

# Post-Traumatic Cultural Disorder (PTCD): Toward a Theory of Costs and Remedies

PTCD issues from conscious or unselfconscious internalization of racist stereotypes by nearly 80 percent of whites and 50 percent of blacks. The costs of PTCD—linked to a wide range of physical, emotional, social, educational, occupational, and economic disparities—issue from more than 900 oppression years in America which we will document. In detailing costs of racist stereotyping, we will (a) identify historical and contemporary expressions of racist stereotypes in America as well as in four African and seven Caribbean nations and (b) explain how racist stereotypes have negative cascading effects on individuals as well as the neighborhoods, communities, and nations where they live. Toward the development of remedies, we will (a) introduce and evaluate a set of five norms that enable Justice (Equity in Outcomes) and Freedom (Fair Access to our Nation’s Fountains of Opportunity) even in unjust and unfair places; (b) profile our intervention model Justice Works which embraces all five norms; (c) examine available evidence linking Justice Works to Just and Fair outcomes even in unjust and unfair places; (d) profile local, state, and national support for policies and practices underlying Justice Works; and (e) identify the 21 local, state, and federal sponsors of development, research, and demonstration activities that led to the design of our intervention model Justice Works. On this list of 21 contributors we owe a special vote of thanks to the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus that years ago provided \$500,000 to fund the inaugural launch of the Institute for the Black Family then located in the Department of Black Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.

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### Table 3. Making WAVES for Justice and Freedom

#### Implications for Recovery and Transformation of Challenged Neighborhoods and Communities

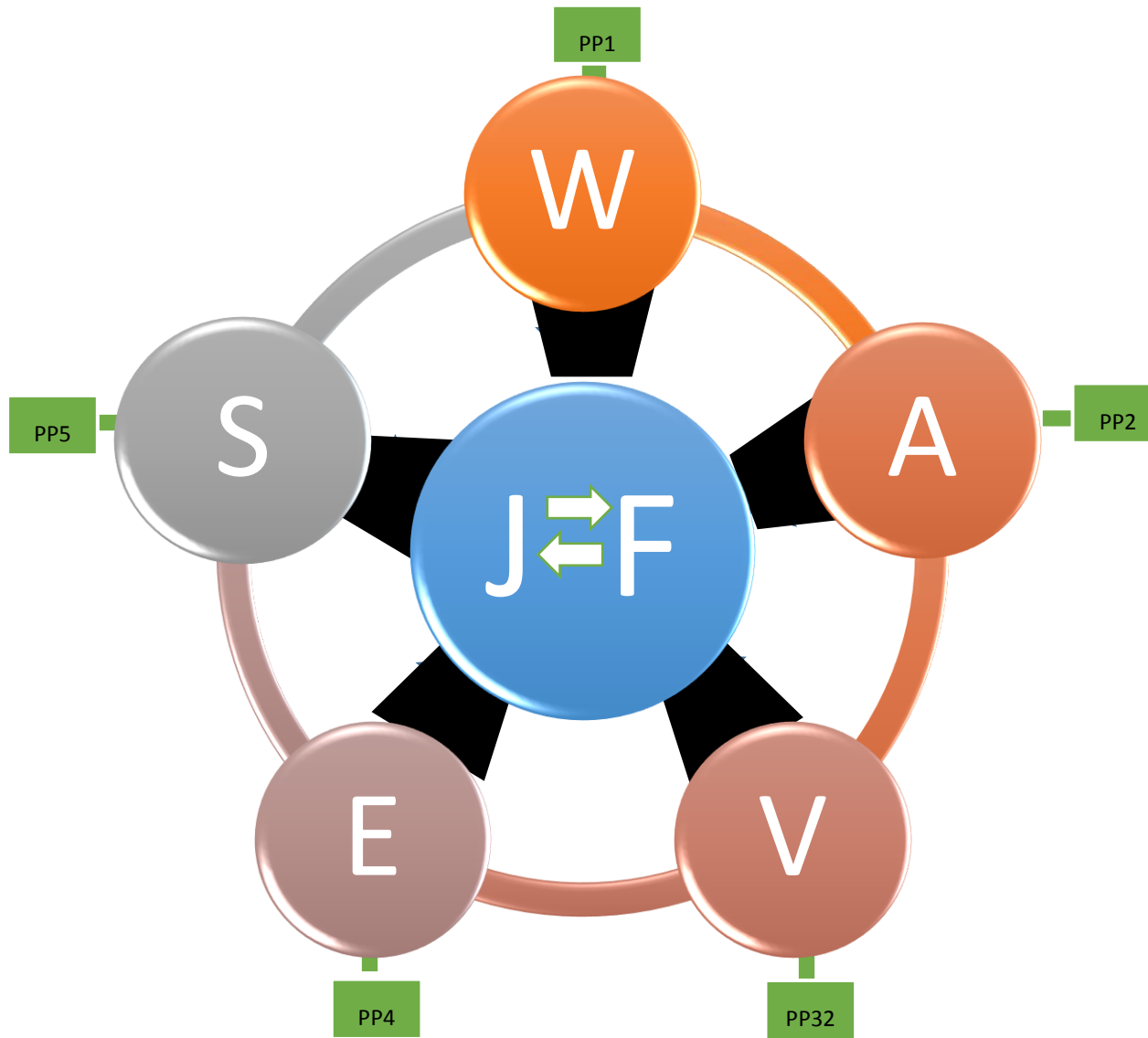
Five norms are central to the achievement of Justice and Freedom which enable the Recovery and Transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities:

1. **W: Allocentric: Worldview.** Embracement of the allocentric worldview that *I am my brother's (sister's) keeper* which stands in contrast to the idiocentric worldview that *every tub rests on its own bottom*. The aspirations and claims of justice are undermined if not abandoned by policies and practices growing out of an inflexibly embraced Idiocentric worldview. Here, racial, economic, and educational inequalities incubate and proliferate in neighborhoods, communities, and nations. The challenge here is in restoring regard for Other, *i.e.*, moving from an idiocentric toward an allocentric worldview to create a wiser and more reconciled and perfect union.
2. **A: Homeothermic-Like Adaptation.** In the field of education, we have advocated for a shift in paradigm from 'best practice' to 'just practice' reforms that require examining how more than 100 'just practice schools' have nearly closed or actually reversed racial, socioeconomic, and black male achievement gaps in the least likely of places: predominately black low-income urban schools located in highly challenged environments indexed by elevated levels of poverty, delinquency, crime, drugs, and teenage pregnancy. Nature provides instruction of relevance to understanding these exceptional schools. The core temperature of warm-blooded organisms remains the same even when stressed by extremities of environmental temperatures (transforming or homeothermically adaptive), whereas the core temperature of cold-blooded organisms is dependent on the temperature of their environments (conforming or poikilothermically adaptive). Analogous to the adaptation strategy of warm-blooded animals, these schools have been able to maintain achievement excellence even in the most challenged environments. Unlike cold-blooded organisms, these schools are not environmentally conformed—they do not mirror abject patterns of marginality or failure that characterize life in their neighborhoods, *i.e.*, these transcendent schools have not become what their neighborhoods are. In general, the call here is for understanding policies and practices that produce just outcomes in unjust places—an example of homeothermic-like adaptation. Why should we continue to settle for more primitive and less evolved poikilothermic-like adaptations where demography is destiny?
3. **V: Integrative Values.** Medial and behavioral commitment to values of love and respect, interpersonal skills, learning orientation, self-confidence, self-persistence, self-esteem, and self-reliance. Embracement of these values is associated with accelerated academic engagement and achievement in pre-school, Head Start, elementary school, high school, and college. Interventions designed to promote these values are associated with improved mental health in children, adolescents, and adults and with decreases in absenteeism, tardiness, and disciplinary problems in elementary and middle school settings.
4. **E: Cultural Emancipation.** Extrusion of chattel slavery stereotypes—*Blacks are animals which 'explains' why they are mentally defective and physically gifted*. Published studies show that American, Caribbean, and African blacks who internalize these stereotypes are at higher risks of obesity, metabolic dysfunctions, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes along with elevated levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and hostility linked to problematic styles of coping—denial, avoidance, fatalism, and escapism. From research findings in the U.S., blacks who identify with these stereotypes show higher risks of lower income, school incompleteness, black-on-black crime, alcohol consumption, and perhaps unprotected sex with multiple partners. The cultural emancipation of blacks and whites is therefore a critical marker along our journey toward recovery and transformation.
5. **S: Spiritual Integration.** A prevailing sense of hope, wholesome connectivity to past and present as well as future, and uncompromising capacity to make transcendent choices. Studies show that spiritual integration lowers symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, and hostility and confers mental and physical health protective effects by attenuating harmful effects of episodic, chronic, structural, and historical sources of stress.

Singularly and conjunctively we expect that these five interrelated norms are critically important for the Recovery and Transformation of African and African Diasporan communities and nations where they live. Further, we expect that creative adaptations of these norms may well provide a universal framework for the recovery and transformation of any group stigmatized and marginalized by race, ethnicity, religion, class, or gender (*e.g.*, Muslims in general, females in Bosnia-Herzegovina, American Indians or Latinos, and poor whites in rural or urban America). We expect that these norms are primary instruments of **Justice** (outcome equities) and **Freedom** (fair access to opportunity and service structures promoting Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness) that together enable Recovery and Transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities.

Figure 2. WAVES: Specifying Norms that Enable Recovery and Transformation of Challenged Neighborhoods and Community

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**WAVES** entail four propositions of consequence to PTCD:

[1] Components of WAVES are intercorrelated;

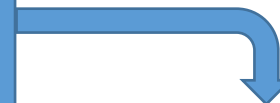
[2] Justice J and Freedom F are civil heirs of Allocentric Worldview (W), Homeo-thermic-Like Adaptability (A), Integrative Values (V), Cultural Emancipation (E), and Spiritual Integration (S);

[3] The relationship between J and F is reciprocal  $J \rightarrow F$  and  $F \rightarrow J$  as well as recursive  $J \rightarrow F \rightarrow J$  and  $F \rightarrow J \rightarrow F$ ; and

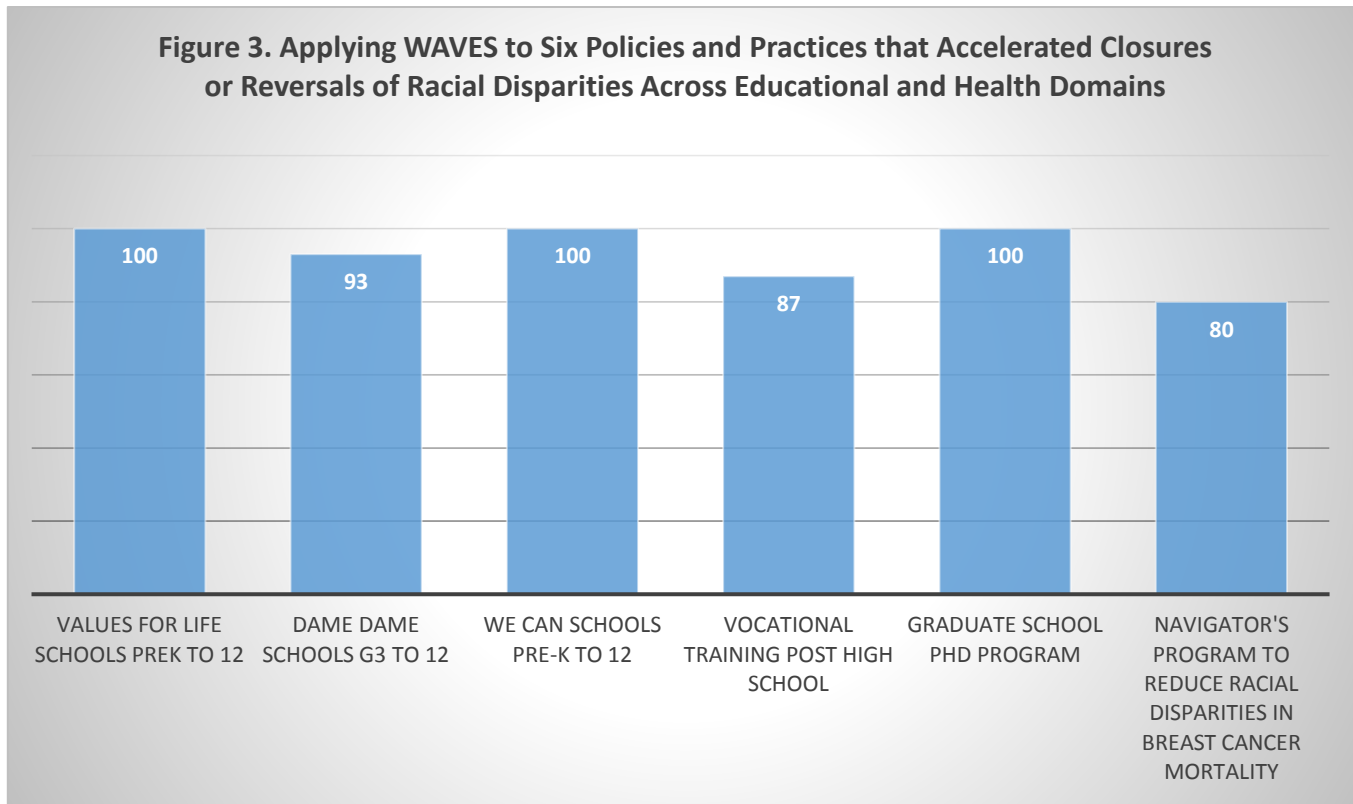
[4] The attainment of J or F is dependent on the number, pattern, and quality of policies and practices specified PP1-PP5 to launch and sustain the drive toward Justice and Freedom even in unjust and unfair places.

W A V E S  $\Rightarrow$  ( $\downarrow$ PTCD)  $\Rightarrow$  ( $\uparrow$ Justice & Freedom even in Unjust and Unfair Places)  $\Rightarrow$

Recovery of Challenged Neighborhoods and Communities



Scores for *WAVES* were calculated for each of six policies and practices that actually accelerated closures and reversals of racial disparities in educational and health outcomes. For each of these six applications, we used a method still under development whereby we assigned a value -3 to +3 to estimate level of saturation of each application on each component of *WAVES*. For example, a value of -3 was



assigned for the Worldview norm when the application was decidedly Idiocentric or a value of +3 if the application was decidedly Allocentric. A value of '0' was assigned when the Worldview construct was not at all a consideration. Finer gradations on either side of '0' (-1, -2, +1, +2) were assigned depending upon the relative absence or presence of the norm evaluated. This metrical procedure was followed for each of the remaining norms *AVES*. Recovery and Transformation Potential scores were rescaled such that total scores fall within the range -100 to +100, *i.e.*,  $(-100 \geq RTP \leq +100)$ .

In our experience thus far, only policies and practices (PP1-PP5 under Figure 2) with RTP scores  $\geq 75$  have empirically accelerated the closure or reversal of racial disparities in educational and health domains. In general, we expect, following Propositions 1-4 under Figure 2, that policies and practices meeting this standard will (a) diminish negative effects of *PTCD*; (b) enable Justice (Equity) and Freedom (Access) within targeted domains; and (c) speed the Recovery and Transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities and enhance national and international regard for our American Experiment. Although encouraged by these preliminary results, we do not recommend use of *WAVES* without prior, concurrent, and future linkage to empirical evaluations which ongoingly evaluate the gap-closing performance of *WAVES*.

## Final Reflections on Structural versus Cultural Causation

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**I**N BASIC AND APPLIED DISCIPLINES of psychology, sociology, economics, epidemiology, nursing, and medicine, structural variables indexed by household poverty, neighborhood poverty, unsafe neighborhoods, and underachieving schools are often implicated as primary causes of racial health disparities—physical, mental, and social. We refer to this claim supported by extensive evidence as the structuralist argument which leaves unanswered two major questions: (1) *What produces structural inequalities to begin with?* (2) *Would eliminating structural inequalities alone eliminate broad ranging racial disparities?*

On question (1), Figure 1 on page 2 summarizes cascading negative effects of more than 900 oppression years linked to negative cognitive, affective, behavioral, physiological, and molecular processes which underlie wide ranging health and structural disparities. Unfortunately, these *PTCD* costs are largely and regrettably unrecognized, underappreciated, unremediated, and even besmirched. These problematic reactions notwithstanding, *cultural oppression is regarded as historical antecedent to structural inequities.*

On question (2), studies using a variety of covariance models indicate that structural markers alone do not explain the magnitude of racial disparities within any targeted domain. Indeed, racial disparities typically abound even when comparing blacks and whites of structurally identical backgrounds. *We therefore argue that cultural models directed toward undoing effects of PTCD which incubate and proliferate structural inequalities (see Propositions 1-5 from Table 2, Page 4) will be more proficient and successful in eliminating wide-ranging disparities than models featuring structural fixes alone.* Embedded in this argument is our expectation that fixing structural inequalities alone without fixing their antecedents is expected to lead inexorably to newly minted structural inequalities (*e.g.*, gentrification)—not an unfamiliar conundrum in the sociocultural history of blacks in America. Does this mean we should give up on structural fixes altogether? No, but it does suggest that we invite consideration of a new genre of cultural fixes (*e.g.*, *WAVES*) which diminish the costs of *PTCD* and structural disparities which together accelerate closures of physical, mental, social, and educational disparities in ways that hasten the **Recovery & Transformation** of challenged neighborhoods and communities.

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*Cultural Fixes* → (((↓ *PTCD*) → (↓ Structural Disparities)) → (Racial Equities in Physical, Mental, Social, and Educational Outcomes))) → **R & T**

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**Post note:** Thus far we are finding that *WAVES* are important in enabling Justice (Equity) and Freedom (Access) in experimental studies as well as in domestic and international applications. We have found in the last instance, for example, that high *WAVES* (RTP=80% in 2016) were associated with remarkably stunning progress in gender equity, economic productivity, infant mortality reduction, and public education accessibility in the African country of Rwanda. In particular, between 1990 and 2017 Rwanda's life expectancy at birth increased by 33.3 years, mean years of schooling increased by 2.3 years, expected years of schooling increased by 5.5 years, and its GNI per capita increased by nearly 110 percent. Is it possible that billowing *WAVES* might be generative for nations as well as communities, neighborhoods, and individuals?

