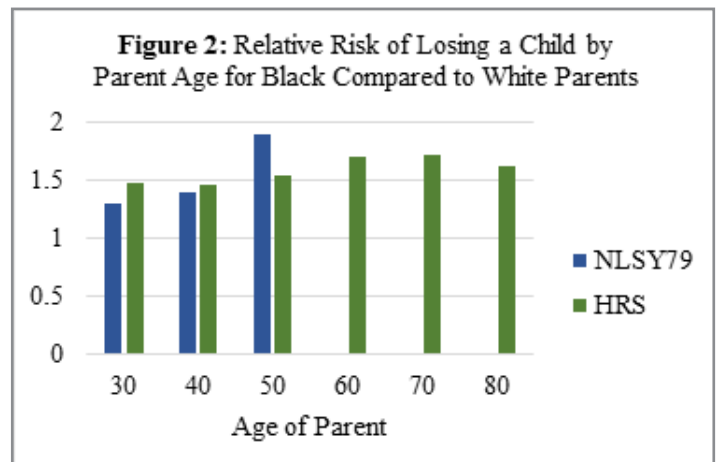
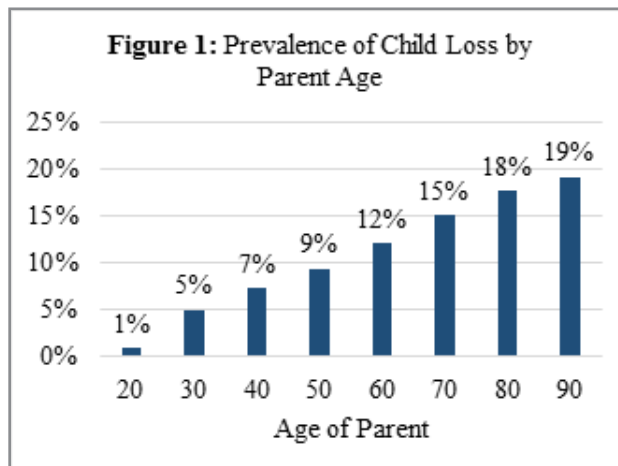


# Race and Death of Child: Exposure and Consequences for Health

## Summary of Preliminary Results

Debra Umberson

### RISK OF LOSING A CHILD



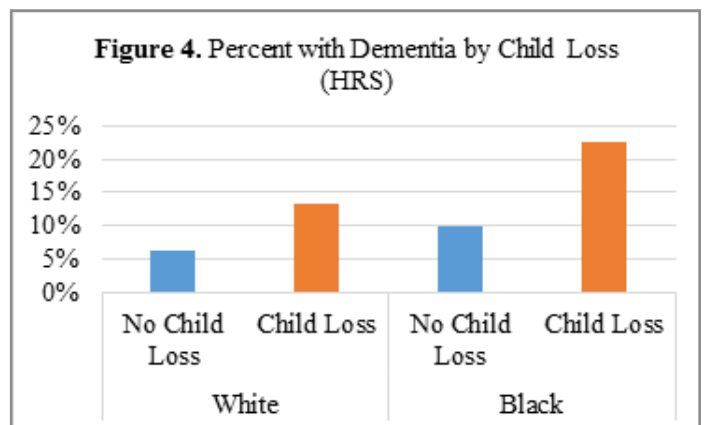
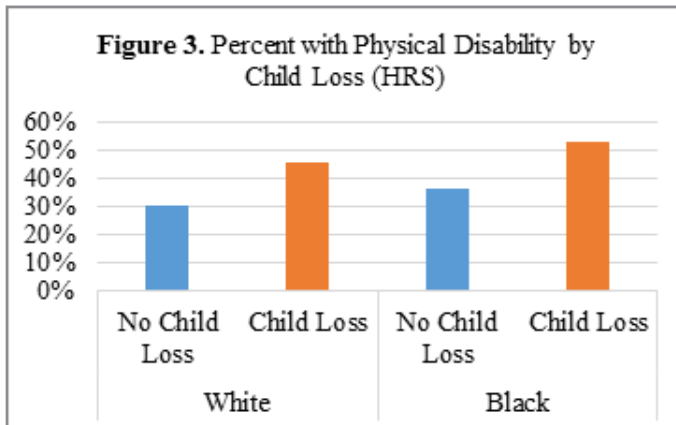
#### KEY FINDINGS

- Among adults aged 50 and older in the Health & Retirement Study (HRS), about 5% of parents lost a child by age 30, 12% by age 60, and 18% by age 80.
- Among both younger and older parents, blacks are more likely than whites to have lost a child.
  - Black adults are almost three times more likely than whites to lose a child by age 30 in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY-97) and almost two times more likely than whites to lose a child by age 70 (HRS).

### HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING A CHILD

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Death of a child is associated with numerous health risks for parents over the years following loss:
  - Increased risk of cardiovascular disease, physical disability, dementia, and death.
- The loss of a child also increases pathways of risk that undermine health, including increased health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking) and poor mental health (e.g., depression).
- These health consequences are statistically robust even when demographic and socioeconomic variables are taken into account.
- Although black and white parents are similarly affected by death of a child, racial inequality and disadvantage is striking for black parents for two primary reasons:
  - Black parents are substantially more likely than white parents to lose a child during their lifetime.
  - Black parents are disadvantaged on health (relative to whites) prior to the loss of a child and the death of a child adds substantially to this disadvantage as shown in Figures 3 and 4.



Results are based on preliminary analysis of data from the Health and Retirement Study (<http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/>) and the National Longitudinal Study of Youth-1997 (<https://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsy97.htm>). This research is supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging (R01-AG17455) and grant P2CHD042849 awarded to the Population Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

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For additional information, see:

“Death of Family Members as an Overlooked Source of Racial Disadvantage in the United States” (<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2017/01/17/1605599114.full>) in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

“Black Deaths Matter: Race, Relationship Loss, and Effects on Survivors” (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022146517739317>) in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*

PRC Research Brief: “How Losing Family Members Earlier than Expected Adds to Racial Disadvantage for U.S. Blacks” (<https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/prc/research/research-brief-series/2017-research-briefs/umberson-racial-disadvantage-bereavement.php>)

PRC Research Brief: “Black Deaths Matter: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Racial Disparities in Relationship Loss and Health” (<https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/prc/research/research-brief-series/2018-research-briefs/umberson-blackdeathsmatter.php>)



The University of Texas at Austin Population Research Center (PRC) aims to provide outstanding infrastructure resources and sustain a dynamic interdisciplinary culture geared toward facilitating the highest level of cutting-edge, population-related research. Our researchers' projects focus primarily on Family Demography and Intergenerational Relationships; Education, Work, and Inequality; Population Health; and Reproductive Health.

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