

Exploring the Conceptualization, Measurement, and Reporting of SES in Social/Behavioral Research.

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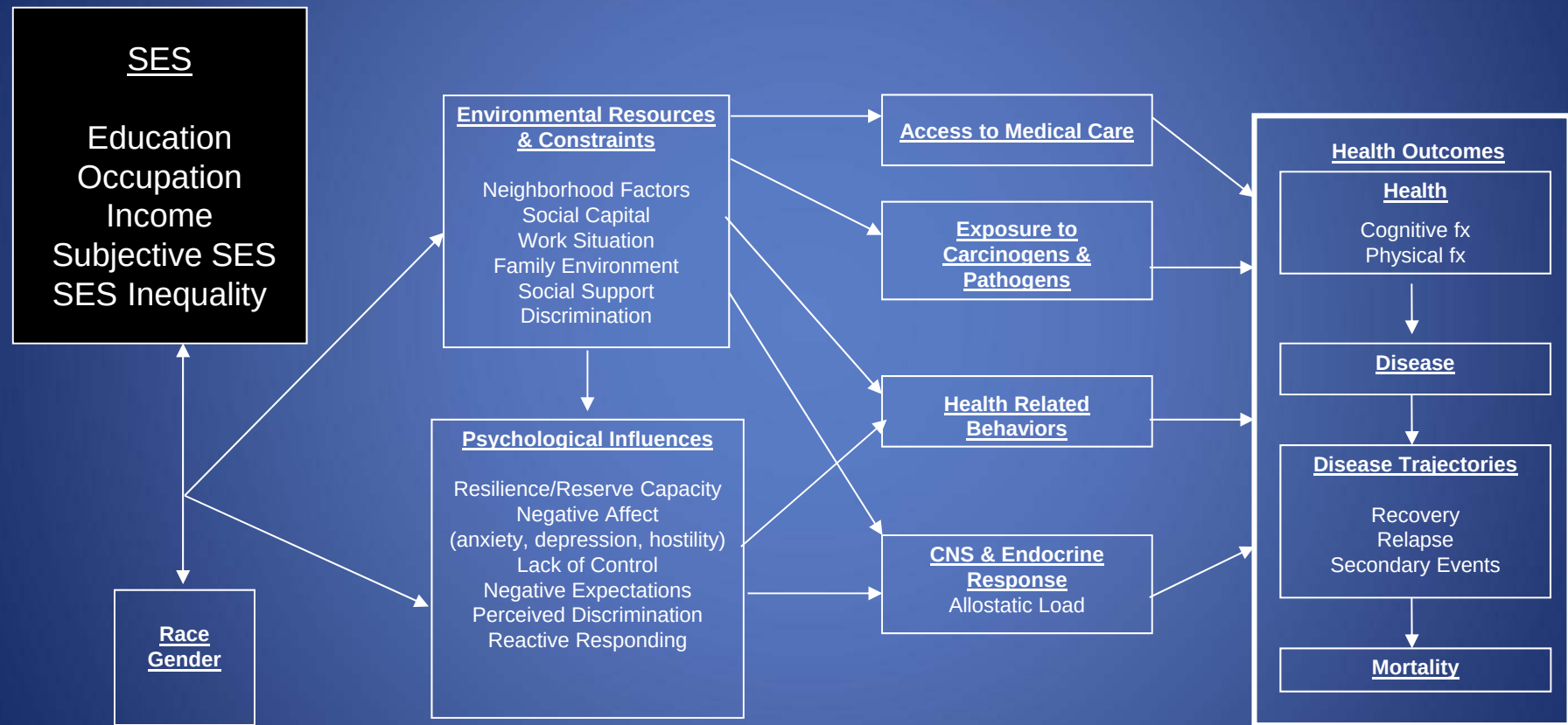
University of California,
San Francisco

NEJM editorial

“In study after study, socioeconomic status emerges as one of the most important influences in morbidity and mortality.”

Marcia Angell

MacArthur Research Network Model



Life Course

Education

- Most commonly used (in US)
- Relatively easy to measure
- Temporal ordering allows stronger inferences about causation

Resources provided by education

- Knowledge
- Social networks and norms
- * Credentialing (sheepskin effect)

Measurement issues

- Years of schooling vs. highest degree earned
- Accounting for quality of education

Financial resources

- Income versus wealth
- Absolute versus relative income
- Income inequality

Measurement issues

- Wealth more stable than income but more complex to measure
- Personal or household income (need for adjustment for size of household)
- Social desirability and use of ranges

Conceptual issues

- Absolute or relative income
- Income inequality as a contextual issue

Occupation

Employed versus unemployed

- benefits of work (financial and social)
- work/life conflicts
- selection effects (reasons for not working)

What aspects of occupation matter?

- Work conditions
 - physical risk
 - social risk (demand, control)
- Prestige
- Qualifications

Composite

- Objective: Combination of income, education and occupation
- Subjective: SES “ladder”

Key consideration

WHAT IS YOUR THEORY?

For further information

www.macses.ucsf.edu