



Equity of Opportunity and Child Development: Where does Boston stand?

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Outline

- Influences on child health and development
 - Contextual effects: neighborhood; schools
- Massachusetts and the Boston area have an unequal geography of opportunity, which results in unequal access to supportive developmental contexts for children, e.g. neighborhood/school environments
- Policy solutions: people-based or place-based?



Diversitydata.org allows visitors to explore how metropolitan areas throughout the U.S. perform on a diverse range of social measures that comprise a well-rounded life experience.

These data call attention to the equality of opportunity and diversity of experiences for different racial and ethnic groups in America. [Learn more about the project.](#)

Largest Metro Areas

Select a metro area below to view its profile, or [view the entire list](#).

- [Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA](#)
- [New York, NY](#)
- [Chicago, IL](#)
- [Philadelphia, PA-NJ](#)
- [Washington, DC-MD-VA-WV](#)

Profiles by Metro Area

1. First select a state.
2. Then, select a metropolitan area.

Rankings & Maps by Indicator

Ranking Map

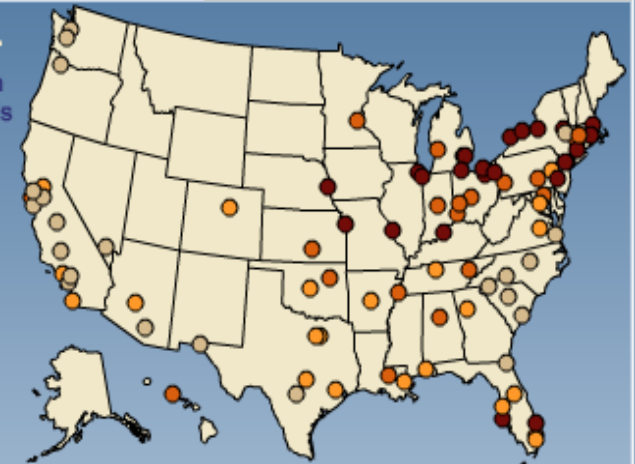
- [Population Demographics and Diversity](#)
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- [Housing Opportunities](#)
- [Economic Opportunities](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Residential Integration and Neighborhood Characteristics](#)
- [Crime](#)
- [Physical Environment](#)

Data spotlight on...

Share of Children Living in Low-Income Neighborhoods by Race/Ethnicity

For year: 2000; Data for: Non-Hispanic Black

- 72.7% - 87.7%
- 61.6% - 72.6%
- 53.4% - 61.2%
- 19.5% - 53.2%



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Spotlight

- [Disparities in Neighborhood Poverty of Poor Black and White Children](#) -- download a PDF of the first diversitydata brief, May 2007
- [Children Left Behind: How Metropolitan Areas Are Failing America's Children](#) -- download a PDF of the first in a series of reports from DiversityData.org, January 2007
- [Chartbook](#) -- download a PDF of the tables and charts related to Children Left Behind: How Metropolitan Areas Are Failing America's Children, January 2007





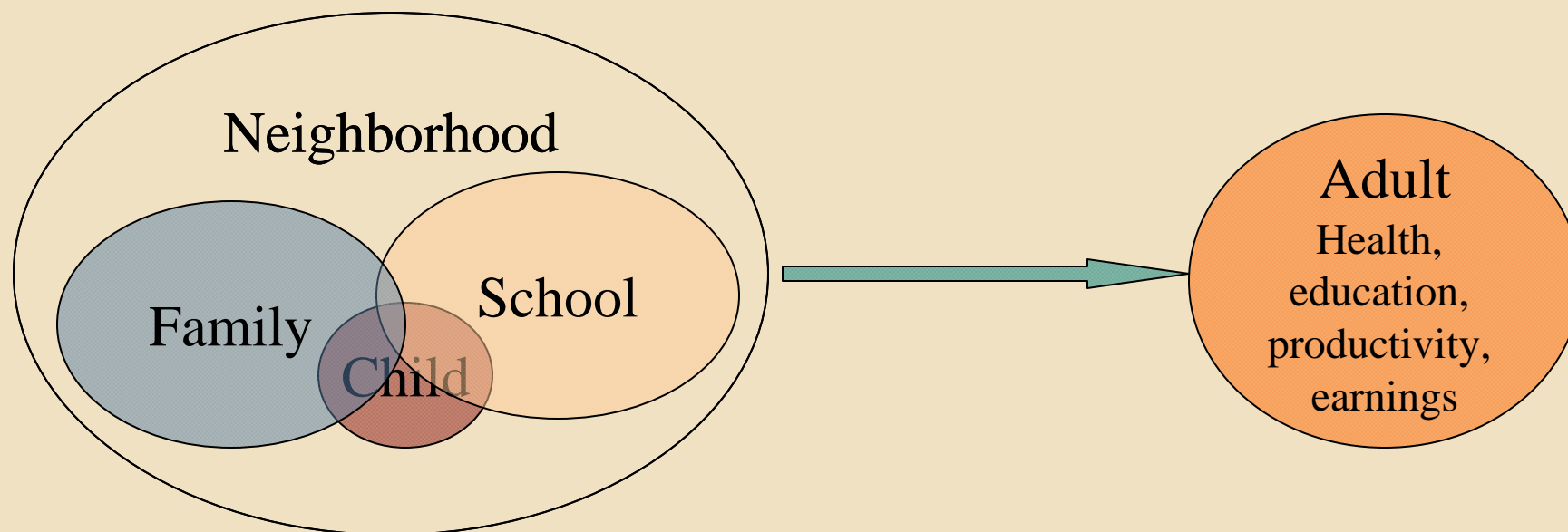
A definition of children's health

Children's health is the extent to which individual children or groups of children are able or enabled to (a) develop and realize their potential, (b) satisfy their needs, and (c) develop the capacities that allow them to interact successfully with their biological, physical, and social environments.

(IOM, 2004, Children's Health: The Nation's Wealth)



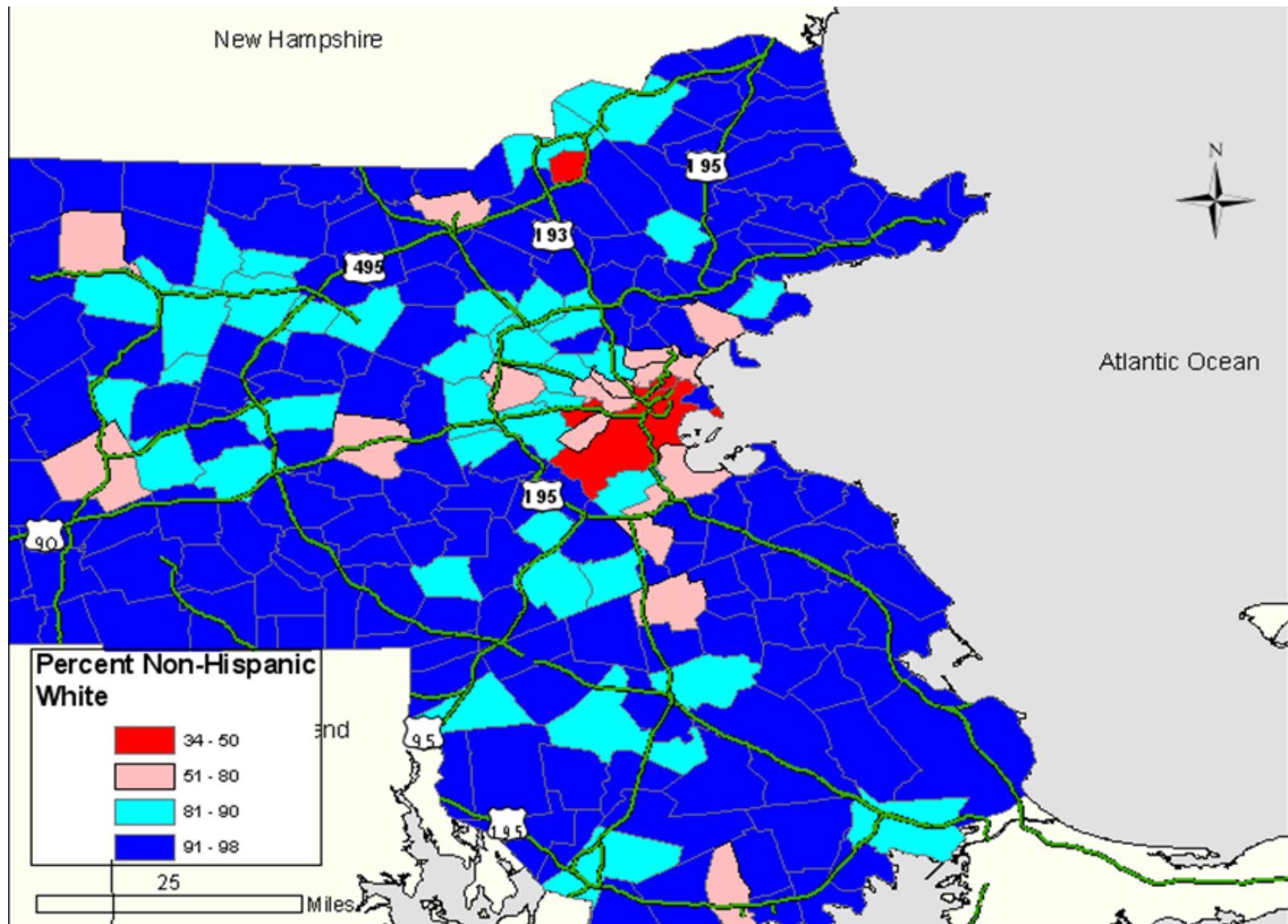
Influences on Child Health and Development





There are large racial/ethnic inequalities children's access to "opportunity neighborhoods/schools"

Metro Boston Has a “Majority Minority” Core Along With Many Suburbs That Are Over 90% White



Source: 2000 Census Redistricting File.



Factors behind high racial/ethnic segregation

- Housing affordability does not explain high segregation (Harris and McArdle 2004).
- Suburbs with highest opportunity levels tend to have exclusionary zoning policies (Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston)
- Housing discrimination: mortgage, rental, sales markets (Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston; Campen)

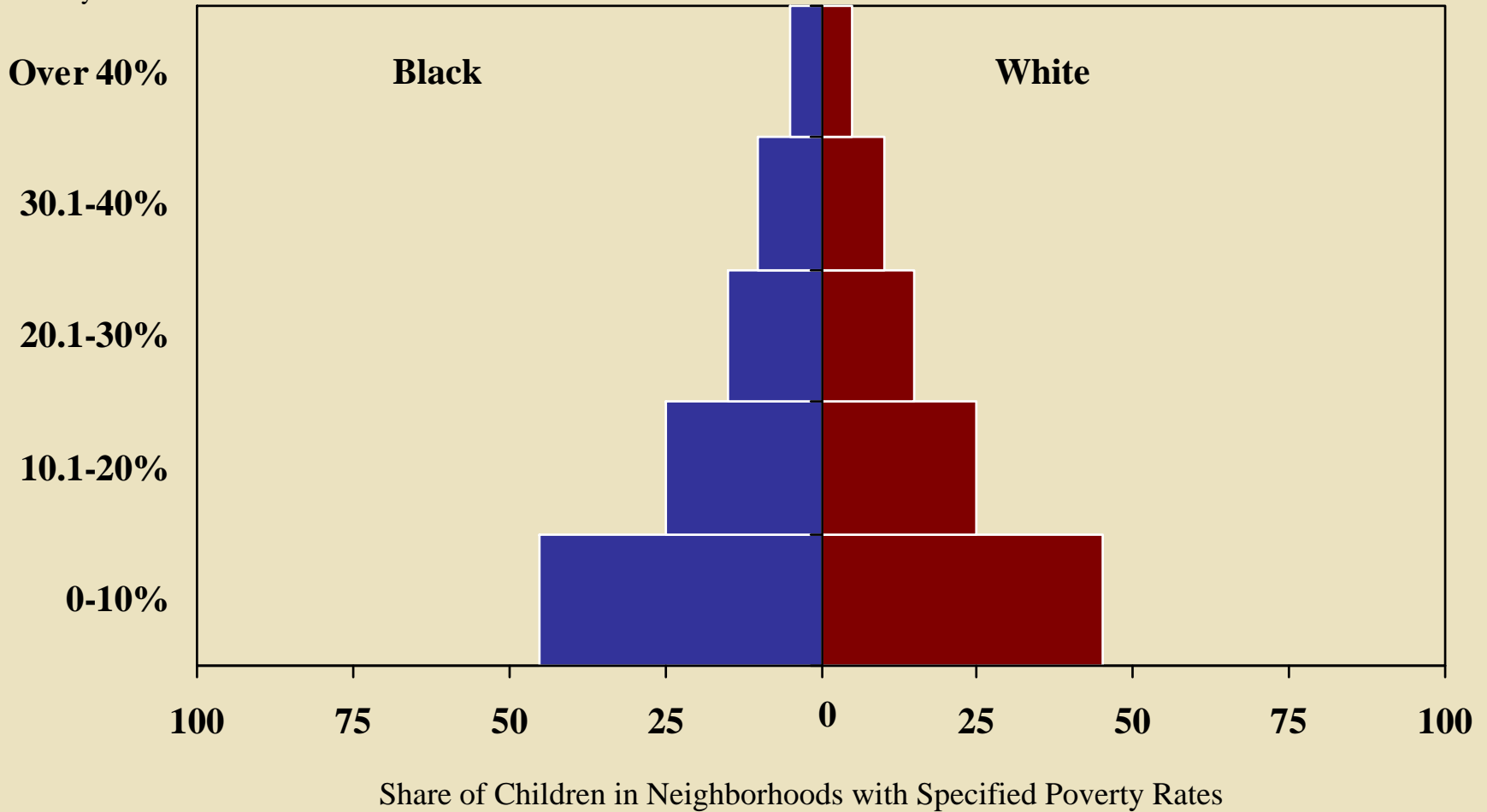


Black and Latino children experience double and triple jeopardy

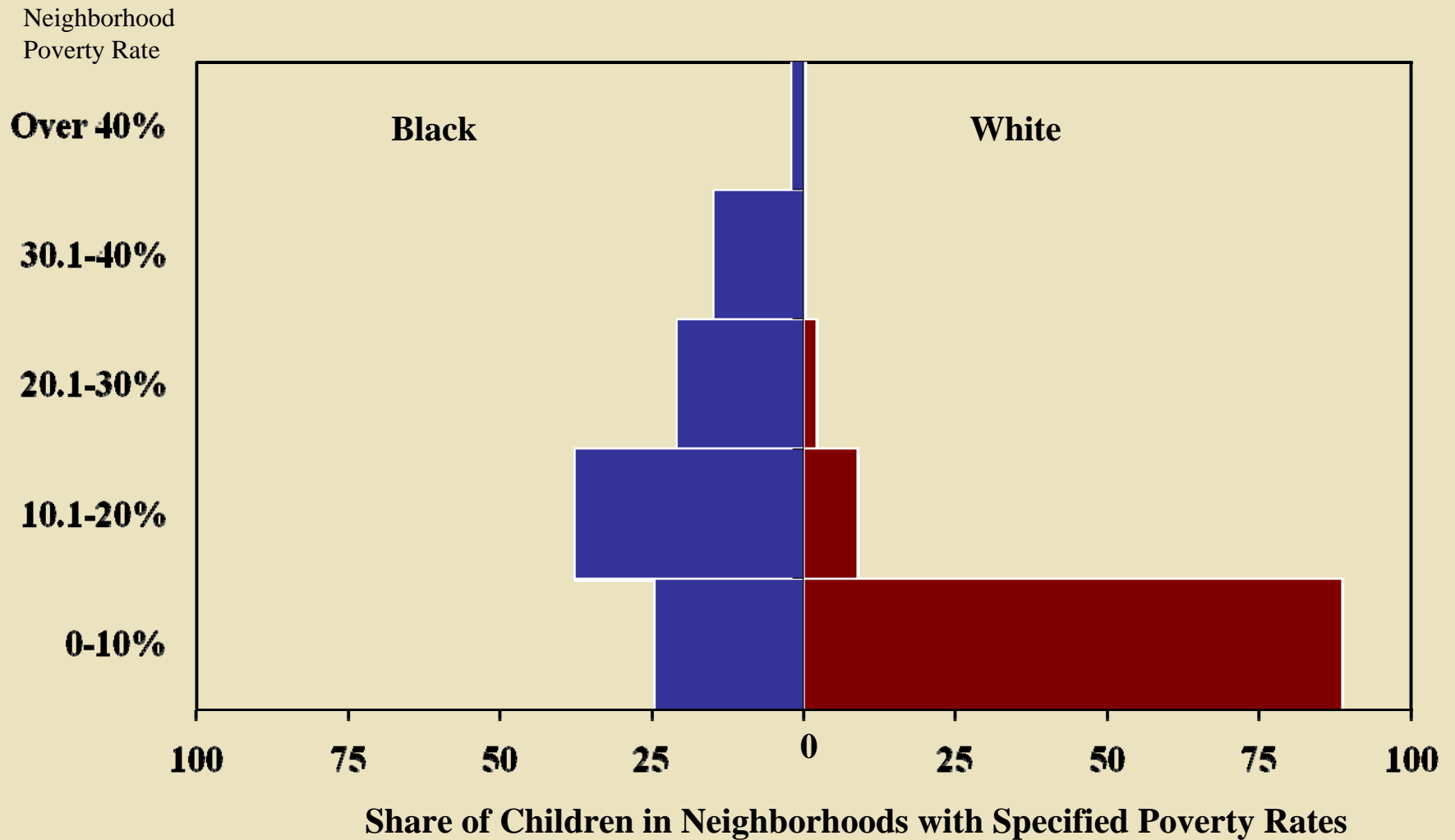
- Black and Hispanic children live in families that disproportionately experienced disadvantage.
- Disparities among individuals and families are exacerbated by vast inequalities in neighborhood and school environments.
- Inequalities go far beyond what can be explained by income differences:
 - Poor black and Hispanic children encounter environments considerably worse than poor white and Asian children.

Pyramid Graph: Hypothetical Equal Neighborhood Environment for 2 Groups: A Mirror Image

Neighborhood
Poverty Rate



Metro Boston Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Black v. White Children



Metro Boston Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Poor Black v. Poor White Children

Neighborhood
Poverty Rate

Over 40%

Poor Black

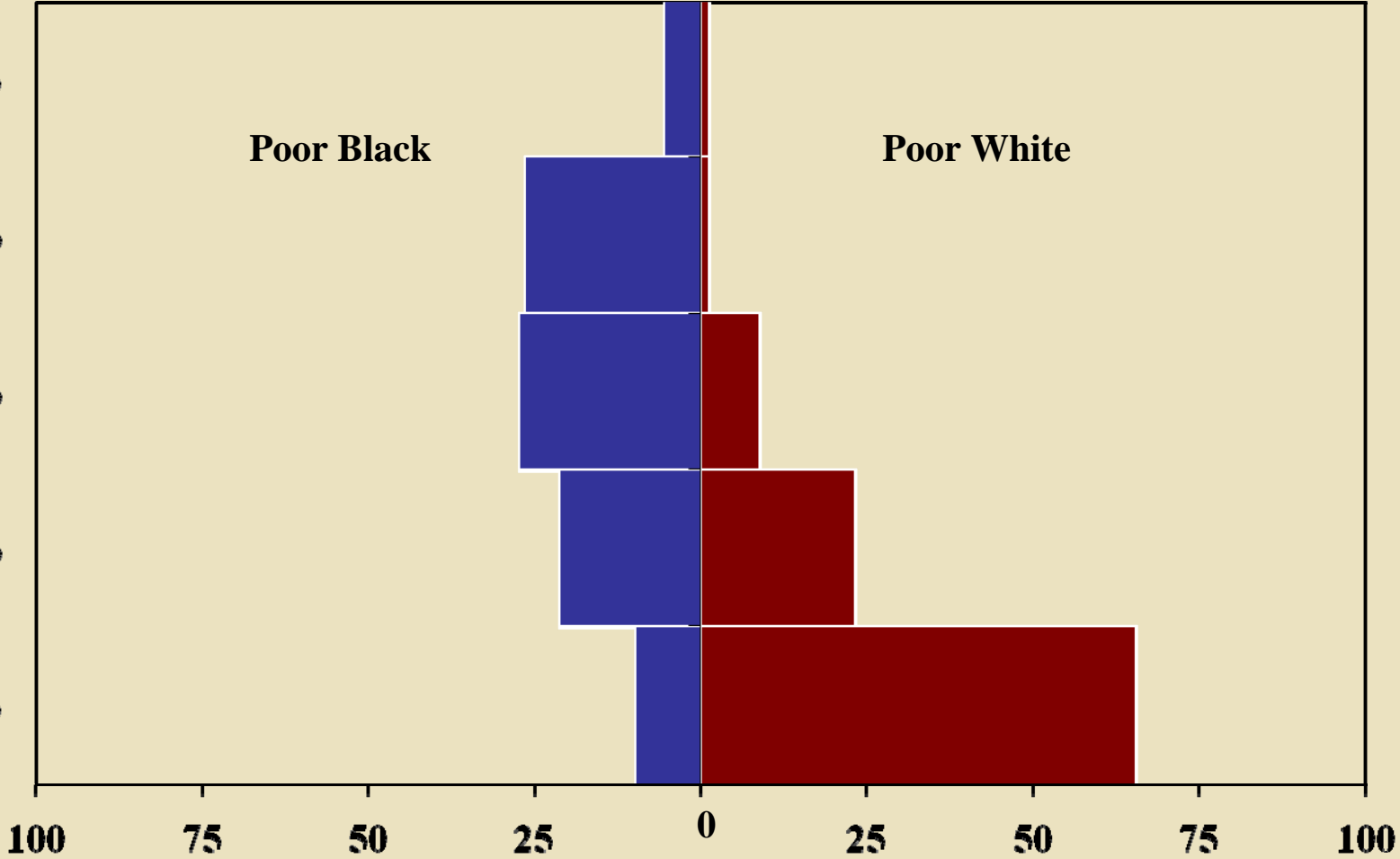
Poor White

30.1-40%

20.1-30%

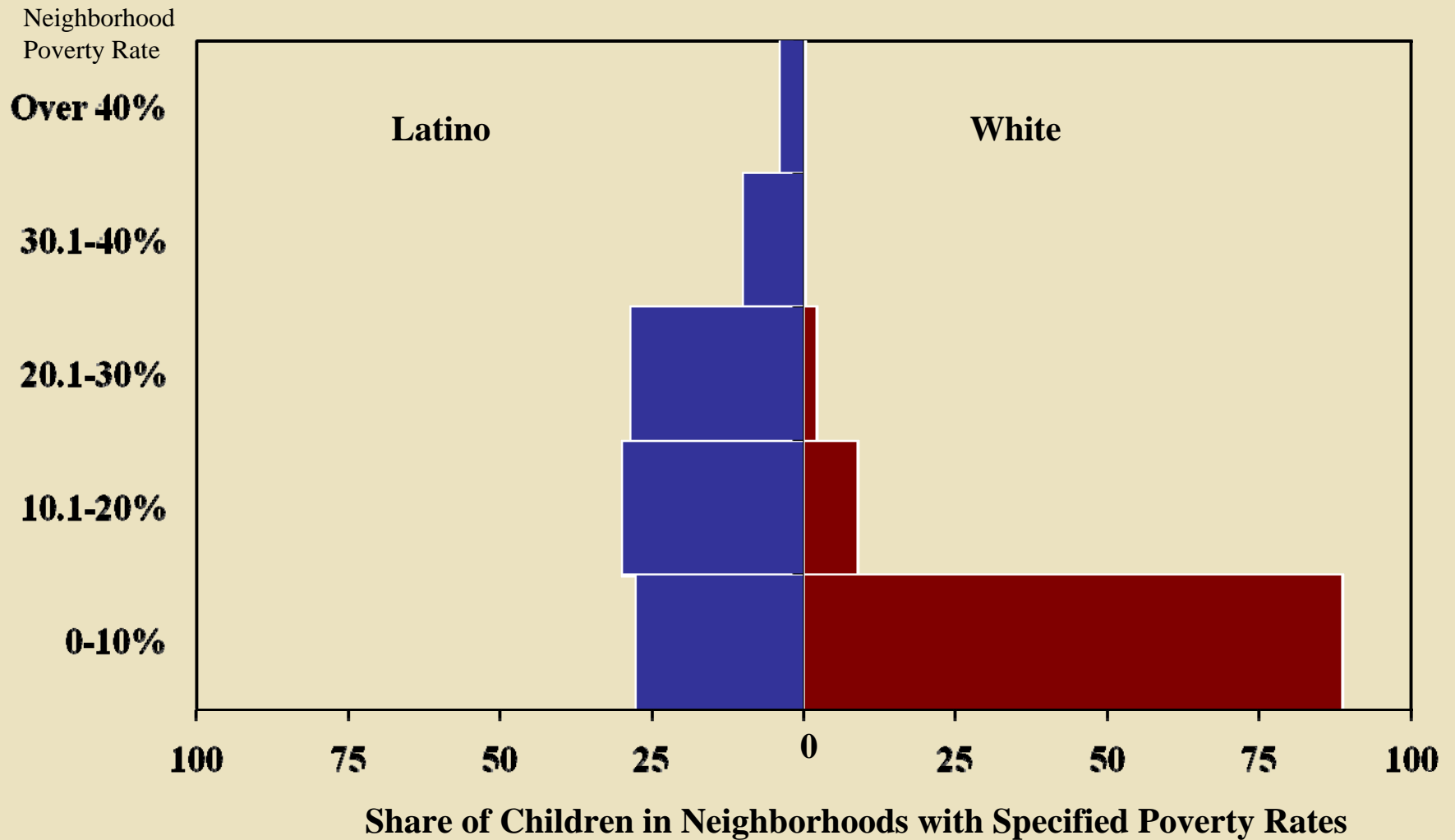
10.1-20%

0-10%



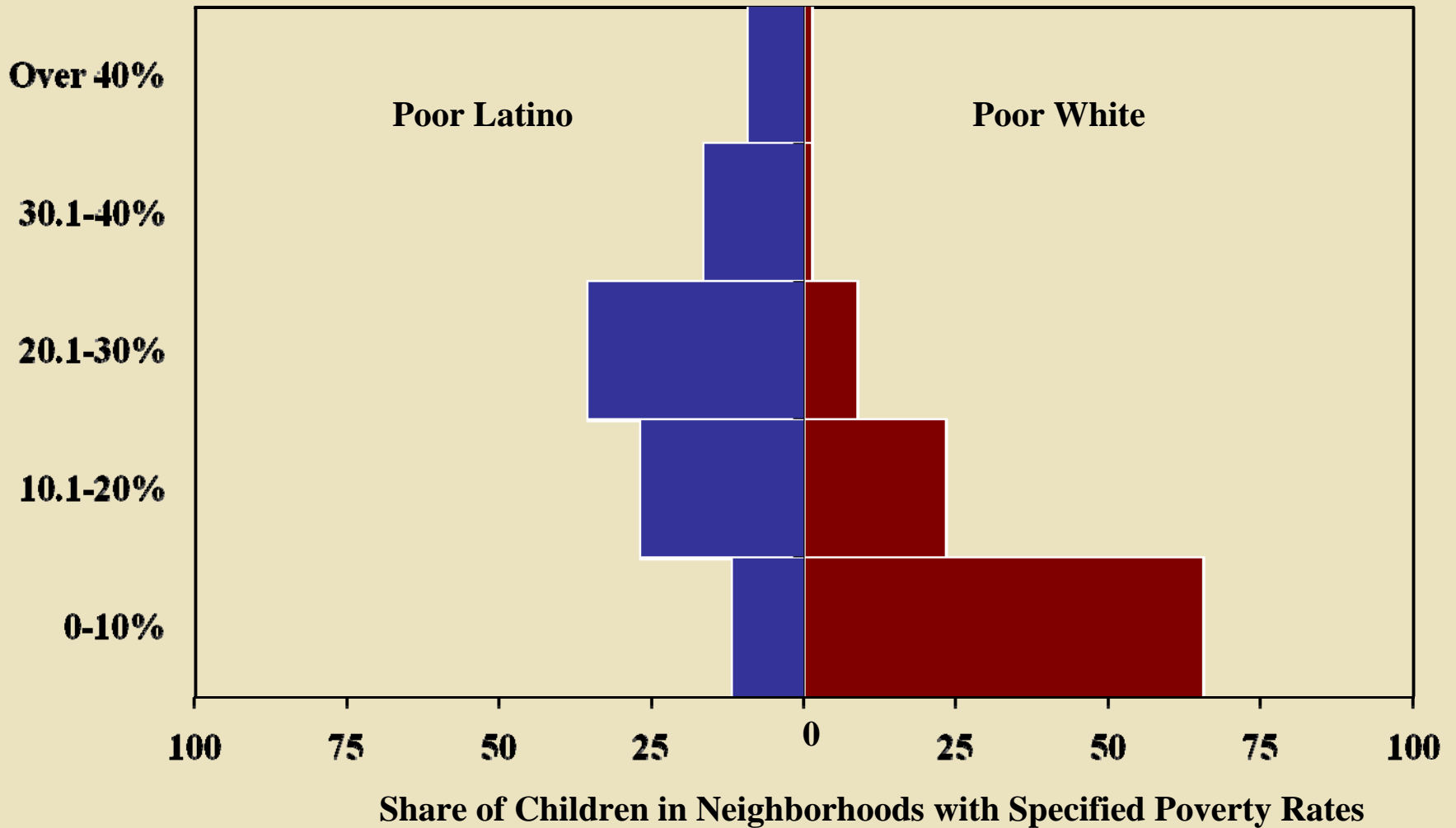
Share of Children in Neighborhoods with Specified Poverty Rates

Metro Boston Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Latino v. White Children



Metro Boston Poverty Composition of Neighborhoods of Poor Latino v. Poor White Children

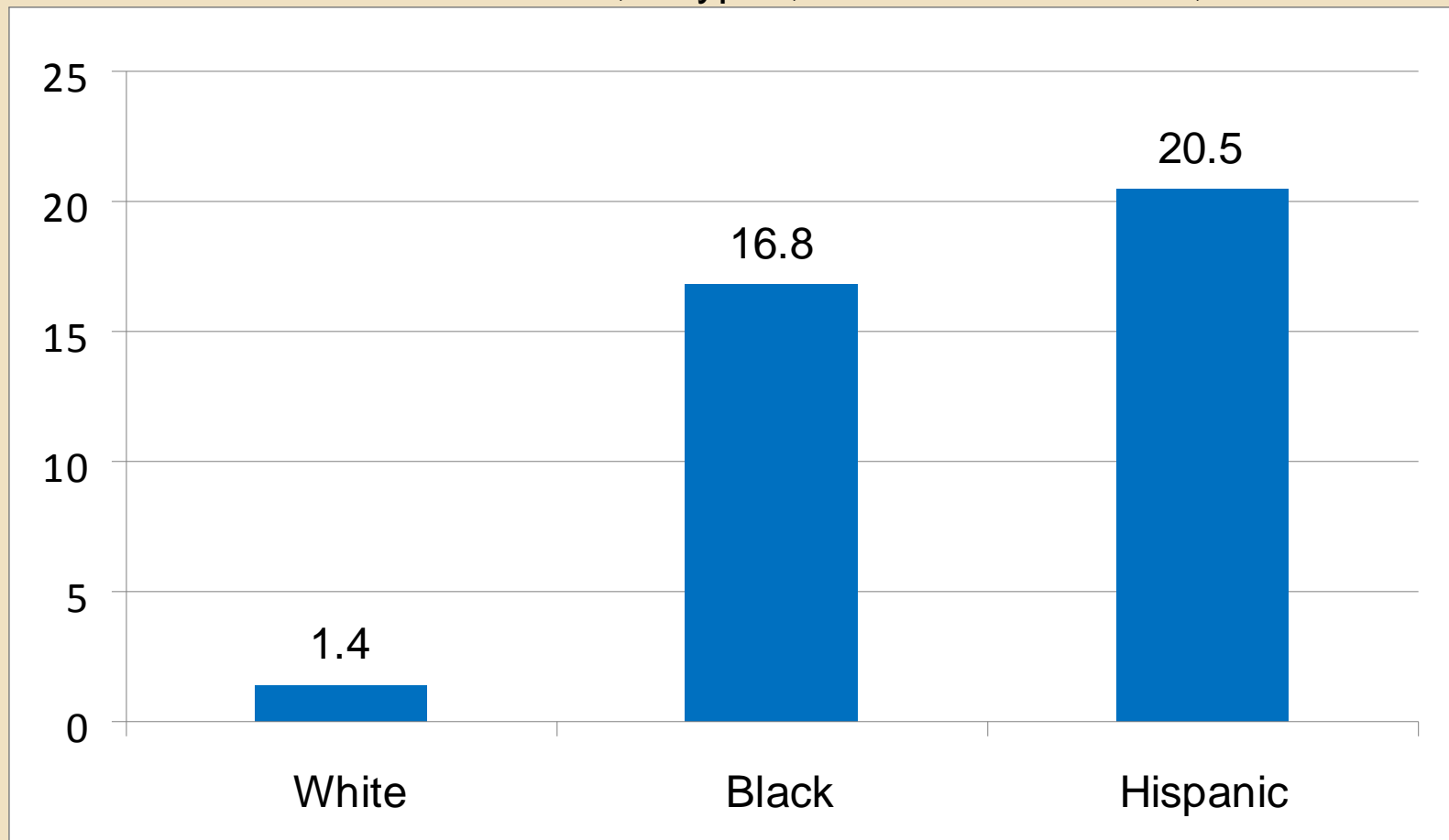
Neighborhood
Poverty Rate





Share of Children Who Experience Double Jeopardy: Live in BOTH Poor Families and Poor Neighborhoods (Percent)

Source: Acevedo-Garcia, Osypuk, McArdle & Williams, 2008



Note: Poor neighborhoods are those with poverty rates over 20%.

Source: 2000 Census



Neighborhood and school environment

- Residential and school segregation are very highly correlated.
 - Across the 100 largest U.S. metros, the correlation between school and housing segregation for blacks v. whites is 94 (within a range of 0 to 100).
- Because MA is fragmented into many school districts and has limited school mobility programs, where a student lives has a particularly large effect on where they go to school.



Implications of an unequal geography of opportunity for child development

- Residential and school segregation result in systematic racial/ethnic differences in the quality of developmental contexts of children.
- Residential/school segregation result in simultaneous exposure to challenging development contexts, which may lead to differences in child resilience,
- These differences result in racially/ethnically unequal trajectories of child development.



What can we do?

- Focus on “opportunity”
 - Child specific definition of opportunity
- Think about Boston as a region in regard to school and education opportunities.



What can we do?

- People-based policies: Expand neighborhood/school choices to include opportunity areas throughout the entire metropolitan region,
 - link housing subsidies and low-income housing development to opportunity neighborhoods/schools,
 - school integration/school choice programs.
- Place-based policies: Interventions in highly disadvantaged areas (e.g. neighborhood/housing revitalization, comprehensive neighborhood development, intervening upon failing schools),
 - Promise Neighborhood (Harlem Children's Zone),
 - Choice Neighborhoods



Examples

- *Delink school* assignment from residential location.
- Strengthen school integration programs, e.g. METCO.
- Link affordable housing to high opportunity areas.
- Measure and monitor opportunity and access to it on a regional basis (e.g. Kirwan report, MAPC Equity Report Card)



Conclusion

- Disadvantaged conditions within families, neighborhoods and schools disproportionately hurt black and Latino children, and hinder their life chances and economic potential.
- Children in the Boston area face significant racial/ethnic disparities in neighborhood and school environment.
- Protecting children and improving opportunities for all
 - Morally compelling
 - Implications for labor productivity, economic competitiveness, health care costs, and social harmony



Thank you