



Measuring Success in Addressing Childhood Adversity Funder Network on Trauma & Resilience

On September 25, 2018, the Funder Network on Trauma and Resilience held a forum to discuss successes and challenges in measuring the effectiveness of different approaches to addressing trauma and building resilience across a variety of practice settings.

Panelists:

- Nicki Bush, Associate Professor, UCSF
- Ken Epstein, (Former) Children’s System of Care Director, San Francisco County Behavioral Health Services
- Ronald J. Powell, President and CEO, RJ Powell Consultants
- Esta Soler, Founder and President, Futures Without Violence
- Moderator: Rajni Dronamraju, Senior Manager of Charitable Giving, Genentech

Defining Trauma & Resilience

There is no one common definition for resilience or trauma, it differs based on who you ask, the field you work in, and the outcomes you are considering.

- Definition needs to take into account that it is an intergenerational issue.
- Trauma often occurs when an important relationship is fractured and continues to be fractured, having negative consequences for future relationships on an individual.
- One common denominator in many resilient individuals is having an adult in their childhood that they felt truly cared for them.
- It’s important to be careful about how we talk about trauma and resilience in a community because there is often stigma attached to it.

Facets of Measurement

- **Relationship between a parent and a child**
 - The cycles of trauma can continue in families across generations
 - For example, a child’s experience of trauma is often linked to their relationship with a parent.
 - Collecting data on a child’s relationship with their parents and creating interventions that optimize those relationships can help promote resiliency and prevent social, emotional, or behavioral health problems.
 - Research shows that addressing the trauma of a parent has a positive effect on the child and the parent-child relationship.

SUMMARY



- When research findings between parent and child don't conclude with the expected outcomes, the data collected can still be valuable for other research projects.
- **Community experiences**
 - It is important to not isolate the relationship between a parent and a child, but consider the external forces in a community that can impact or support a child-parent relationship and children in general.
 - External forces include the socio-cultural, physical/built, and economic environments.
- **Organizational culture & workforce development**
 - Organizations need to be intentional in creating an environment where staff feel respected and valued.
 - Gauging how staff feel in their work environment through surveys and setting up interventions to address issues raised can prevent staff burnout.
 - There is great value in funding organizational culture change. It provides space for individuals to think about their common purpose and what success looks like for the team; also helps departments break down silos and work together to serve clients.
 - Staff should be representative of the community; individuals with lived experience have the greatest potential to be the most effective in their roles.
 - When hiring, organizations should place high emphasis on how well the applicant will adapt to the organization's culture. Often organizations hire for talent and fire for character, but instead they should hire for character and train people to learn the skills they need to be successful.
- **Informing policy**
 - Need to collect data that educates and compels policymakers.
 - 62% of CA adults have experienced at least one ACE and one in six have experienced four or more ACES.
 - Data shows we can measure a 6 month old's "fight or flight" physiology. By setting up interventions during pregnancy, such as providing an 8 week group-based mindfulness training and social support community, and then tracking the difference this makes in an infant's fight or flight instinct, we can show the benefits of reducing stress during pregnancy.
 - Median age for anxiety disorders is six. Children with mental health issues are being diagnosed and treated too late. Need to pay more attention to prevention.
 - Need to share best practices so they can be replicated in other places.

SUMMARY



Focusing on Race

- There is not a lot of research that examines the implications of race. One reason for this is the amount of time it takes to build trust between a researcher and the community.
- Need to have more of a focus on race and understand the generational trauma experienced. If we ignore race, we replicate the problem.
- Research that Dr. Bush has worked on asked individual parents to place themselves on the MacArthur ladder. The study showed that where parents perceived themselves on the ladder was associated with their children's physiological reactivity (predictor of mental and physical health), suggesting parents' perceptions of their social standing predicts their children's health.
- A study conducted on African Americans in Appalachia showed that some AA children who showed psychosocial resilience to poverty demonstrated high levels of physiological "wear and tear", suggesting resilience in one outcome (social competence) does not confer resilience in all domains (health).

Working across Sectors

- Need to expand the table and invite people from the government, business and media so we can think bigger.
- New governor poses a great opportunity to advance an ecosystem that is more family oriented and policies that set up families to be more sustainable and thrive.
- CA is in a great position to be innovative, try practices that can act as model for the nation.
- The field should work across sectors to develop shared desired outcomes (e.g., every child should be able to read by 3rd grade). Shared outcomes can be identified through research that takes into account race, health, and social landscape.

Philanthropy's Role

- Provide flexibility in measuring a broader set of outcomes.
- Think about where the intersections are and don't fund in silos.
- Support initiatives that help move practices from the lab to organizations and to communities.
- Also consider how funders can support the organizational changes and culture shift needed to implement these practices.
- Consider how funding for treatment and prevention can be merged.
- Funding cycles need to be longer in order to pursue multi-generational approaches.
- Provide leeway in how dollars are being spent and have a tolerance for risk. This allows for research/practitioners to have more space to approach their work more thoughtfully.

SUMMARY



Tensions

- How to overcome barriers and transfer what is learned in the lab to implementation in a community.
- Measuring the ecosystem and seeing the intersections, solely measuring an individual's progress is not enough.
- Systems have a long history of brokenness, and we are trying to measure their repair.

Resources

[Resilience and Recovery: Findings from the Kauai Longitudinal Study](#)

[A Hidden Crisis – Data report by Center for Youth Wellness](#)

[Is Resilience Only Skin Deep? Rural African Americans' Preadolescent Socioeconomic Status-Related Risk and Competence](#)