Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma

Ruben Cantu
Program Manager
Prevention Institute

November 4, 2016
What's Trauma Got to do with It?

How the Environment Affects Us
Photo: MTA of the State of New York
MY NEIGHBORHOOD IS KILLING ME
It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural and physical environment conspire against such change.

— Institute of Medicine
Prevention

a **systematic** process that reduces the frequency and/or severity of illness or injury.

**Primary Prevention**

*Promotes healthy environments and behaviors to prevent problems from occurring* **before** *the onset of symptoms*
Prevention Works

- Smoking Prevention
- Minimum Drinking Age Laws
- Childhood Immunizations
- Motorcycle and Bicycle Helmet Laws
- Child Seat and Safety Belt Use
- Reduced Lead Levels in Children
Child Safety Seats
NORMS

Attitudes, beliefs, ways of being

Taken for granted

Sanction behavior

Based in culture & tradition

More than a habit
“The ideas of one generation become the instincts of the next.”

— D.H. Lawrence
What can be done to prevent the problem from occurring in the first place?
Prevention Institute and Dr. Howard Pinderhughes conducted a study (literature review and interviews) to explore trauma at the population level, how it impacts other community health improvement efforts – including violence prevention, and emerging strategies.
What Is Trauma?

- Experiences or situations that are emotionally painful
- Chronic adversity (discrimination, racism, sexism, poverty, oppression)
A. There is growing understanding about trauma, particularly its prevalence and impact. The predominant approach to dealing with trauma is screening and treatment, consistent with a medical model.

B. Trauma manifests at the community-level. There are emerging practices to address trauma at the community-level, yet there is not a framework for addressing and preventing it.
“No epidemic has ever been resolved by paying attention to the treatment of the affected individual.”

— George W. Albee
The Community Environment

Equitable Opportunity

People

Place
THRIVE

Tool for Health and Resilience In Vulnerable Environments
THRIE

**EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY**
- Education
- Living wages & local wealth

**PEOPLE**
- Social networks & trust
- Participation & willingness to act for the common good
- Norms and culture

**PLACE**
- What’s sold & how it’s promoted
- Look, feel & safety
- Parks & open space
- Getting around
- Housing
- Air, water, soil
- Arts & cultural expression

**PREVENTION INSTITUTE**
Symptoms of Community-Level Trauma

- Intergenerational poverty
- Long-term unemployment
- Relocation of businesses & jobs
- Limited employment
- Disinvestment

- Deteriorated environments and unhealthy, often dangerous public spaces with a crumbling built environment
- Unhealthy products

- Disconnected/damaged social relations and social networks
- The elevation of destructive, dislocating social norms
- A low sense of collective political and social efficacy

Figure 1 The Community Environment
Social-Cultural Environment

PEOPLE

- Damaged, fragmented or disrupted:
  - social relations (esp. intergenerational)
  - social networks and
  - infrastructure of social support

- Low sense of collective political and social efficacy

- Elevation of destructive social norms promoting violence and unhealthy behaviors over affirming, community oriented positive social norms
Deteriorated environments and unhealthy, often dangerous public spaces with a crumbling built environment.
Economic/Educational Environment

- Intergenerational poverty
- Long term unemployment
- Relocation of businesses, corporations and jobs
- Limited employment opportunities
- Government and private disinvestment

OPPORTUNITY

People

Place

Opportunity
Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against 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.

World report on violence and health: summary.

World Health Organization
Structural violence refers to harm that individuals, families and communities experience from the economic and social structure, social institutions, relations of power, privilege and inequality and inequity that may harm people and communities by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.
Root Causes

- Poverty
- Racism
- Oppression
- Inequality
- Sexism
- Power Dynamics
- Classism
- Heteronormativity
Root Causes = Structural Violence

- Poverty
- Inequality
- Racism
- Sexism
- Oppression
- Power Dynamics

Trauma
Figure 2  The Production of Trauma from Violence

- Structural Violence
- Violence Threat of Violence Loss
Figure 2 The Production of Trauma from Violence

- Structural Violence
- Violence Threat of Violence Loss
- Individual Trauma
- Individual Symptoms
  - Re-experiencing
  - Emotional numbing
  - Avoidance
  - Increased arousal
Figure 2: The Production of Trauma from Violence

- Structural Violence
- Violence Threat of Violence Loss

Equitable Opportunity
- Intergenerational poverty
- Unemployment
- Disinvestment

Community Symptoms
- Disconnected, damaged relations
- Destructive social norms
- Low sense of political/social efficacy

People

Place
- Deteriorated environments
- Unhealthy, dangerous public spaces
- Crumbling built environment

Community Trauma
Figure 2: The Production of Trauma from Violence

- **Structural Violence**
  - Indirect Impact on Population
  - Opportunity Inequality

- **Violence Threat of Violence Loss**
  - Direct Impact on Individual
  - Direct Impact on Community

- **Individual Trauma**
  - Re-experiencing
  - Emotional numbing
  - Avoidance
  - Increased arousal

- **Individual Symptoms**
- **Community Symptoms**
  - Equitable Opportunity
  - Inter-generational poverty
  - Unemployment
  - Disinvestment

- **Community Trauma**
  - Disconnected, damaged relations
  - Destructive social norms
  - Low sense of political/social efficacy

- **Place**
  - Deteriorated environments
  - Unhealthy, dangerous public spaces
  - Crumbling built environment

**Prevention Institute**
Building Community Resilience Requires Comprehensive and Sustained Policy and Action
Community resilience: the ability of a community to recover from and/or thrive despite the prevalence of adverse conditions.

In the context of community-level trauma, this means putting the conditions in place in which the community can heal from trauma and/or be protected against the impact of trauma.
Figure 5  Promoting Community Resilience: From Trauma to Well-being

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES
- Equitable Opportunity
  - Restorative justice
  - Healing circles
  - Economic empowerment
  - Workforce development
  - Investment in resources

- People
  - Rebuild relationships and networks
  - Strengthen healthy social norms
  - Promote community connection

- Place
  - Create safer public spaces
  - Improve the built environment
  - Invest in parks, housing and transportation

INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES
- Trauma-informed care
- Mental health services

Reduced individual and community trauma
Reduced risk of violence, threat of violence
People

- Rebuild and revitalize:
  - social relationships, esp. intergenerational
  - social networks
  - infrastructure of social support

- Strengthen and elevate social norms promoting: healthy behaviors, community connection and community orientation

- Establishing collaborations promoting these community level strategies while rebuilding community social networks
Social-Cultural Environment

PEOPLE

• Change the narrative about community and the people in it

• Shift community social norms

• Organize and promote regular positive community activity

• Provide a voice and element of power for community folks around shifting and changing environmental factors as well as the structural factors
Isle de Jean Charles

Photo: NY Times
Isle de Jean Charles

Louisiana

Photo: Karen Apricot
• Create safer public spaces through improvements in the built environment by addressing parks, housing quality and transportation
• Reclaim and improve public spaces
Gentilly Resilience District

New Orleans

Photo: www.NOLA.gov
Economic/Educational Environment

EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY

- Restorative Justice
- Healing Circles
- Economic empowerment/opportunity and workforce development
- Strategies to increase community wealth and resources that can resist the economic pressures that result in dislocation and gentrification
Springfield Innovation Center

Springfield, MA
Community Strategies

- Shift Community Social Norms
- Enhance Social Connections and Networks
- Rebuild Intergenerational Connections and Relationships
- Organize and Promote Regular Positive Community Activity
- Providing more of a voice and element of power for community folks around shifting and changing environmental as well as structural factors
- Change the community narrative
Community Strategies

- Reclaim and Improve Public Spaces
Community Strategies

- Sustainable Community Economic Development
- Restorative Justice
- Healing Circles
Figure 5: Promoting Community Resilience: From Trauma to Well-being

**Community Strategies**
- Equitable Opportunity
  - Restorative justice
  - Healing circles
  - Economic empowerment
  - Workforce development
  - Investment in resources

**People**
- Rebuild relationships and networks
- Strengthen healthy social norms
- Promote community connection

**Place**
- Create safer public spaces
- Improve the built environment
- Invest in parks, housing and transportation

**Individual Approaches**
- Trauma-informed care
- Mental health services

**Resilient Community**
- Adequate living wages
- Local wealth
- Quality education

**People**
- Strong social networks
- Trust
- Willingness to act for the common good
- Norms/culture that support health and safety

**Place**
- Safe parks and open spaces
- Arts and cultural expression
- Perceptions of safety
- Availability of healthy products
- Availability of quality housing

**Increased well-being for individuals, families and communities**

**Reduced individual and community trauma**

**Reduced risk of violence, threat of violence**

Prevention Institute

Unity through Violence Prevention
THRIE

EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY

- Education
- Living wages & local wealth

PEOPLE

- Social networks & trust
- Participation & willingness to act for the common good
- Norms and culture

PLACE

- What’s sold & how it’s promoted
- Look, feel & safety
- Parks & open space
  - Getting around
    - Housing
  - Air, water, soil
  - Arts & cultural expression

PREVENTION INSTITUTE
# Neighborhood Resilience Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CM</th>
<th>TDV</th>
<th>IPV</th>
<th>SV</th>
<th>YV</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Suicide</th>
<th>Elder Abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of services among community agencies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to mental health and substance abuse services</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community support and connectedness*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** CM (Child Maltreatment), TDV (Teen Dating Violence), IPV (Intimate Partner Violence), SV (Sexual Violence), YV (Youth Violence)

*Community support and connectedness typically measured at the individual level

Your Turn

Comments?

Questions?

Reflections?

Q & A

Thoughts about how this applies to your work?
Your Turn

What symptoms of community trauma have you seen manifest in the communities you serve?

Figure 1 The Community Environment

Symptoms of Community Trauma
- Intergenerational poverty
- Long-term unemployment
- Relocation of businesses & jobs
- Limited employment
- Disinvestment

Place
- Physical/built environment
- Deteriorated environments and unhealthy, often dangerous public spaces with a crumbling built environment
- Unhealthy products

People
- Social-cultural environment
- Disconnected/damaged social relations and social networks
- The elevation of destructive, dislocating social norms
- A low sense of collective political and social efficacy

Equitable Opportunity
- Economic and educational environment
In what ways is community trauma a barrier to implementing effective solutions to promote health, safety and well-being in the communities you serve?
What are some strategies that might be effective in the communities you serve to heal from trauma and prevent trauma in the first place?

**Your Turn**
Ruben Cantu
510-444-7738
ruben@preventioninstitute.org

Sign up for our media alerts at www.preventioninstitute.org/alerts

Connect with us on