

A Qualitative Study of Adverse Childhood Experiences of Low-Income Youth in Philadelphia

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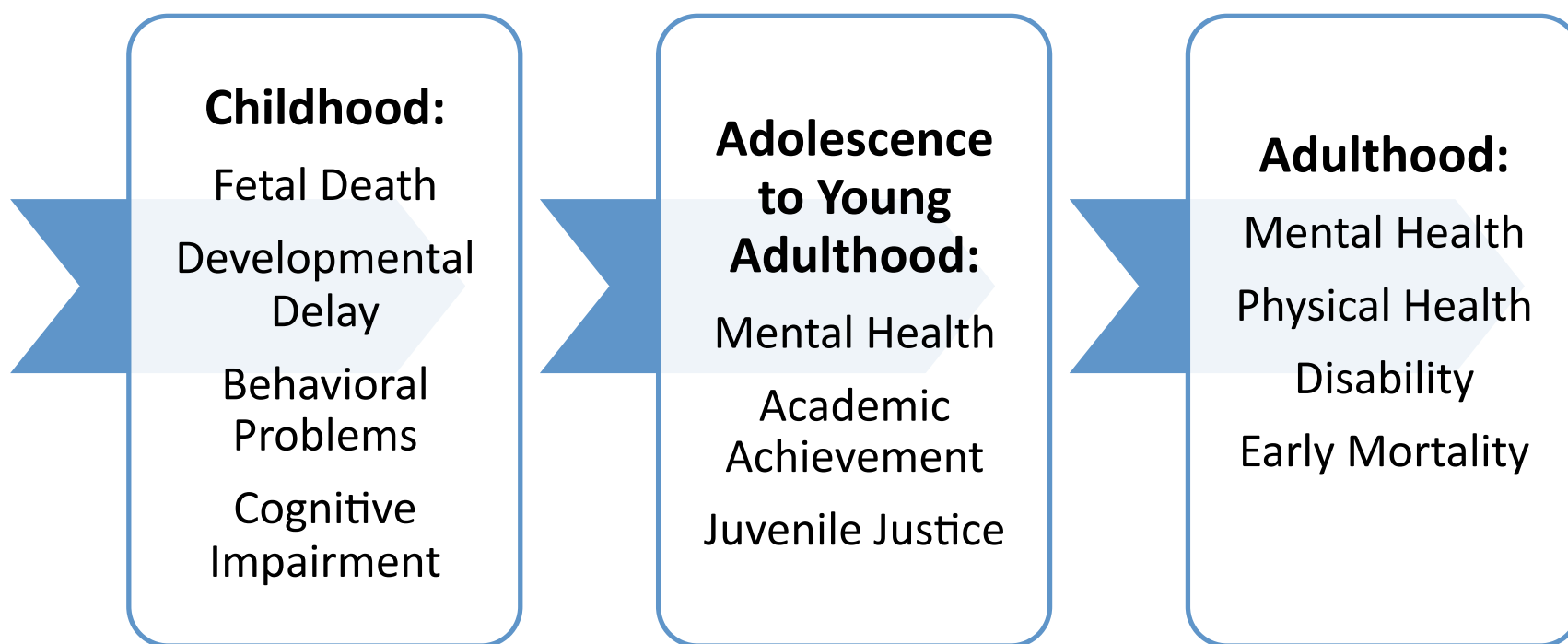
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Adverse Childhood Experience Study

- Published by CDC/ Kaiser in 1998
- Surveyed 17,000 policy holders
- Understand relationship between childhood adversity & adult health outcomes

Childhood Exposure	Subcategory
Abuse	Psychological
	Physical
	Sexual
Household dysfunction	Substance abuse
	Mental illness
	Intimate partner violence
	Criminal behavior
	Divorce
Neglect	Emotional
	Physical

Outcomes Associated with ACEs: A Life Course Perspective



ACE Study Population is not a Representative Population

Demographics	ACE Study	Philadelphia
Mean age	56	34
Race/ethnicity	79% White	41% White
	5% African American	43% African American
	5% Hispanic	12% Hispanic
High school graduates	94%	36%
College graduates	43%	13%
Percent below FPL	Not measured	25%

Specific Aims

- Specific Aim 1: Use focus groups to identify and characterize the range of adverse events experienced by low-income urban youth
- Specific Aim 2: Describe the relative significance of adverse events experienced by low-income urban youth

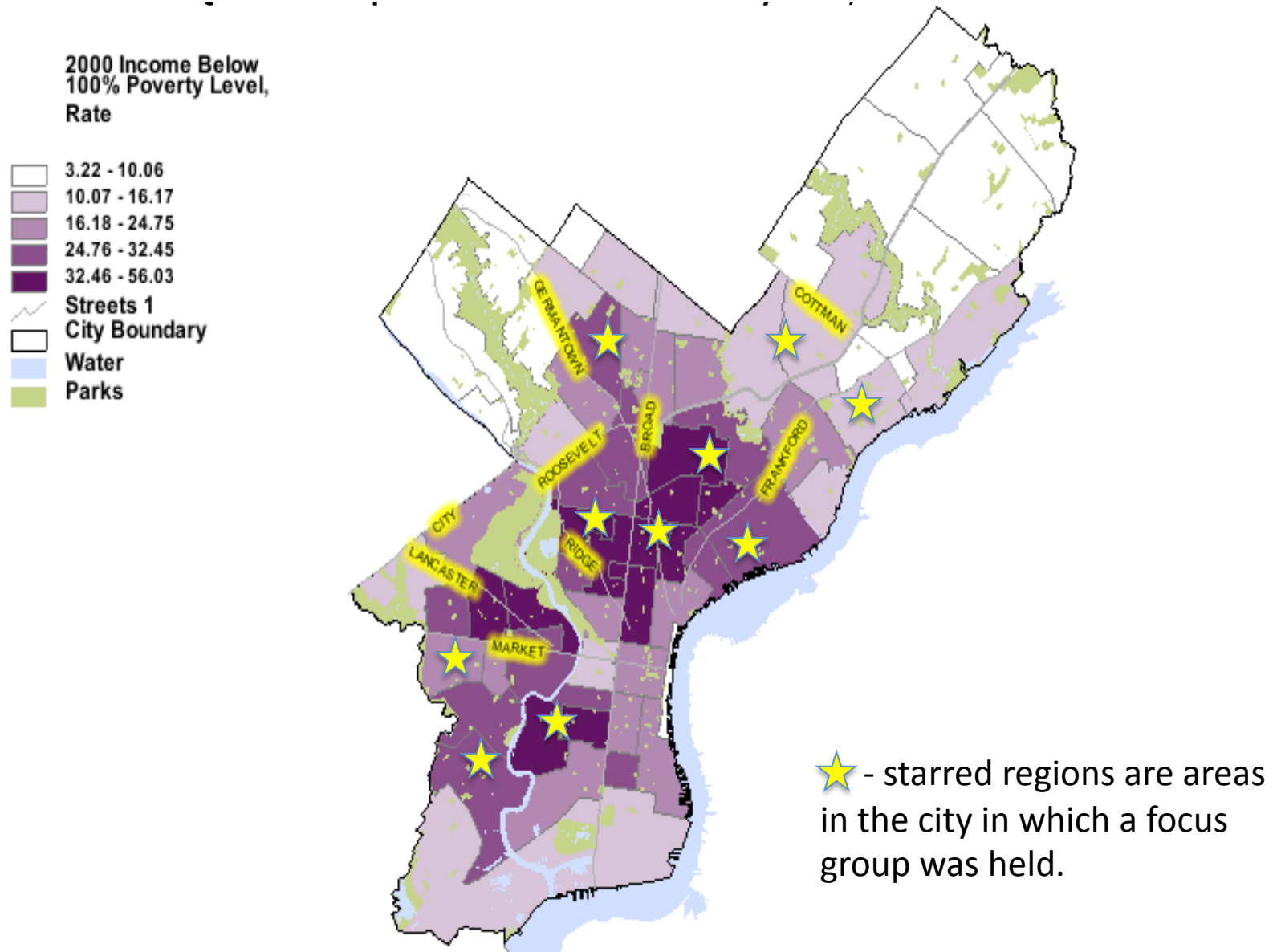
Overall Study Design

- Series of focus groups with young adults
- Nominal Group Technique
 - Generate list of adverse childhood experiences
 - Prioritize items on list based on relative significance
- Analyze ranked lists for common themes
- Develop final ranked list of adverse experiences
- Member checking process & discussion of context surrounding each theme

Study Participants

- Inclusion criteria
 - Ages 18 to 26
 - Lived in Philadelphia at least half of childhood from birth to age 18
 - Targeted individuals who grew up in low-income neighborhoods (defined as at least 20% of the residents of that community at or below the Federal Poverty Level)
- Exclusion Criteria
 - Non-English Speaking

Sampling Strategy



Study Participant Demographics

Demographics		Percent of Individuals
Sex	Male	55
	Female	45
Race/Ethnicity	Non-Hispanic Caucasian	5
	Hispanic Caucasian	5
	Non-Hispanic Black	71
	Hispanic Black	5
	Native American Black	1
	Hispanic	8
	Native American	2
	Asian	3
Neighborhood Poverty Level (100% FPL)	Less than 10%	5
	10 to 20%	11
	20 to 40%	51
	Greater than 40%	33

Number of focus groups = 19

Number of participants = 119

Domains of Most Stressful Experiences

Domain	Number of Responses
Family Relationships	195
Community Stressors	119
Personal Victimization	72
Economic Hardship	67
Peer Relationships	35
Discrimination	23
School	22
Health	17
Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice	8
Media/Technology	5

Family Relationships

Family Relationship Subdomains	Number of Responses	Representative Quote
Family Members Abusing Alcohol & Drugs *	37	<i>“My mom said, I ain’t teach you nothing because I want you to go through the same thing I went through... it’s just like heartless, like you just don’t care. My parents couldn’t show me [love]. They made me feel like I was just there for a check.”</i>
Lack of Love & Support in the Family *	33	
Single Parent Homes *	30	
Death & Illness of Family Members *	21	
Violence in the Home *	20	
Poor Parenting & Lack of Guidance *	20	
Criminal Activity by Family Members *	15	
Having to Take on Adult Responsibilities *	14	
Violent Victimization of Family Members by Individuals Outside of the Home	4	

* In at least one focus group these experiences were identified only after prompting

Community Stressors

Community Stressor Subdomains	Number of Responses	Representative Quote
Neighborhood Crime, Violence, and Death *	57	<i>“There were shootings every night, so much so that the kids couldn’t play outside. You wake up in the morning and find that someone from your friend’s family passed away.”</i>
Negative/Adult Behavior in the Neighborhood *	50	
Neighborhood Nonviolent Crime *	12	

* In at least one focus group these experiences were identified only after prompting

Economic Hardship

Economic Hardship Subdomains	Number of Responses	Representative Quote
Not Enough Money *	35	<i>“The hardest thing for me was watching my mom struggle [financially to pay for] food, utilities, bills”</i>
Lack of Nonmonetary Resources (hunger, homelessness, lack of adequate housing, lack of utilities, housing instability) *	31	
Watching Parents Struggle to Make Ends Meet *	1	

* In at least one focus group these experiences were identified only after prompting

Discrimination

Discrimination Subdomains	Number of Responses	Representative Quote
Stereotypes, Racism, Discrimination *	23	<i>“stereotyping... it’s mostly white people, the way they look at you when you are out walking in the street, they try to downgrade [you]... I’ve seen people follow [black people] around the store. They already got a mindset about us before they even know who we are.”</i>

* In at least one focus group these experiences were identified only after prompting

Key Findings

- Participants endorsed broader experiences of adversity
- Family dysfunction most commonly cited adversity
 - Loss of love and support
 - Single parent homes
- Other commonly cited stressors of lack of safety and economic hardship

Key Findings

- Relatively low number of respondents endorsed racism and discrimination
- Few participants endorsed corporal punishment /harsh parenting as a stressor

Implications

- Develop a broader understanding of adversity
- Incorporate a youth informed perspective of adversity
- Understand the complexity of adversity
- Understand the biological significance of broader experiences

Limitations

- Generalizability of findings
- Focus group format might have limited discussion of sensitive issues
- Relied on retrospective recall of adverse childhood experiences

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