How do traumatic experiences impact equity and access in education?

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Learning Objectives

• This session will help participants
  – Identify factors that may lead to trauma
  – Describe inequities associated with trauma
  – Discuss role of schools in addressing inequities
What is Trauma?
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- Maltreatment
  - Physical Abuse
  - Emotional Abuse
  - Sexual Abuse
  - Neglect

- Family Dysfunction
  - Incarcerated family member
  - Mentally ill family member
  - Substance abusing family member
  - Domestic Violence
  - Absence of parent (divorce, separation, death)
ACE Results

Collected b/w 1995 and 1997 (N=17,000+)

Negative Outcomes Among Youth

Negative Outcomes Among Adults

Dose-Response

http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm
Adverse Experiences

- Are pervasive
- Often begin at an early age
- Are often chronic and reoccurring
- Impact schools
Common misassumptions

• ACEs *cause* negative outcomes
• Exposure to adversity invariably leads to negative outcomes
• ACEs and trauma are synonymous
What makes an experience traumatic?

Subjective

- Individual factors
  - Previous experiences
  - Biology
  - Developmental level
  - Other risk factors
  - Perception
FIRST ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON JAPAN;
MISSILE IS EQUAL TO 20,000 TONS OF TNT;
TRUMAN WARNS FOE OF A ‘RAIN OF RUIN’

HIRAM W. JOHNSON, REPUBLICAN DEAN IN THE SENATE, DIES

CALIFORNIA EX-GOVERNOR Ran for Vice President With Theodore Roosevelt in ’12—in Washington Since ’17

WASHINGTON, Aug. 6—Sen.
for Hiram Warren Johnson of California, the leading Republican politician who helped prevent this country from entering the war, died today in the hospital here. He had served as governor of California and as a member of the House of Representatives.

The knowledge he gained in those battles was invaluable to him, as he was brought home to the Senate. He was a learned man and a student of the arts. He was a man of many parts, and his political career was marked by his ability to think clearly and to speak with authority.

A few days after his death, his funeral services were held at the capitol. The Senate was adjourned, and the members of Congress met in the rotunda. The pallbearers carried the body of the late senator along the aisle.


 Hiram W. Johnson, Republican Dean in the Senate, Dies

California Ex-Governor Ran for Vice President With Theodore Roosevelt in ’12—in Washington Since ’17

Washington, Aug. 6—The death of Hiram W. Johnson, California’s leading Republican politician, was announced today. Johnson, who was a member of the Senate since 1917, died at his home in Washington today.

Johnson was a member of the Senate since 1917, and had been a member of the House of Representatives since 1907. He was a member of the Republican party, and had been a leader in state and national politics.

The news of his death was announced by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who said that Johnson had been a friend and colleague for many years.

The funeral services were held at the capitol, and the Senate was adjourned. The pallbearers carried the body of the late senator along the aisle.

What makes an experience traumatic (cont.)?

Event/Experience factors

- Proximity
- Severity
- Availability of social support/validation
- Availability of intervention services/response
- Whether stressor is chronic or single-event (acute)
- Interpersonal or non-interpersonal
Cultural Lens

• Role of religion
• Role of the extended family
• Cultural traditions
• Willingness to disclose
Compton Schools Lawsuit

• “I was coming home… and this Hispanic guy had an African-American guy on his knees and he just blew his head off.”

• “I was throwing up for like three hours. My momma didn’t know why I was throwing up, I just told her I was sick.”

– ----Statement from anonymous student in the lawsuit
Inequities in trauma

• Exposure to adversity
  – Poverty/SES
  – Discriminatory experiences
  – Racial and ethnic differences

• Trauma Response
  – Sexual orientation
  – Racial and ethnic differences

• Perception of adults
  – Age of child
  – Race of child

• Treatment
  – Race
  – Disclosure
  – Stigma
Inequities cont.

Meanwhile….

– Receiving school trauma interventions soon after screening compared to delaying treatment can result in better school grades
So.....

• Why do you think such inequities exist related to trauma response?

• What factors contribute to differences in access to appropriate mental health supports?
  – How can those factors be minimized?

• How would knowing about these inequities in trauma response impact your work in schools?

- Filed as a class-action lawsuit
  - Classroom of students
  - 3 teachers
- Invokes 504 (not IDEA)
  - Experiences have substantially impacted learning, thinking, reading, and concentrating
- Asks Compton Unified School District to implement school-wide trauma-sensitive practices.
The Claim

• “By law, children have the right to a ‘free and appropriate public education.’ By failing to address the special needs of children affected by trauma, the Compton Unified School District has denied students their right to an appropriate education.”

• defendants are alleged to have “subject[ed] trauma-impacted students to punitive and counter-productive suspensions, expulsions, involuntary transfers, and referrals to law enforcement that push them out of school, off the path to graduation, and into the criminal justice system.”
The Cast

• Peter P
  – Witness to shootings & stabbings; victim of sexual and physical abuse; parent substance abuse and mental illness; family incarceration; homelessness

• Kim
  – Witness to murders; Marginalized as sexual minority; victim of sexual assault

• Philip
  – Witnessed over 20 shootings – his first at 8 years old “execution style.” He cried and threw up but did not tell anyone about it
Consider this

What role does special education and/or Section 504 play in reducing inequities of access to prevention and intervention services?
Discussion
Update

- Defendant’s motion to dismiss – DENIED
- Plaintiff’s motion for preliminary injunction – DENIED
- Plaintiff’s motion for class certification - DENIED
“Denied Meaningful Access”

• In the *Compton* case, “[t]he Court is satisfied that the Complaint alleges how the Student Plaintiffs have been denied meaningful access to CUSD’s program as a result of their trauma-induced disabilities, as required for a violation of Section 504.”

• “Further, it is clear from the allegations in the Complaint that, to the extent it is required, Plaintiffs are asserting that the educational services provided by CUSD do not and are not designed to meet the needs of students with trauma-induced disabilities as adequately as the needs of students without these disabilities.”
Helping Children Thrive • In School • At Home • In Life