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# How Disparities Research Can Influence Public Policy

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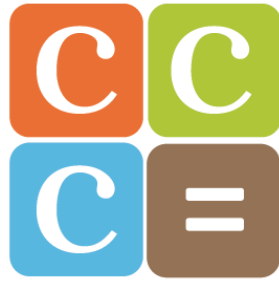
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# How Disparities Research can Influence Public Policy

*Ann Curry-Stevens, Associate Professor  
Director, Center to Advance Racial Equity*



Portland State  
UNIVERSITY



- Five-year history of partnered research
- Initiated by the Coalition
- Grant funding of \$550,000
  - City, County
  - Foundations
  - PSU
  - In-kind contributions from Coalition members

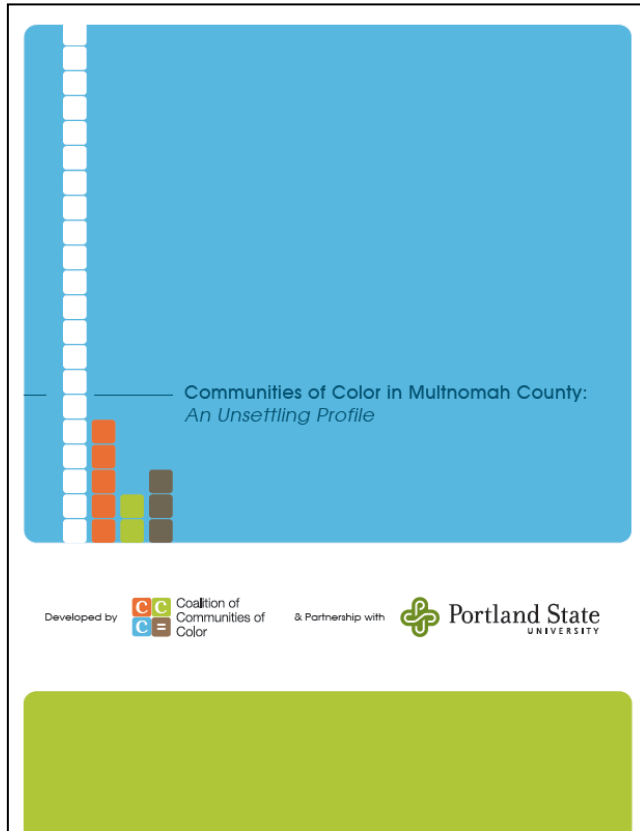
# Origins of the Research

- The context
  - Facing invisibility and exclusion in policy development
    - Rarely invited to the table
    - Once there, had to waste much time making the arguments for the needs of the community
  - Didn't pass the "raised eyebrows" test
    - When shared information, suspicion was pronounced
- Needed
  - Community "licenses" the process and the product
    - Useful data & visibility
- University credentials build legitimacy

# Where have disparities been uncovered?

1. Population counts
2. Education
3. Occupation
4. Unemployment
5. Poverty levels
6. Access to food banks
7. Government procurement and contracting
8. Small business numbers
9. Hiring in public service
10. Incomes
11. Wealth
12. Bankruptcy
13. Lending institutions
14. Housing discrimination
15. Voter registration and voting
16. Volunteering
17. Public office
18. Philanthropy funding
19. Police hiring
20. Juvenile Justice
21. Child welfare
22. Health insurance
23. Health disparities
24. Racial harassment
25. Health risk behaviors (varied results)
26. Criminal justice
27. Access to public housing
28. Homeless numbers

# First Report – June 2010



- Integrated for “communities of color”
- Expansive media and policy attention
- Presentations to civic leaders, bureaus, school boards, foundations...

# Communities of Color Coalition finds 'toxic' conditions for Multnomah County minorities

By Janie Har, The Oregonian  
May 06, 2010, 5:33PM

A new report by a coalition of minority groups labels Multnomah County a "uniquely toxic place" for people of color, where minorities consistently lag behind whites on nearly every indicator, from poverty rates to jobs.

Conditions here are worse than in other parts of the country and continuing slide, said lead researcher Ann Curry-Stevens, an assistant professor of the graduate school of social work at **Portland State University**.

## New Research on Urban Indian Community Ample Leaders With Tools for Change

By Leah Gibson November 9, 2011

On November 2, policy makers, Native American leaders, National Congress of American Indian's conference attendees and other Native professionals witnessed the release of the unique report *The Native American Community in Multnomah County: an Unsettling Profile*. This research is the product of a collaboration among the Coalition of Communities of Color, Portland State University, the Portland Indian Business Center, and the Portland Urban Indian Community. The research is a unique and innovative methodology, a method that equally prioritizes quantitative and qualitative data. Unique to this report, the information is not only accurate but also

### Investing in Lasting Change: The Benefits of Advocating for Communities of Color

By Thomas Aschenbrenner  
President, Northwest Health Foundation

### Opinion

## Report reveals 'unsettling' disparity for Latinos in Multnomah County



Daily Vanguard

### Portland minorities at a disadvantage

Study shows that Portland is not as progressive as it appears

By Courtney Graham  
Vanguard staff

Published: Tuesday, May 25, 2010  
Updated: Tuesday, May 25, 2010

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Portland State recently released a report in conjunction with the Coalition of Communities of Color that found that communities of color—including newly profiled African immigrants and Slavic communities—are substantially disadvantaged compared to their white counterparts in Multnomah County.

# Needed: A way to keep on area racial disparity

A surprising report from Portland State University and minority groups documents the canyon between who we are and who we want to be.

**W**e now know the score, and it's deeply disturbing:

Whites winning. Everyone else in Multnomah County losing.

Of course, it's not that simple. It's fair to say that few Oregonians are doing brilliantly in this economic climate. Nevertheless, whites are not and minorities are doing worse, far worse.



## Portland isn't as white as figures show, coalition contends

Published: Saturday, December 19, 2009, 10:00 AM Updated: Saturday, December 19, 2009, 8:06 PM

By Nikole Hannah-Jones, The Oregonian  
Follow

# Subsequent Reports



- Native American
- Latino
- Asian & Pacific Islanders
- African
- African American
- Slavic



# Policy recommendations in the reports

- Set of 11 CCC-wide policies (remain important)
- Each community determines additional policy priorities
- Increasing sophistication and targeted “asks” at each presentation to
  - City
  - County
  - School districts
  - Leadership bodies

# Last week... City Hall...

- <http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=49508&a=481868>
- 116:00

# Impacts of the Research

- Awareness
- Outcomes & impacts
  - Changing discourse about racial equity
  - Capacity building for the Coalition
    - Profile
    - Leverage
    - Leadership
    - Advocacy experience & strategy
    - Infrastructure
  - Community development
  - Leveraged resources
  - Policy development practices
  - Policy outcomes...



# Examples of Policy Outcomes

- **Philanthropic policy**
  - 30% of funds from Regional Arts and Culture Council in “culturally-specific set-aside” allocation
  - Convergence Partnership (2010-12) for policy advocacy in Healthy Eating Active Living grants (\$664,000)
  - Children’s Levy – ¼ of rating dedicated to proven ability to serve children of color (CCC and CARE provided metrics)
  - Racial equity policies being developed in most local foundations
    - Meyer – “Working towards equity at the center ... [of] revising the mission and vision”
    - Northwest Health Foundation – Racial equity at forefront of improving health
- **Research reforms for visibility of communities of color**
  - Multnomah County’s Visibility Initiative
  - House Bill 2134, “Race, ethnicity, language and disability demographic data collection standards”
  - Disparities research being embedded in government practices – City of Portland
  - Benchmarks for “equity” set in service access and outcomes – City of Portland
- **Human Resources policies**
  - Changed the stature of Equity Director at Metro – instead of HR, reports directly to COO
  - Participating in hiring committees for major leadership positions (not policy, but significant practice)
    - Foundation leadership (United Way, Oregon Community Foundation)
    - Equity staff (City of Portland, Metro)
    - School Board Superintendents (Reynolds School District)

# Additional Policy Gains

- **Economic-related policy**

- Worked with Mayor's office to implement racial equity objectives in budget
- 1500 new jobs by PDC, of which 30% to go to workers of color
  - Although significant (at ~ \$37 million from job creation & multipliers), this is not beyond simply a fair share of investment
- Exploring options for the City to expand recognition of foreign credentials
- Community Benefits Agreement, directing staff to expand minority contracting in “large scale public works projects” (2012)

- **Education policy**

- Catalyzed and supported PPS's additional 4% “Equity Formula Allocation” to help close the achievement gap
- 5/6 of local school districts have passed racial equity policies
- Working with Superintendents to build policies to reduce discipline disparities

- **Leveraged funds**

- Obtained \$1 million (and additional \$1.6 million in 2013) from Meyer Memorial Trust for leadership development (not policy, but supports policy advocacy)

- **Helped create City of Portland's Office of Equity and Human Rights (2011)**

# Center to Advance Racial Equity

1. Develop “Protocol for culturally-responsive services”
2. Determine the landscape of contracting for health and human services
3. Disaggregate student achievement data by race and income
4. Civil service workforce profiles
5. Granting Practices & Environmental Sustainability
6. Identifying “best practices” at the policy level for reducing racial disparities in education
7. Establish an evidence base of the needs and assets of newcomers of color to the region
8. Lit review on “government levers” to improve racial equity (employer, investor, policy maker...)
9. Evaluate Latino leadership development program
10. Improving food bank access for Asian community

# Benefits

- Community
  - Get to make requests of academia for important research needs
  - Strengthens leverage and profile
- Students
  - Resume strengthening
  - Professional networks extended
  - Meaningful paid research
- PSU
  - Partnership and profile
  - Much greater community-validated legitimacy
  - Recruitment