Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience

Preventing Community Trauma as Equity in Practice

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Trauma: What We Know

- Trauma is the impact of experiences or situations that are painful.
- There is growing understanding about trauma, particularly its prevalence and impact.
- Trauma-informed care is becoming a standard in a growing number of places
- The predominant approach to dealing with trauma is screening and treatment, consistent with an individual medical model.

Community Trauma: What We're Learning

- Trauma also manifests at the community level, and is not just the aggregate of individuals in a neighborhood who have experienced trauma.
- Community trauma is the impact of chronic adversity across a community.
- There is an understanding that trauma serves as a barrier to effective solutions to promote health, safety and wellbeing.
- There are manifestations, or symptoms, of community trauma in the sociocultural, physical/built and economic environments.

People are unbelievably resilient—but traumatized people interacting with other traumatized people— a community can really run the risk of imploding.

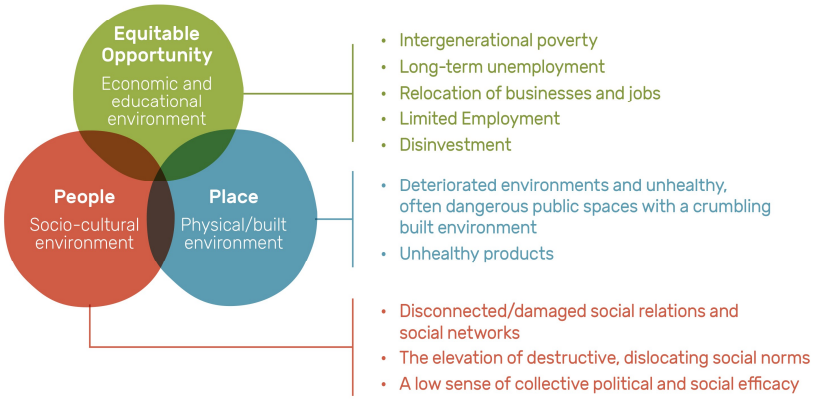
Violence prevention practitioner (*Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: Preventing and Addressing Community Trauma*)

Symptoms of Community Trauma

Community trauma symptoms are the manifestations of the impact of experiencing adversity (structural violence and/or violence) across a community.

Examples include:

- damaged social networks
- a low sense of social and political efficacy
- deteriorated built environments
- intergenerational poverty



Sample Symptoms of Community Trauma

The Impact of Community Trauma

Communities with high levels of community trauma share similar characteristics that make it difficult for them to develop and implement effective strategies to improve wellbeing and thrive.

The Roots of Community Trauma

- Structural violence is **what inflicts harm** on communities and is driven by structural drivers
- Violence is the **intentional use** of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of **resulting in injury, death, psychological or emotional harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation**

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE (examples)

- Concentrated poverty
- Residential segregation/ segregation from opportunity
- Redlining
- Gentrification and displacement
- Disproportionate toxic exposures – environmental injustice
- Poor transportation systems
- Poor food systems
- Flight of business and economic drivers/engines out of communities
- Disinvestment
- Predatory marketing and business practices
- Failing school systems and zero tolerance policies
- Over/oppressive policing, under policing, and unconstitutional policing
- Differential sentencing, minimum sentencing, and higher rates of incarceration
- Criminalization of mental illness and substance abuse

VIOLENCE (examples)

- Community Violence
- Gang violence
- Sexual violence
- Fear of violence
- Loss from violence

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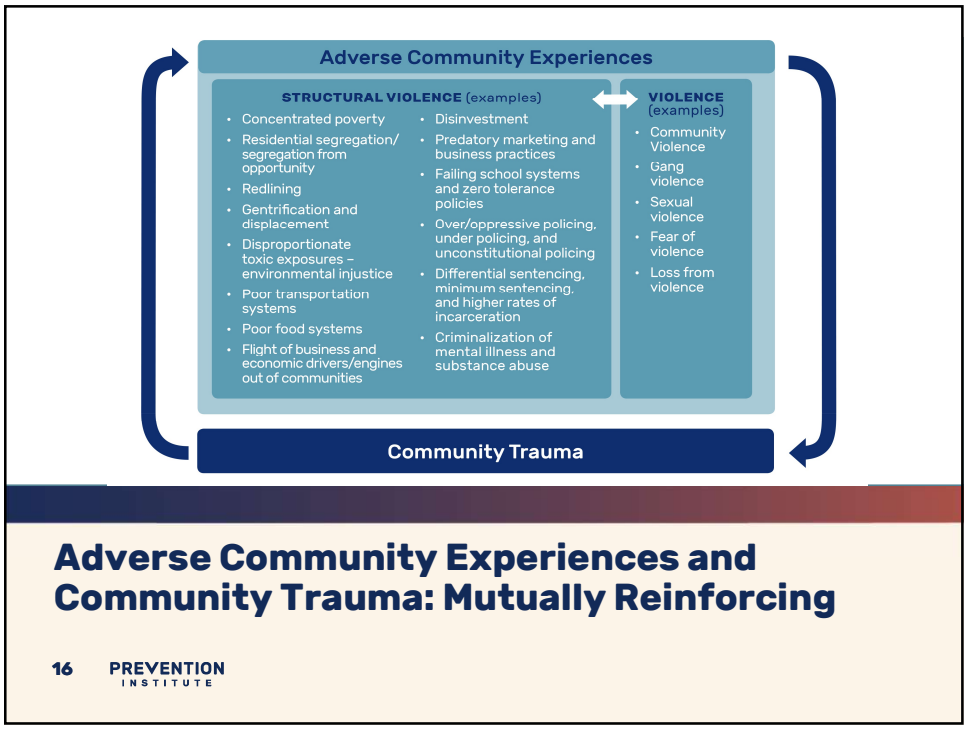
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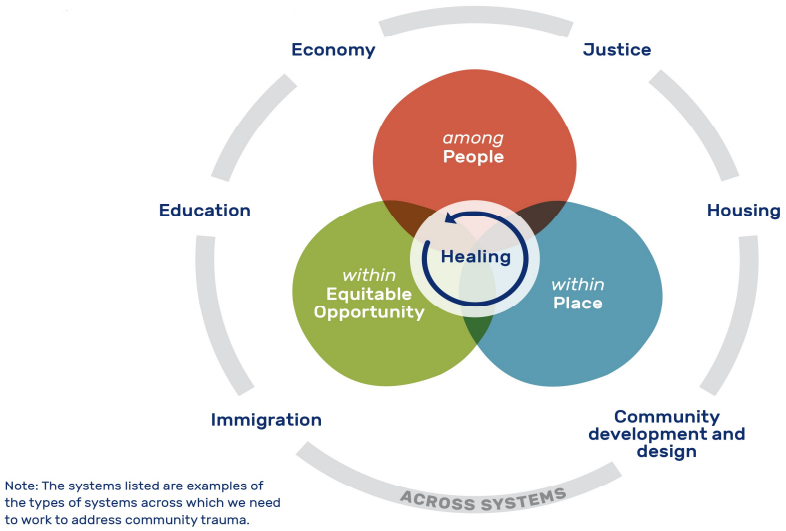
Community Resilience

- Community resilience is the ability/capacity of a community to adapt, recover and thrive, even in the face of adversity
- It's rooted in community factors, such as social networks and trust; willingness to act for the community good; culture; living wages/local assets and wealth; healthy, equitable community design and infrastructure; and healthy products and services

Working on community determinants is both scary and reassuring. If we don't do this level of prevention, we will always be chasing the problem.

-Ohio Community Collective Impact Model for Change Learning Community Partner



Note: The systems listed are examples of the types of systems across which we need to work to address community trauma.

Healing: A Starting Point for Community Agency

- Healing circles
- Vigils
- Restorative justice practices
- Acknowledgement/ reconciliation
- Arts and engagement in the arts
- Community dialogues
- Practices that are culturally and community rooted and acknowledge harm and promote resilience

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Strategies Among People

- Increasing civic engagement and participation
- Supporting multigenerational relationships
- Coming together to build community efficacy
- Advancing positive norms

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Strategies Among People

- Uplifting positive narratives of hope and resilience from within the community
- Enhanced community engagement and advocacy
- **Trauma informed community building**
- Reconnecting with cultural identity

Fostering social connections and trust in public housing

BRIDGE Housing's approach to addressing community trauma

Comments by Susan Neufeld of BRIDGE Housing, shared during a Prevention Institute web conference about the ACE|R framework in April 2016, serve as the basis for the following narrative. Photo credit: Clark James Mishler, courtesy of BRIDGE Housing.

BRIDGE Housing's approach to trauma-informed community building

At BRIDGE Housing, we recognize that trauma is the interpersonal things that happen in our lives but also the way systems fail communities, in many cases over generations. It's critical to recognize the impact that systems have on the communities they serve and there is a growing understanding that the trauma experienced by many low-income and public housing communities poses challenges for traditional community building efforts. When BRIDGE was recruited and hired to redevelop two large public housing sites, including Jordan Downs in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles and Potrero Terrace and Annex (PTA) in San Francisco, we noticed that both public housing developments suffered from a deteriorating built environment due to years of physical neglect. While trying to engage residents in the redevelopment process, we also saw that they had a chronic lack of trust as a result of the history of public housing in the United States and the chronic failure of the system in many neighborhoods. With affordable housing work, it is common to offer resident programs and services, such as mental health services and after-school youth development programs, and expect residents to show

In April 2016, **SUSAN NEUFELD** of BRIDGE Housing joined a Prevention Institute web conference about the ACE|R framework to discuss trauma informed community building as a strategy to promote resilience and healing. The remarks she shared during the web conference serve as the basis for this narrative and are supplemented by information from BRIDGE Housing's *Trauma Informed Community Building* report, Partners in Progress Case Study, and evaluation.

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Strategies within the Community (Place)

- Reclaiming land, spaces and public places
- Arts and cultural reflection/expression in the community
- Focus on ensuring stable housing with dignity
- **Creating safe and supportive places for regular gathering/coming together**

Creating Space for Being/Doing/Connecting

United Women of East Africa
San Diego, CA

Strategies within the Community (Equitable Opportunity)

- **Workforce and economic development**
- Restorative justice in schools
- Resident ownership of businesses

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Strategies Across Systems

- Trauma informed systems transformation
- Public health solutions to police-community violence
- Power-sharing (e.g., participatory budgeting, shared leadership and decision-making)

East San Jose PEACE Partnership

City paints over Brooklyn 'jail' playground with space-age replacement

BY JAKE PEARSON, ELIZABETH HAYS / DAILY NEWS WRITERS / Thursday, April 15, 2010, 4:14 PM

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