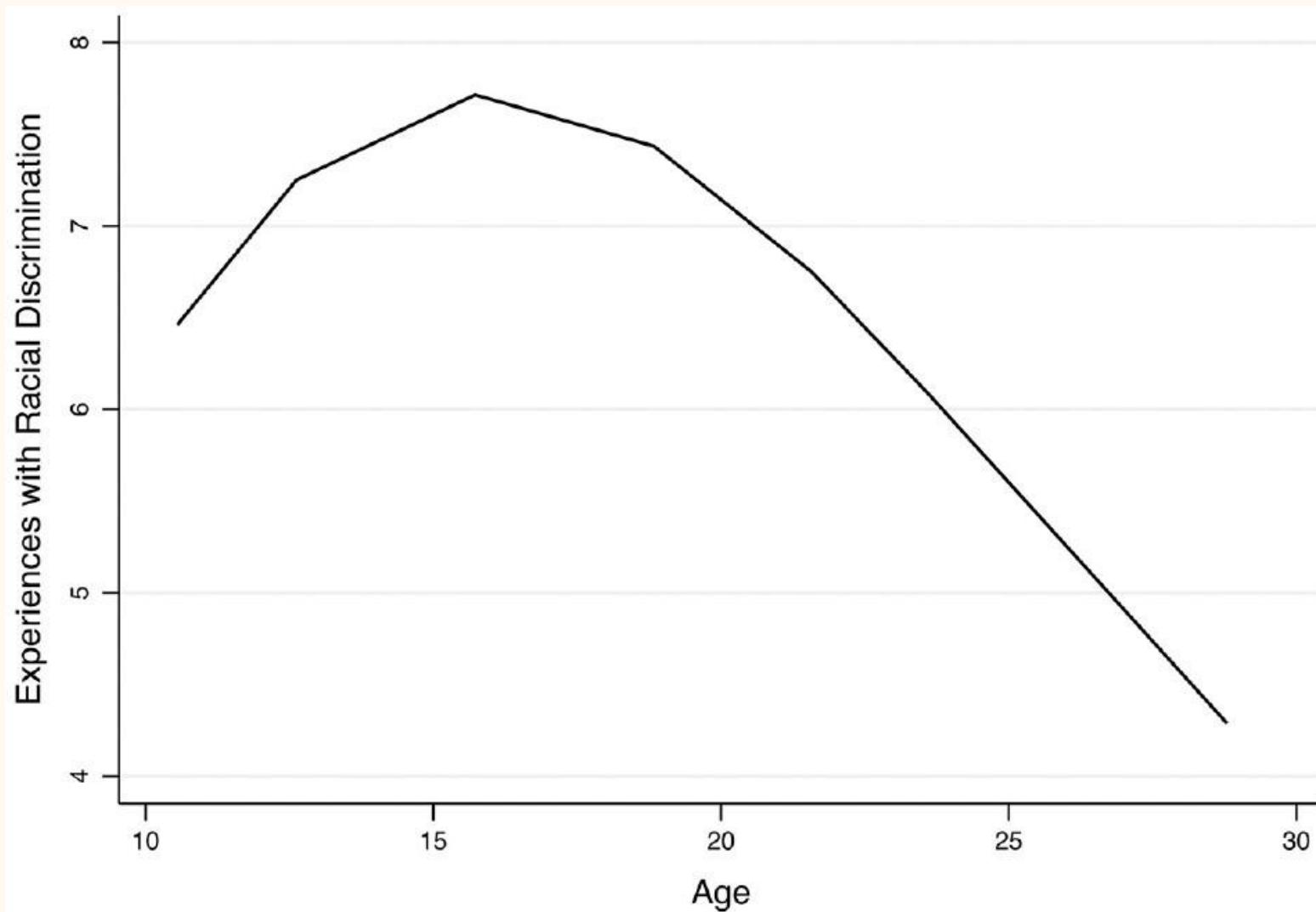


# Defining Racism

“A system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial group designations; rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined or perceived by dominant-group members as inferior, deviant or undesirable”

-(Harrel, 2000; p. 43).

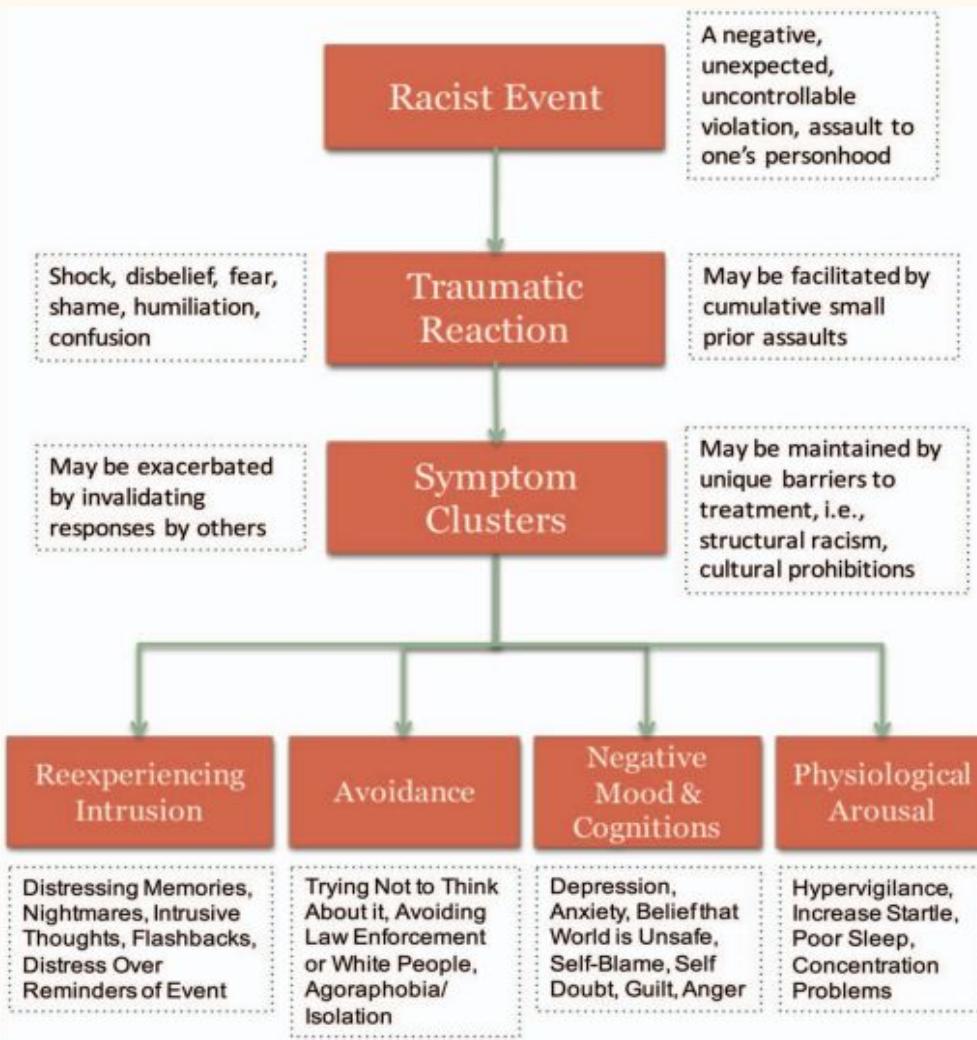
# Interpersonal discrimination



# Racism-Related Trauma

The emotional and psychological response to racial incidents that are unexpected, experienced as threatening, and result in significant psychological stress

(Carter, 2007)



# Rumination as a Mediator of the Association Between Racial Discrimination and Depression Among Black Youth

[Donte L. Bernard](#) , [Colleen A. Halliday](#), [Funlola Are](#), [Devin E. Banks](#) & [Carla Kmett Danielson](#)

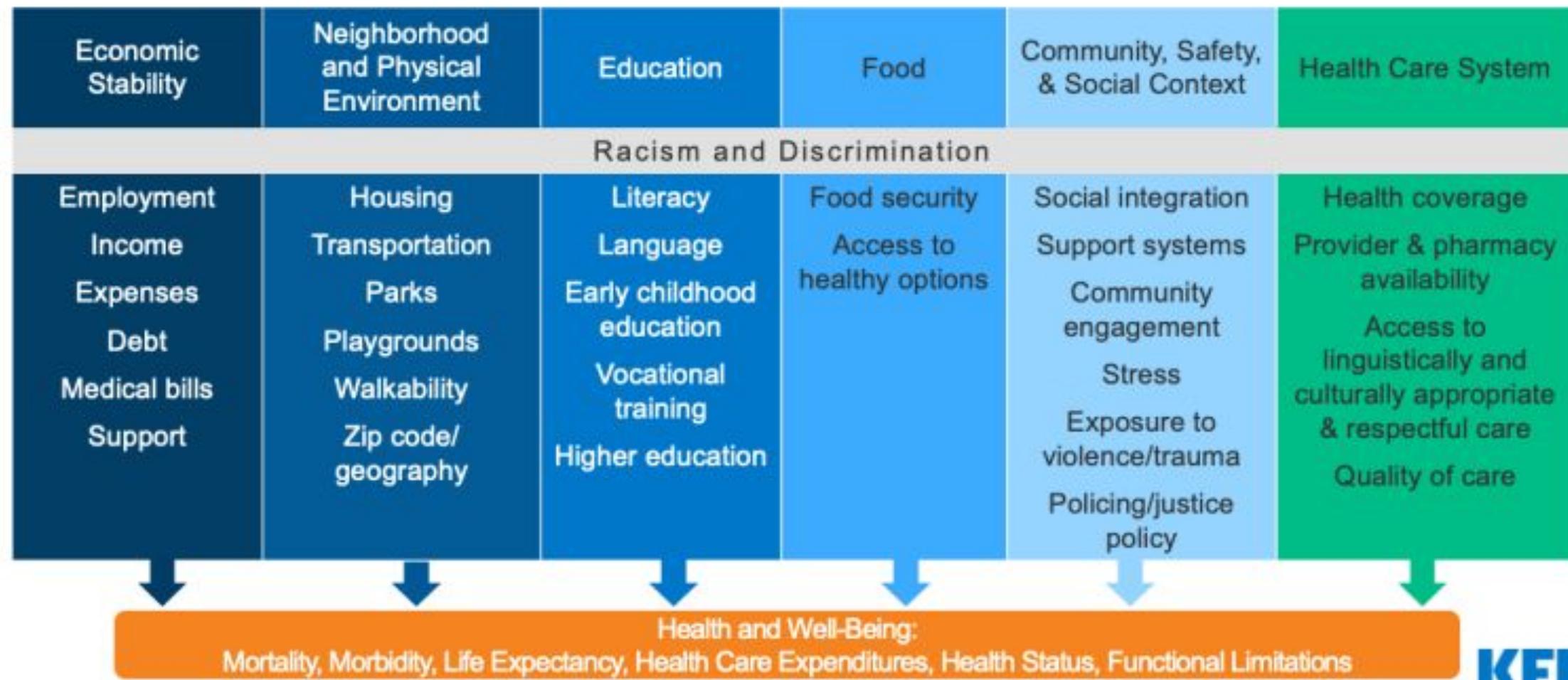
*Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* **9**, 1937–1945 (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

➤ [Am J Orthopsychiatry](#). 2023;93(4):293-303. doi: 10.1037/ort0000679. Epub 2023 May 8.

**Developmental differences in the impact of racial discrimination on depression and anxiety among Black youth: Examining rumination as a mechanism**

Donte L Bernard <sup>1</sup>, Cristina M López <sup>2</sup>, Devin E Banks <sup>3</sup>, Austin M Hahn <sup>2</sup>, Carla Kmett Danielson <sup>2</sup>

# Health Disparities are Driven by Social and Economic Inequities



KFF

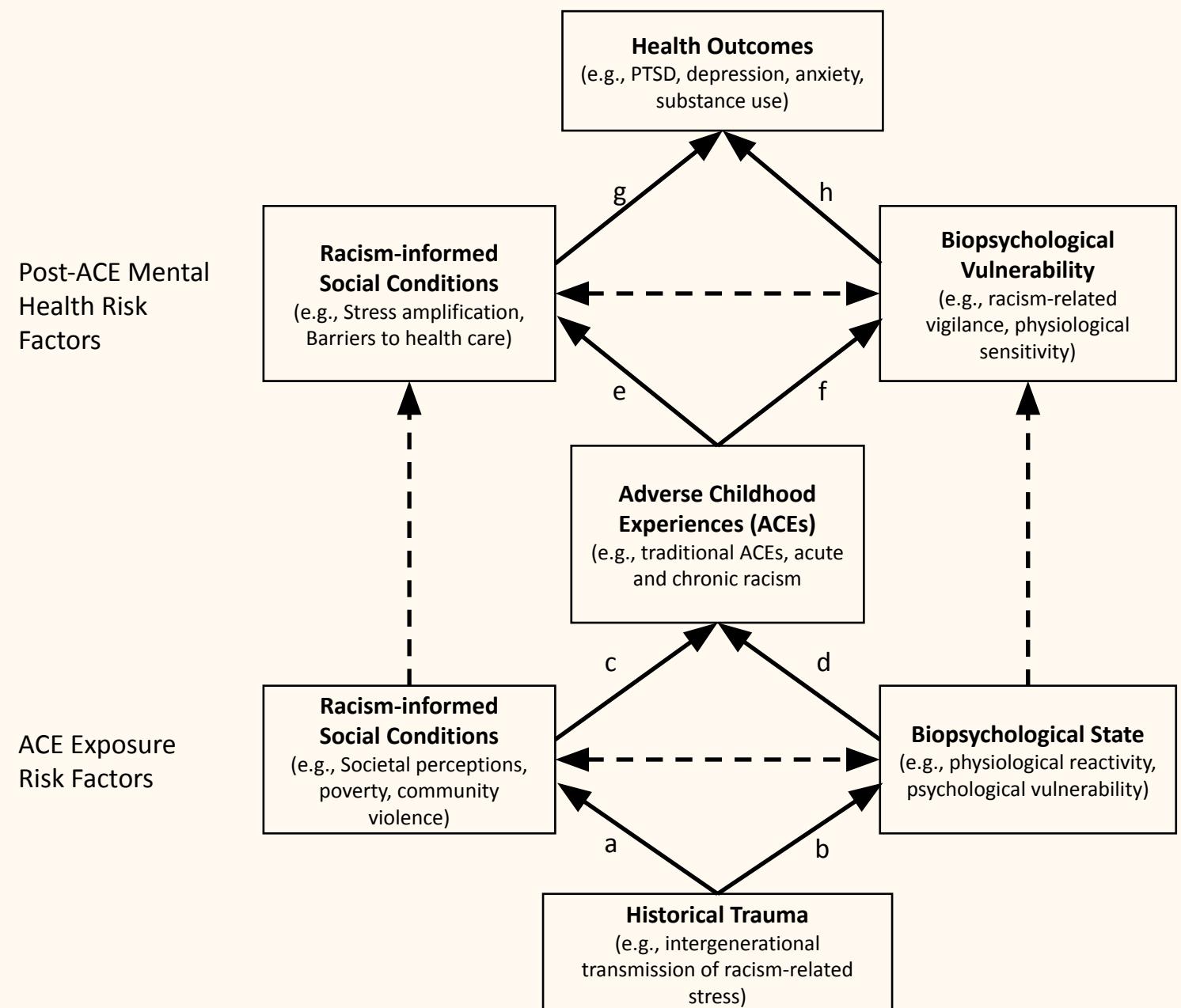
## Bridging the Gap

- *The APA Presidential Task Force on Traumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents (2009)* and *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017)* have cited racism and racial discrimination as a contributing factor to stress in the lives of racial and ethnic minority children.

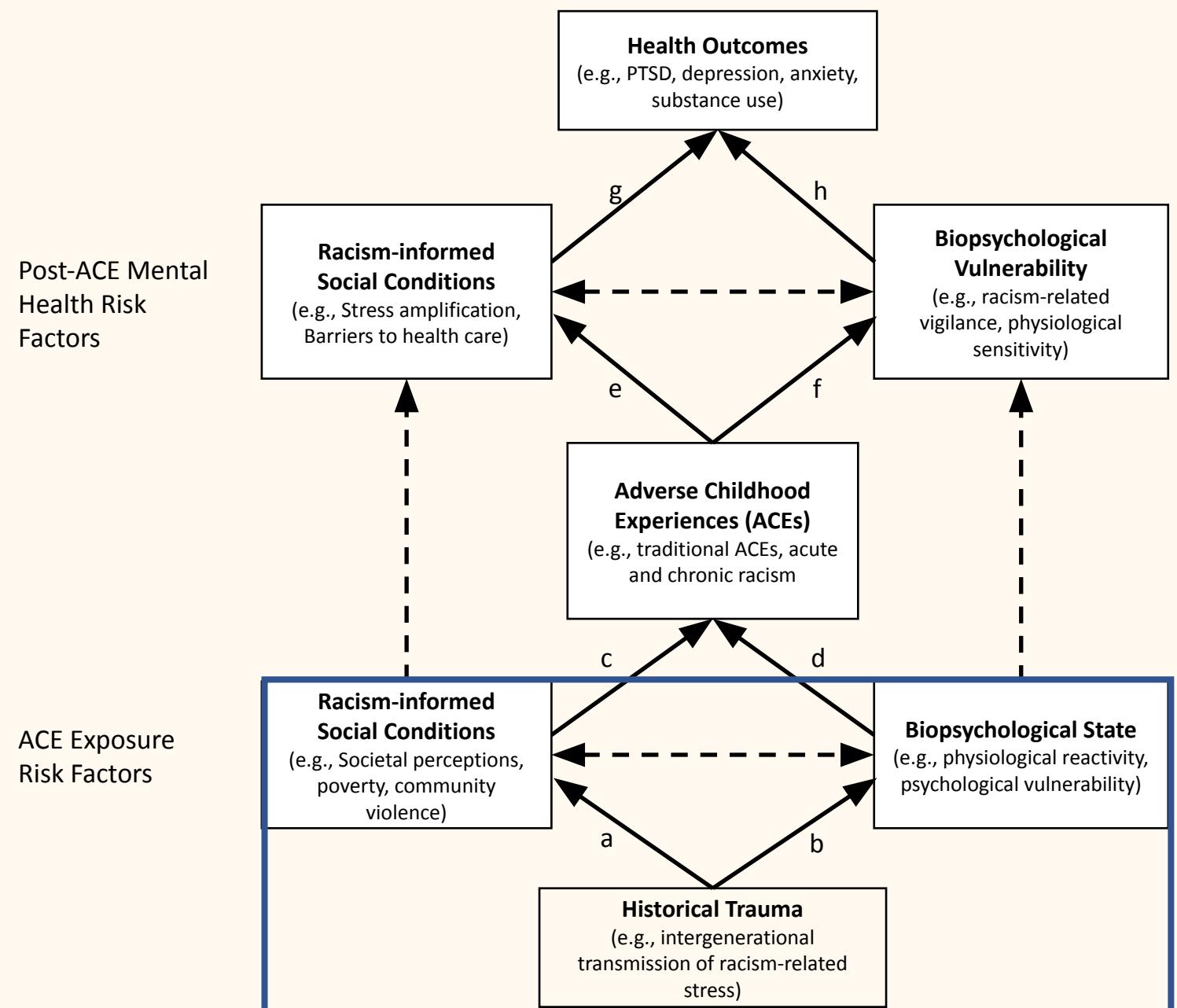
# Integrating Racism into the ACEs Framework

- ACEs + Racism
  - (Vásquez et al., 2019)
- Culturally specific ACEs
  - Racial discrimination and community violence vs. parental drug and alcohol problems.
    - (Maguire-Jack et al., 2019)
- Expanded Model of ACEs
  - (Cronholm et al., 2015)
- Adverse Community Events
  - (Ellis, 2017)

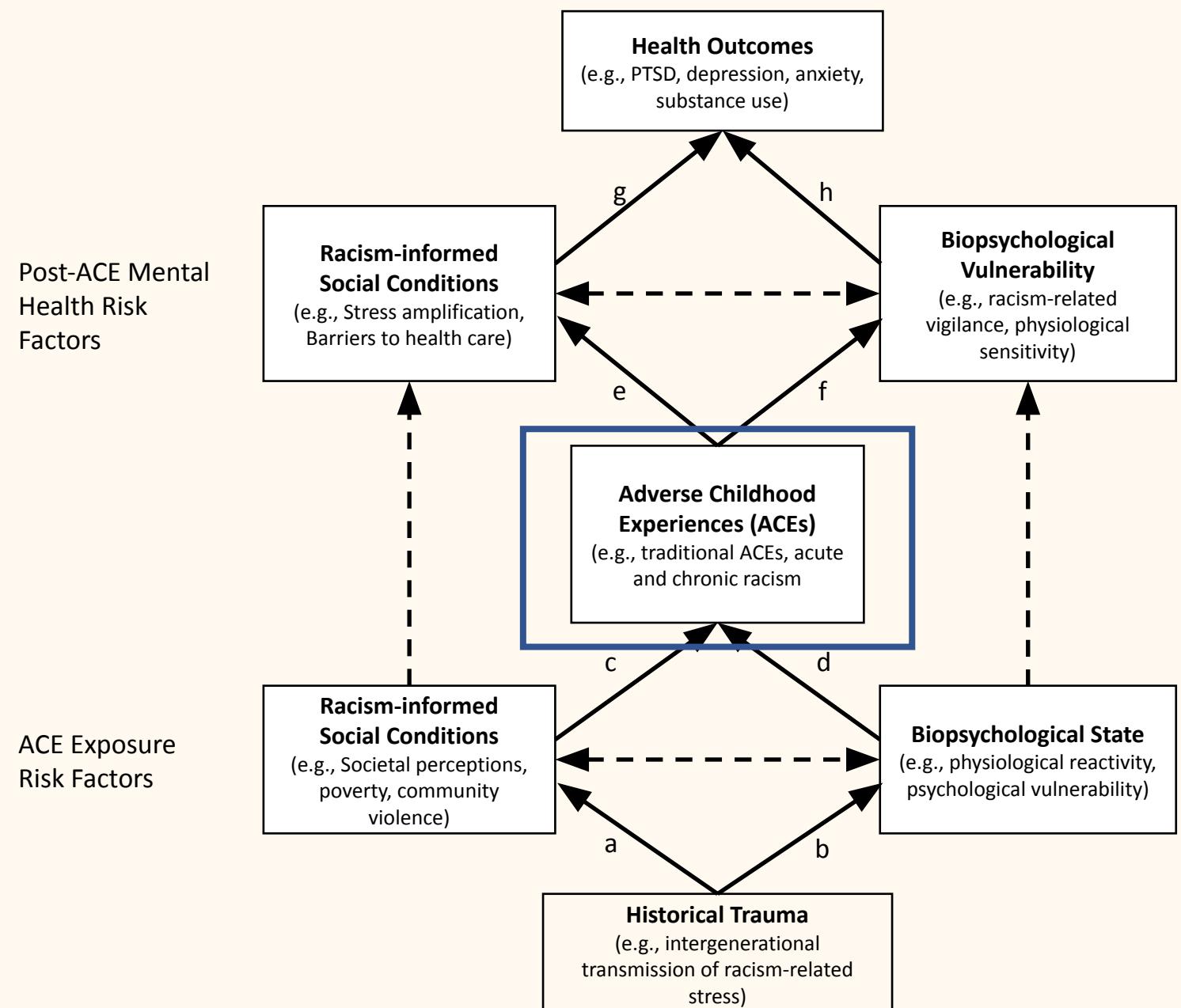
# Culturally-Informed Adverse Childhood Experiences Framework to Understand the Pervasive Mental Health Impact of Racism on Black Youth



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Published in final edited form as:

*J Trauma Stress*. 2021 October ; 34(5): 995–1004. doi:10.1002/jts.22670.

## Racial Discrimination is Associated with Acute Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms and Predicts Future Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Severity in Trauma-Exposed Black Adults in the United States

Claire M. Bird<sup>1</sup>, E. Kate Webb<sup>2</sup>, Andrew T. Schramm<sup>3</sup>, Lucas Torres<sup>1</sup>, Christine Larson<sup>2</sup>, Terri A. deRoon-Cassini<sup>3</sup>

## Beyond Trauma Exposure: Discrimination and Posttraumatic Stress, Internalizing, and Externalizing Problems Among Detained Youth

Lucybel Mendez<sup>1</sup> ,  
Michaela M. Mozley<sup>1</sup>  and  
Patricia K. Kerig<sup>1</sup>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Racial discrimination and other adverse childhood experiences as risk factors for internalizing mental health concerns among Black youth

Donte L. Bernard , Quinton Smith, Paul Lanier

Journal of Interpersonal Violence  
2022, Vol. 37(3-4) 1825–1851  
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DOI: 10.1177/0886260520926314  
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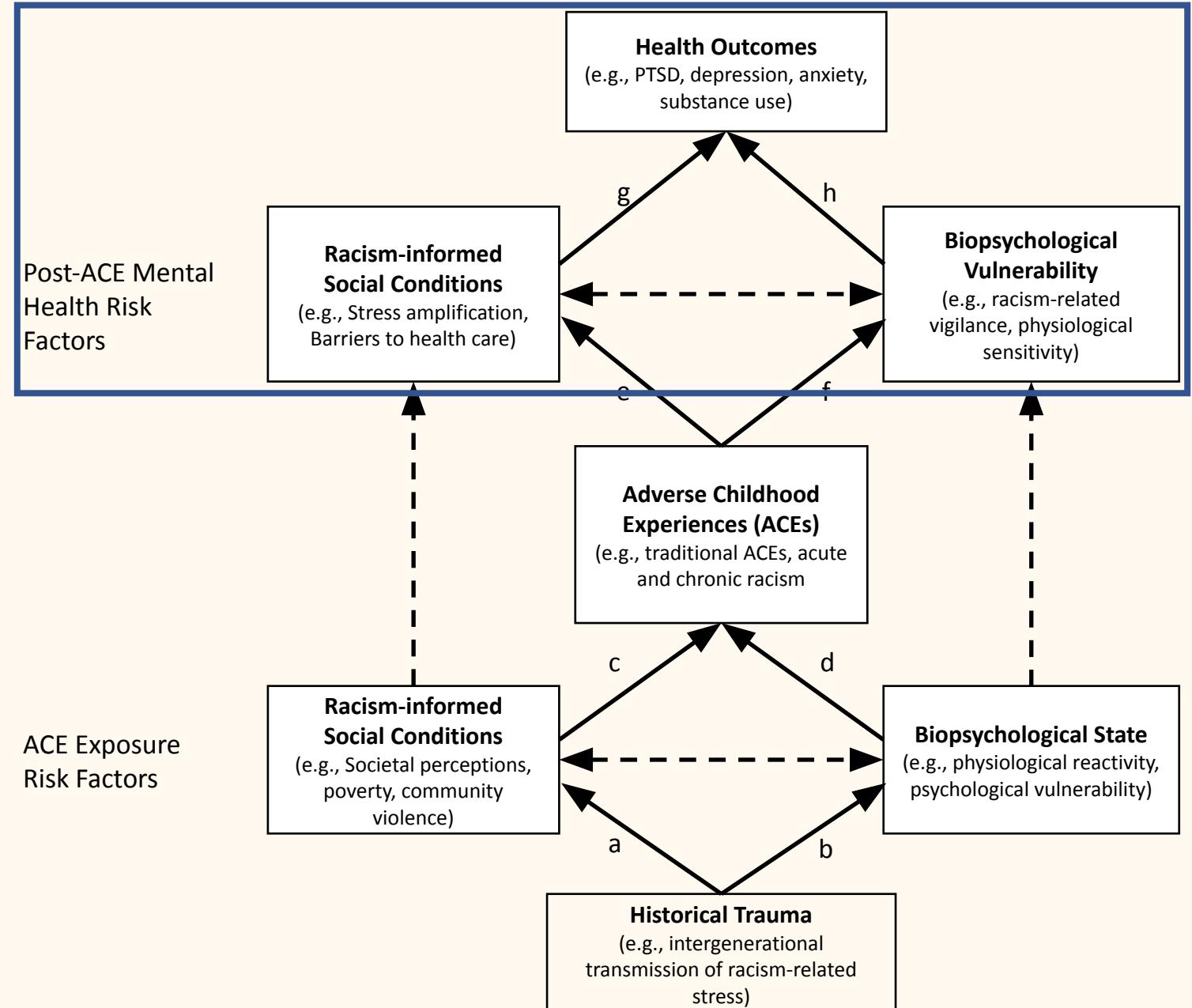


TABLE 4 Results of multivariable models estimating the associations between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and depression and anxiety

ACE endorsed	Depression		Anxiety	
	aOR	95% CI	aOR	95% CI
Racial Discrimination	1.35	[1.23, 1.49]	1.39	[1.31, 1.47]
Hard to cover basics like food or housing	1.74	[1.68, 1.81]	1.79	[1.75, 1.84]
Parent or guardian divorced	1.59	[1.54, 1.64]	1.24	[1.21, 1.27]
Parent or guardian died	1.18	[1.10, 1.28]	0.91	[0.80, 1.04]
Parent or guardian spent time in jail	1.01	[0.99, 1.04]	0.96	[0.93, 0.99]
Adults slap, hit, kick, or punch others	1.19	[1.16, 1.22]	1.06	[1.05, 1.07]
Victim of or witness to neighborhood violence	1.74	[1.70, 1.78]	1.36	[1.32, 1.40]
Lived with person with mental illness	3.21	[3.13, 3.28]	2.91	[2.83, 2.98]
Lived with person with alcohol/drug problem	1.24	[1.21, 1.27]	1.22	[1.21, 1.23]

Note: N = 8,672, with pooled results from six imputed models. Models controlled for child age, sex, geography, and poverty level.

## Culturally-Informed Adverse Childhood Experiences Framework to Understand the Pervasive Mental Health Impact of Racism on Black Youth



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# **RING THE ALARM**

## THE CRISIS OF BLACK YOUTH SUICIDE IN AMERICA



A REPORT TO CONGRESS FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS  
**EMERGENCY TASKFORCE ON BLACK YOUTH  
SUICIDE AND MENTAL HEALTH**

# Meta-analysis: Are Psychotherapies Less Effective for Black Youth in Communities With Higher Levels of Anti-Black Racism?

Maggi A. Price, PhD , John R. Weisz, PhD , Sarah McKetta, MSc , Nathan L. Hollinsaid, BS , Micah R. Lattanner, PhD , Allecia E. Reid, PhD , Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, PhD 

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**Objective:** To examine whether anti-Black cultural racism moderates the efficacy of psychotherapy interventions among youth.

**Method:** A subset of studies from a previous meta-analysis of 5 decades of youth psychotherapy randomized controlled trials was analyzed. Studies were published in English between 1963 and 2017 and identified through a systematic search. The 194 studies ( $N = 14,081$  participants; age range, 2-19) across 34 states comprised 2,678 effect sizes (ESs) measuring mental health problems (eg, depression) targeted by interventions. Anti-Black cultural racism was operationalized using a composite index of 31 items measuring explicit racial attitudes (obtained from publicly available sources, eg, General Social Survey) aggregated to the state level and linked to the meta-analytic database. Analyses were conducted with samples of majority-Black (ie,  $\geq 50\%$  Black) ( $n = 36$  studies) and majority-White ( $n = 158$  studies) youth.

**Results:** Two-level random-effects meta-regression analyses indicated that higher anti-Black cultural racism was associated with lower ESs for studies with majority-Black youth ( $\beta = -0.2$ , 95% CI  $[-0.35, -0.04]$ ,  $p = .02$ ) but was unrelated to ESs for studies with majority-White youth ( $\beta = 0.0004$ , 95% CI  $[-0.03, 0.03]$ ,  $p = .98$ ), controlling for relevant area-level covariates. In studies with majority-Black youth, mean ESs were significantly lower in states with the highest anti-Black cultural racism ( $>1$  SD above the mean; Hedges'  $g = 0.19$ ) compared with states with the lowest racism ( $<1$  SD below the mean; Hedges'  $g = 0.60$ ).

**Conclusion:** Psychotherapies tested with samples of majority-Black youth were significantly less effective in states with higher (vs lower) levels of anti-Black cultural racism, suggesting that anti-Black cultural racism may be one contextual moderator of treatment effect heterogeneity.

**Key words:** anti-Black cultural racism, psychotherapy, spatial meta-analysis, treatment effect heterogeneity, youth

J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry 2022;61(6):754-763.   

So, What Do We Do?

# Expand conceptualizations of trauma

*An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.*

*- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)*

# Poverty as an Adverse Childhood Experience

Michelle Hughes, Whitney Tucker

# Exposure to Community Violence as a New Adverse Childhood Experience Category: Promising Results and Future Considerations

Eunju Lee, Heather Larkin, & Nina Esaki



American Journal of Preventive Medicine  
Volume 49, Issue 3, September 2015, Pages 354-361

Research Article  
Adverse Childhood Experiences: Expanding the Concept of Adversity

Peter F. Cronholm MD, MSCE <sup>a b c</sup>   , Christine M. Forke MSN, CRNP <sup>d e</sup> ,  
Roy Wade MD, PhD, MPH <sup>f</sup> , Megan H. Bair-Merritt MD, MSCE <sup>j</sup> , Martha Davis MSS <sup>k</sup> ,  
Mary Harkins-Schwarz MPH <sup>h</sup> , Lee M. Pachter DO <sup>i</sup> , Joel A. Fein MD, MPH <sup>e g</sup>



Preventive Medicine  
Volume 157, April 2022, 107016

## Expanding adverse child experiences to inequality and racial discrimination

Jesse J. Helton <sup>a</sup>   , Jordan P. Davis <sup>b c d e</sup> , Daniel S. Lee <sup>e</sup> , Sheila Pakdaman <sup>e</sup>

# The Case for Conceptualizing Youth-Police Contact as a Racialized Adverse Childhood Experience

Dylan B. Jackson, PhD

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dylan B. Jackson is with the Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.

# Enhance measurement of ACEs



- Philadelphia ACEs survey
  - Chronholm et al., 2015
- Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener (PEARLS)
  - Koita et al., 2018
- National Survey of Children's Health
  - Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative

# Modify case-conceptualizations



Ralph Yarl

# Healing Interpersonal and Racial Trauma: Integrating Racial Socialization Into Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for African American Youth

Isha W. Metzger<sup>1</sup> , Riana Elyse Anderson<sup>2</sup>, Funlola Are<sup>3</sup>, and Tiarney Ritchwood<sup>4</sup>

Child Maltreatment  
2021, Vol. 26(1) 17-27  
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# EMBRacing Racial Stress and Trauma: Preliminary Feasibility and Coping Responses of a Racial Socialization Intervention

Journal of Black Psychology  
2018, Vol. 44(1) 25-46  
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Cognitive and Behavioral Practice xxx (2022) xxx-xxx

**Cognitive and Behavioral Practice**  
[www.elsevier.com/locate/cabp](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/cabp)

## An Evidence-Based Approach for Treating Stress and Trauma due to Racism

Monnica T. Williams, *University of Ottawa*  
Samantha Holmes, *City University of New York, College of Staten Island*  
Manzar Zare, *University of Ottawa*  
Angela Haeny, *Yale School of Medicine*  
Sonya Faber, *Bioville GmbH*

Published: 07 November 2022

## A Flexible Treatment Planning Model for Racism-Related Stress in Adolescents and Young Adults

Ryan C. T. DeLapp  & Laurie Gallo

[Journal of Health Service Psychology](#) (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

# In Summary

- Difficult to conceptualize childhood adversity without the recognition of racism in the lives of Black youth
- Racism-related stressors bear striking resemblance to ACEs as traditionally conceptualized
  - a) Represent distinct and potentially traumatic events that can accumulate
  - b) Chronic can compromise health both immediately and over time
  - c) May compromise health through multiple pathways
- Exclusion of culturally relevant potentially traumatic experiences may lead to inaccurate or incomplete case-conceptualization, treatment approaches, and policies

## Contact Information

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# Move beyond person-centered investigations

Our recommendations for practitioners are:

1. To be more cautious and sensitive in translating evidence from population research to individual risk in order to reduce stigma and avoid deterministic messages from being propagated.
2. Give careful thought to how and when to appropriately record ACEs in different practice settings. In some situations, e.g. in therapeutic settings, detailed information on specific adversities might be useful but it needs to be recognised that ACEs do not necessarily result in poor outcomes.
3. Consider whether evidence is available on the effectiveness and acceptability of programmes such as routine enquiry and trauma informed initiatives before implementation.
4. Only routinely enquire about ACEs where the benefit outweighs any potential harm, and where evidence-based interventions exist and are readily available.
5. Look beyond individuals and families to the broader structural 'causes' of ACEs, such as poverty – especially when developing policy initiatives.

**The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry**

*Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* \*\*:\*(2019), pp \*\*-\*\*



doi:10.1111/jcpp.13135

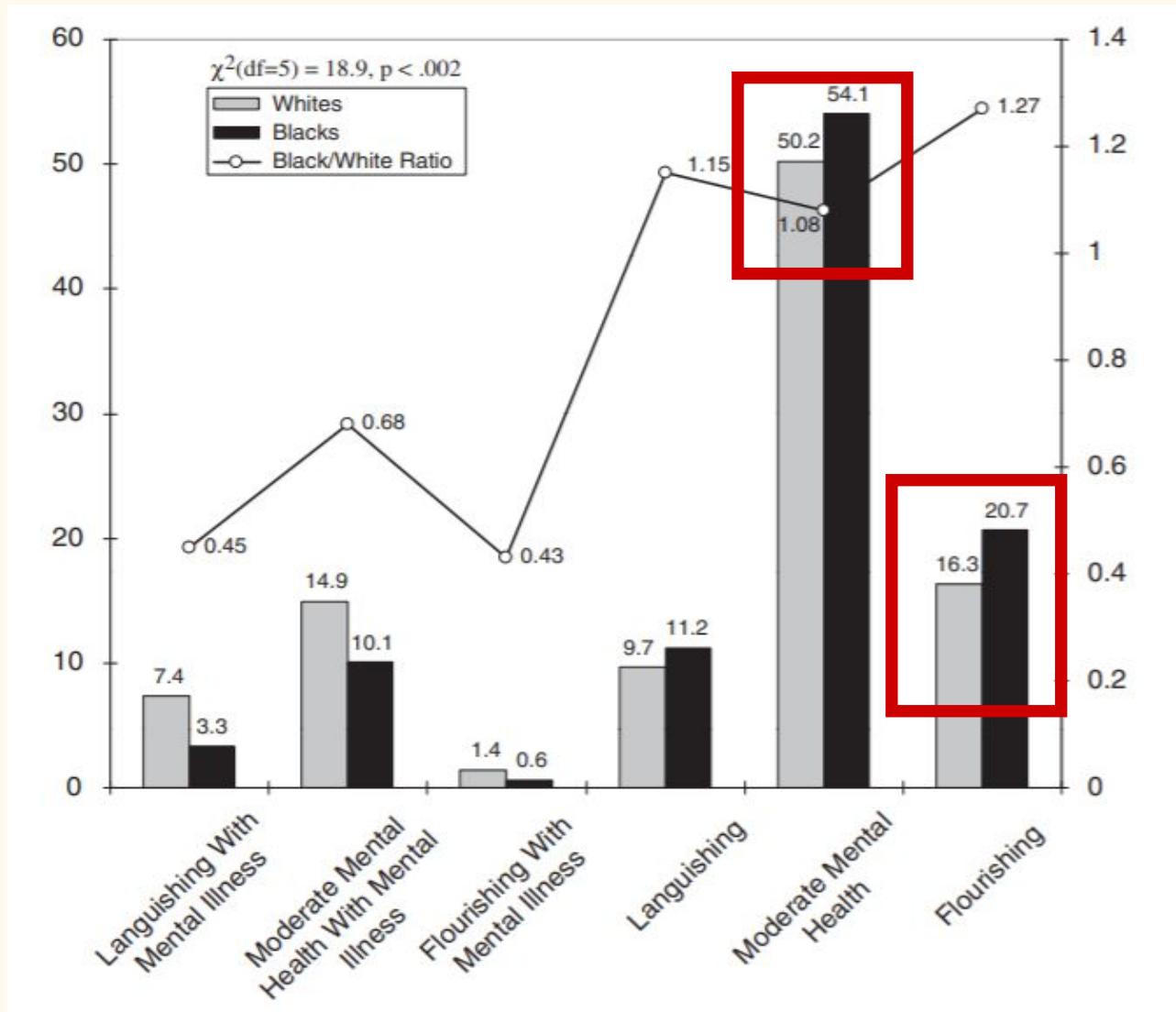
## Practitioner Review: Twenty years of research with adverse childhood experience scores – Advantages, disadvantages and applications to practice

**Rebecca E. Lacey,<sup>1</sup> and Helen Minnis<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Research Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London, London, UK; <sup>2</sup>Institute of Health and Wellbeing, College of Medical Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK



# Towards a Resilience Perspective

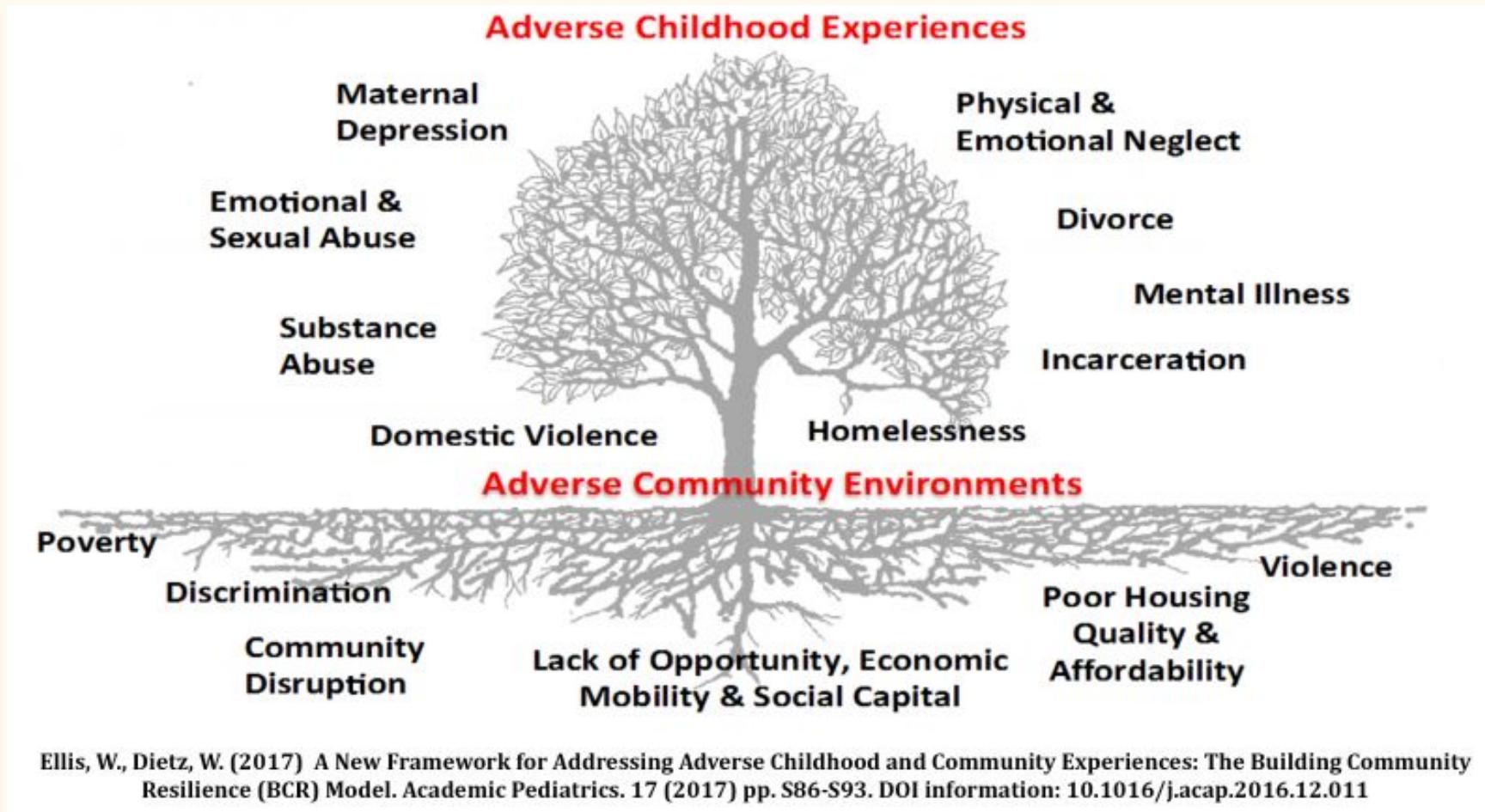


# In Conclusion

*To reduce the health effects of racism among African American and other youth experiencing marginalization, it is critical that we validate their perceptions and experiences, empower them, and collaborate with them to leverage the community strengths they identify.*

(Woods-Jaeger et al., 2013)

# The Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences Framework





9.5% of GA children had a guardian with substances abuse.<sup>4</sup>

21% of GA children live in Poverty.<sup>2</sup>

30% of GA children live in housing that is more than 30% the household income.<sup>2</sup>

## ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Mental Illness

Homelessness

Substance Abuse

Emotional & Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Incarceration

Domestic Violence

Maternal Depression

Physical & Emotional Neglect

## ADVERSE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

Holocaust

Slavery

Genocide

Poor Housing Quality & Affordability

Poverty

Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital

Systemic Racism

Community Violence

Mass Incarceration

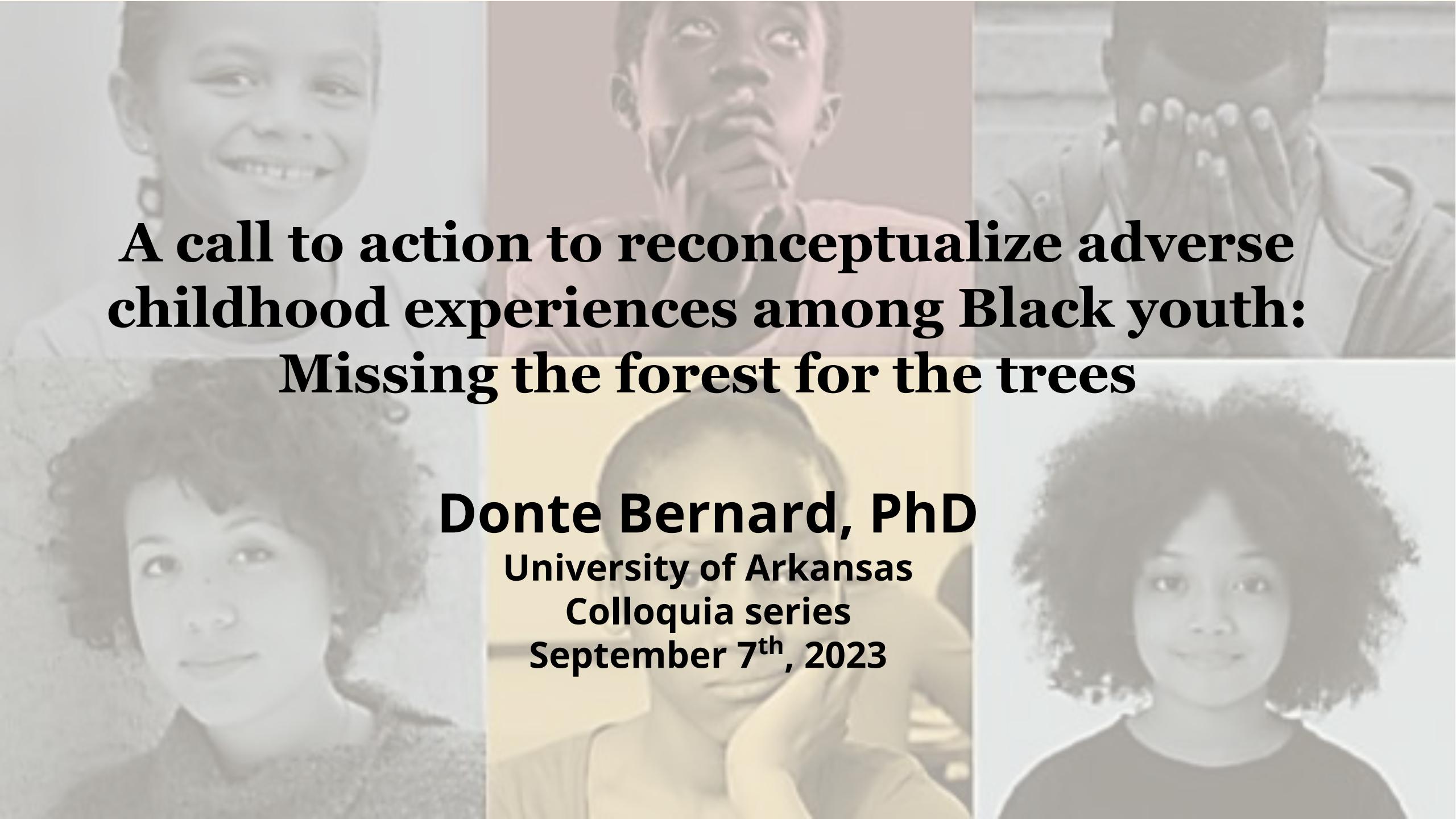
Forced Displacement

Pandemics

10% of GA children had a parent serve jail time in 2017-2018.<sup>2</sup>

Atlanta is the **#1** city in the U.S. for income inequality.<sup>3</sup>

## ADVERSE COLLECTIVE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES



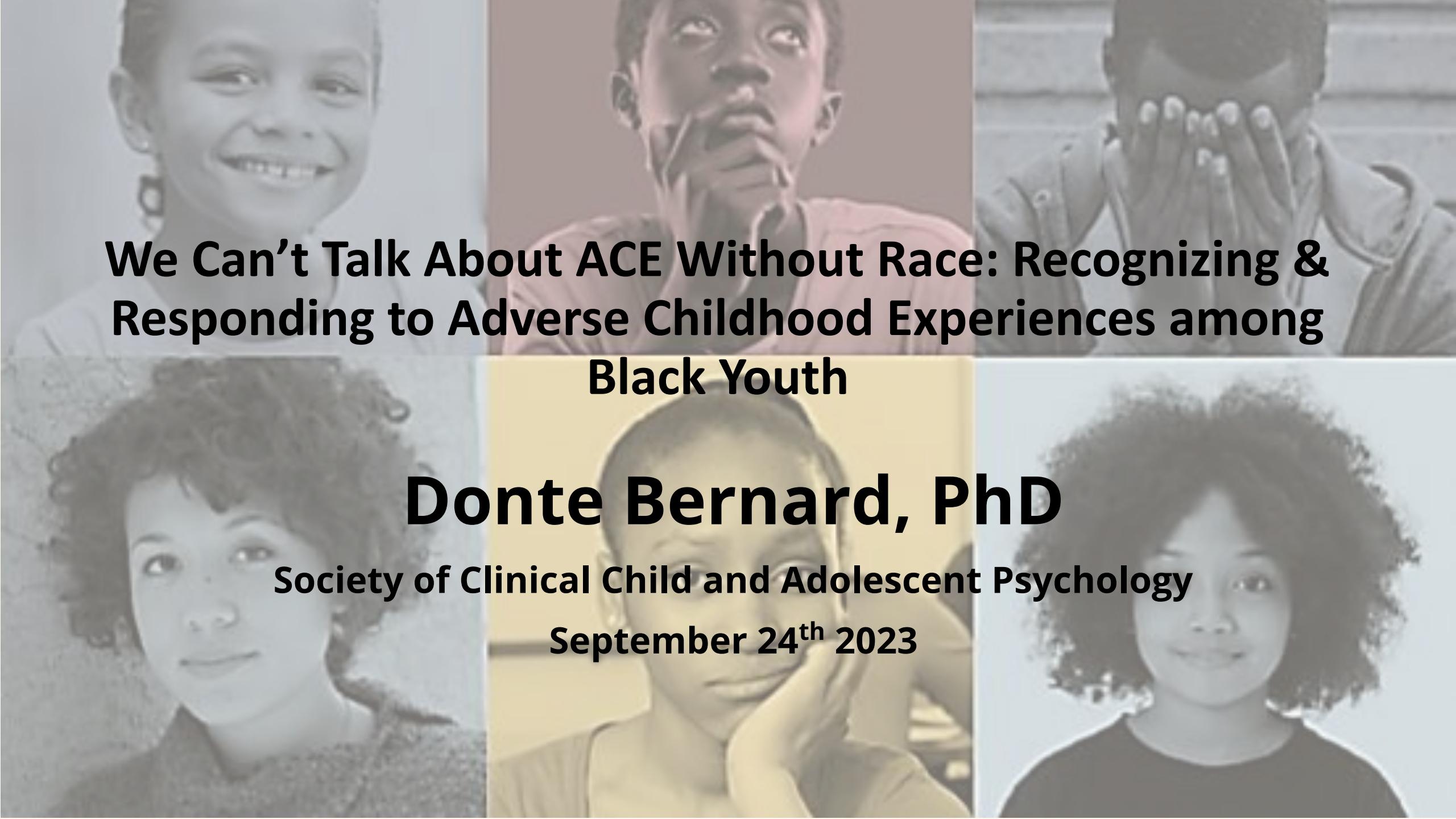
# **A call to action to reconceptualize adverse childhood experiences among Black youth: Missing the forest for the trees**

**Donte Bernard, PhD**

**University of Arkansas**

**Colloquia series**

**September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023**



# We Can't Talk About ACE Without Race: Recognizing & Responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences among Black Youth

**Donte Bernard, PhD**

**Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology**

**September 24<sup>th</sup> 2023**