UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA IN THE CONTEXT OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Vetta L. Sanders Thompson, PhD
Washington University in St. Louis
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Overview

- Define health inequity, marginalized communities and historical trauma.

- Discuss the relevance of historical trauma, disproportionate poverty, stress & community violence observed in marginalized communities for traumatic stress.

- Responsiveness to the needs of marginalized communities.
What Are Disparities?

Differential morbidity, mortality and health-related well-being and quality of life among populations:

- Disease/Illness – Specific, objective symptoms with a biological basis;
- Health behaviors (diet, physical activity, smoking);
- Healthcare (access, treatment).
What is Health Equity?

• Assurance that all members of society have the opportunity for health – a sense of well-being and the ability to lead full, productive life-

• Regardless of SES, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual Orientation, etc. or other social factors that might contribute to inequity
Understanding Health Inequity

• Health inequities have historically existed in certain groups.

• Healthcare access factors alone do not account for disparities.

• Systemic issues;
  • Complex interaction of factors affect groups to create the conditions that lead to difference in risk for a number disorders, including trauma.

• Illuminate how disparities in disorders develop and steps that we need to take in care and treatment to address these.
Marginalized Communities

- ethnic
- racial
- refugee
- immigrant
- linguistic groups
- religious groups
- gender and sexual orientation
- able-bodiness
- socio-economic status
- geographic status
Mental health difficulties experienced by many marginalized groups are related to a social context of oppression.

Oppression can lead to social alienation, low self-esteem, and symptoms of psychological distress.

Experiences of insecurity & hopelessness, risks of violence & poor physical health increase vulnerability to mental disorders.
Historical Trauma (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 60)

- Native American loss of population;

- 1883 federal law prohibited Native Americans from practicing traditional ceremonies (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011).
  - American Indian Religious Freedom Act, 1978

- Indian Removal Act of 1830, forced relocation of 100,000 Native Americans.
  - Loss of land never restored.

- Feelings of shame, powerlessness and subordination. (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).
Historical Trauma

- Slavery, history of segregation, & racism are important factors in the history of African American.

  - 1\textsuperscript{st} entered the US in 1619 as indentured servants.

  - **Slavery** became a way of life in the late 17\textsuperscript{th} century.

  - **The 1863 Emancipation** of slaves.

  - 1883 the US Supreme Court declared the **Sumner Act 1875**, which had given African Americans equal rights to public accommodations & transportation, unconstitutional.
Historical Trauma

- **Late 1800’s Jim Crow laws created.**
  - Southern states ignored the 14th & 15th amendments that gave African Americans citizenship & the right to vote; black codes instituted.

- **1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson** the Supreme Court made separate but equal the law.

- **1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka, KA**
Hate Crimes 2013

- 5,922 single bias incidents:
  - 48.5%, race
  - 20.8%, sexual orientation
  - 17.4%, religion

- 3,407 single-bias, racially motivated hate crimes:
  - 66.4%, anti-black or African-American bias,
  - 21.4% anti-white bias.

- 1,402 sexual orientation hate crimes:
  - 60.6% anti-gay (male) bias.

- 6,933 hate crime offenses:
  - 63.9% intimidation, assaults, rapes, murders, etc.
  - 35% property crimes (destruction/damage/vandalism)
Discrimination as a Unique Stressor

- Racism and stressful life events were significant predictors of PTSD symptoms, suggesting the importance of life context.
- Discrimination has been associated with psychiatric symptoms.
- There is empirical support for racism as a separate and unique source of stress for minorities.
  - Higher impact of discrimination scores than European Americans.
  - No gender or ethnicity differences in daily stress or the number of racial incidents reported.

Marginalized Identities

• Many stigmatized identities generate experiences of discrimination.

• 53% of participants in one reported some experience with discrimination.
  • Most frequent sources: mental disability, race, sexual orientation, physical disability.

• Areas of discrimination: employment, housing, and interactions with law enforcement and did not differ among groups.

• Official poverty rate in 2014, 14.8%; which is up from 13.2% in 2008;
• 2014, 47.7 million people in poverty, up from 39.8 million, 2008.
  • 4th consecutive year people in poverty and poverty rate remained essentially unchanged (increased 2008-2010).

• Between 2008 and 2010, 2012, 2014 the poverty rate increased for:
  • Non-Hispanic Whites, 8.6%, 9.9%, 11.6, 10.1%
  • American Indians/ Alaska Natives, 27% (2012)
  • Blacks, 24.7%, 27%, 25.8, 26.2%
  • Hispanics, 23.2%, 26%, 23.2, 23.6%
  • Asians, 12.1, 12 %, not statistically different from the 2008 rate, 11.7%.1
Social Issues and Context

• Stigma of Being Poor:
  • Insufficient resources for necessities,
  • Urban areas characterized by high density poverty,
  • Diminished resources,
  • Poor education,
  • Lack role models for college, occupational striving,
  • Shame,
  • Negative attributions (worthless, unintelligent, poor work ethic).
Addressing the Issues

• A person may be at greater risk because of their social position and context but the identity is not the cause.
  • Must avoid pathologizing and further stigmatizing groups of people.
  • Take advantage of strengths that can assist in resilience.

• Ability to discuss trauma in the context in which it occurs.
  • Acknowledge micro-aggressions that are a part of living with marginalized identities.
  • Ability to acknowledge and fully address racism, discrimination in its full historic context for the person and the group if needed and desired.
  • Ability and willingness to address the social situations and contexts that place people at risk of trauma – poverty, crime, etc.
Questions