

# ***Psychological Resilience***

*2013 Public Health & Medical Preparedness Conference  
West Virginia Center for Threat Preparedness  
Charleston, West Virginia  
May 22, 2013*

**Brian W. Flynn, Ed.D.**

**RADM / Assistant Surgeon General (USPHS, Ret.)  
Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry  
Associate Director  
Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress  
Department of Psychiatry**



# Disclaimer

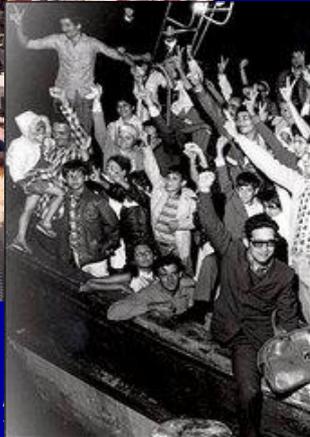
Ideas, attitudes, and opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the USUHS, DoD, or other branches of the US government

# BLUF...

- Resilience is a valuable and necessary concept
- Resilience needs to be better defined
- Components/elements of resilience need to be better understood
- The relationship between resilience and other constructs needs to be better articulated and understood
- We must be able to measure resilience and evaluate resilience efforts

# My History with the Concept of Resilience...

- Training
- Disaster experience:
  - Cuban/Haitian mental health program
  - Other disasters(why not more PTSD, etc.?)





# My History with the Concept of Resilience...

- Promoting resilience in the federal system
- From pushback to mutual understanding
- From acceptance to promotion
- Now: If it is everything, is it anything?



# What is Resilience?

- **Positive adaptation in the face of adversity**
- **Mastery against adversity**
- **Ability to “bounce back” from difficult experiences in a health manner**
- **“Ordinary Magic”**
- **The “rule,” not the exception**

# Resilience Needs to be Better Defined

Adaptation

Mastery  
Against  
Adversity

Bouncing  
Back

Ordinary  
Magic

Maintain  
Stability

Generative  
Experiences

Stable  
Trajectory

Psychological  
Functioning

Resistance to  
Stress

Normal  
Function

Rebound from  
Adversity

Positive  
Emotions



# Components/Elements of Resilience Need to be Better Understood

- Biological (e.g., DNA, memory consolidation, memory distortion)
- Psychological
- Behavioral
- Social/Community
- Organizational
- Cultural



# The Nature of Resilience Needs to be Better Understood

- Steady state or variable state?
- Situation/domain specific (e.g., disaster impact vs. workplace vs. domestic life?)
- Developmentally different?
- Cultural differences?

# The Relationship Between Resilience and Other Constructs Needs to be Better Articulated and Understood...

- Resilience and mental illness
- Resilience and health
- Resilience and recovery
- Individual and collective (family/organizational/community/culture) resilience
- Resilience and a developmental perspective



# The relationship between resilience and other constructs needs to be better articulated and understood...

- Relationships among risk/protective factors and resilience
- Resilience and “meaning”
- Resilience and hope
- Post traumatic growth and resilience  
(Westphal, M, Banano, G.A. (2007) Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience to Trauma: Different Sides of the Same Coin or Different Coins? *Applied Psychology* 56 (3), 417–427.)



# Context and Interactions Among Types of Resilience...

- Psychological
- Economic
- Organizational
- Community
- Structural/architectural

# East Africa Embassy Bombings: Same Time/Same Bomb



## Nairobi:

- Many deaths
- Many injuries
- Many psychological casualties



# East Africa Embassy Bombings: Same Time/Same Bomb



## Dar Es Salaam:

- Few deaths
- Few injuries
- Minimal psychological casualties

**The Difference? Architecture!**

# We Must be Able to Measure Resilience and Evaluate Resilience Efforts

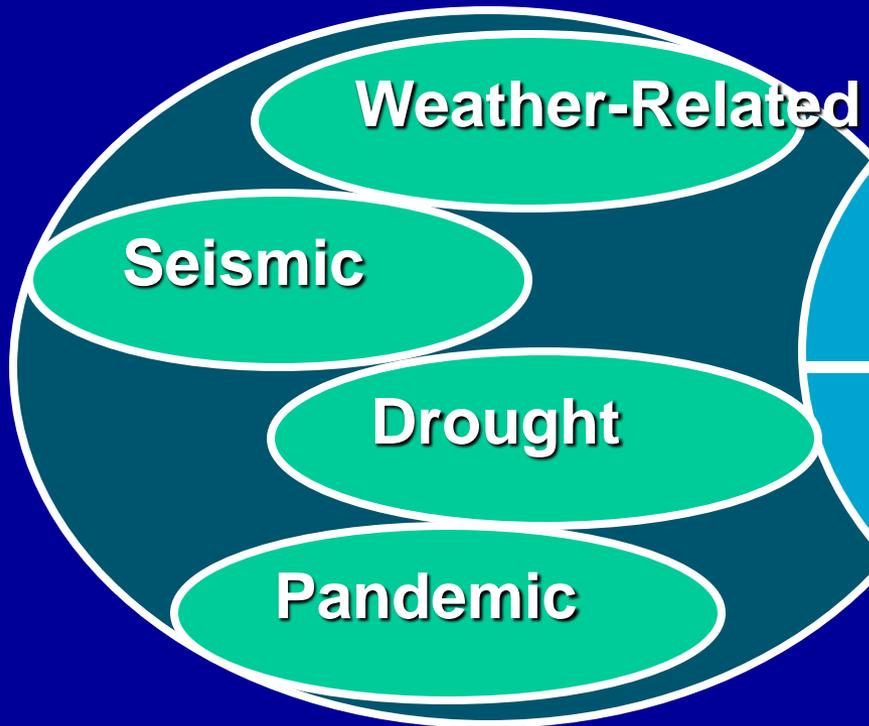
- We have to define it before we can measure it
- Complications of intervening variables
- Relationship among
  - Science (data/consensus/pace/funding research)
  - Training (a different way of conceptualizing Dx and Tx)
  - Practice (lag time)
  - Funding (who will pay for what)
  - Policy (who/where is leadership?)

# The Disaster Ecology Model as a Way of Examining Resilience and the Disaster Event

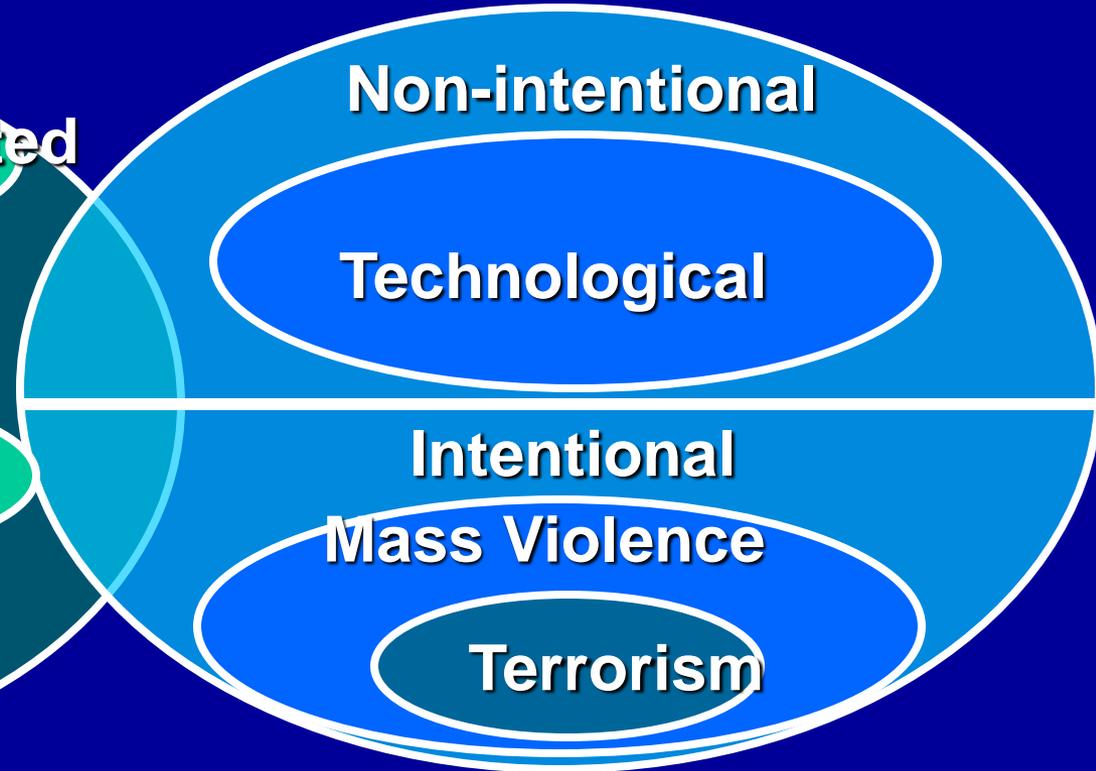
A disaster is characterized by  
an encounter between  
**forces of harm**  
and a **human population** in harm's way,  
influenced by the **ecological context**,  
that creates demands exceeding  
the coping capacity  
of the affected community.

# What Do We Know About Resilience and Event Type?

## *Natural Disasters*



## *Human-Generated Disasters*



# We Know About Risk For Adverse Psychosocial Consequences.

Mass Violence



Technological Disasters

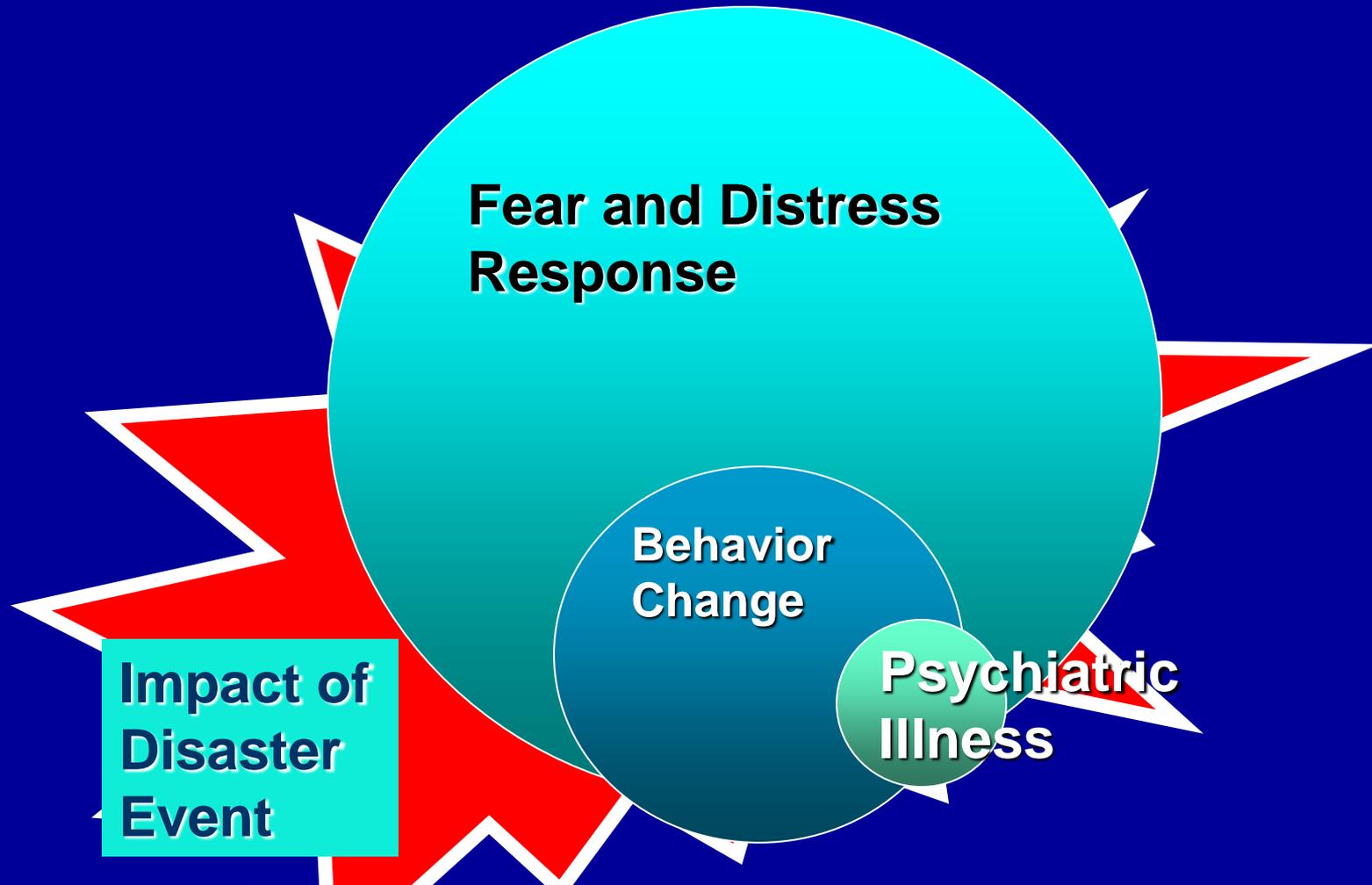


Natural Disasters

*Source: Norris F, Friedman M, Watson P, Byrne C, Diaz E, Kaniasty K. 60,000 disaster victims speak, part 1: An empirical review of the empirical literature, 1981-2001. Psychiatry 2000;65: 207-239.*

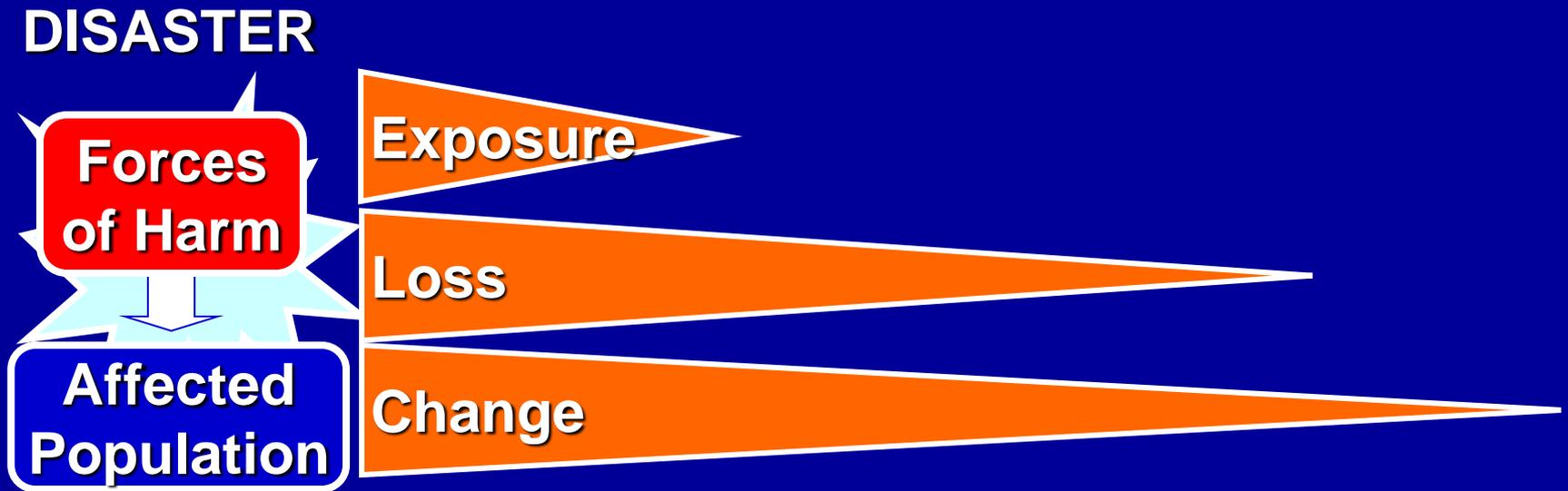
# What Do We Know About Resilience and Event Type?

# Psychosocial Consequences in Disasters



Graphic by Schultz, JM-Source: Butler AS, Panzer AM, Goldfrank LR, Institute of Medicine Committee on Responding to the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism Board of on Neuroscience and Behavioral Health. Preparing for the psychological consequences of terrorism: A public health approach. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2003.

# Psychosocial Consequences in Disasters



## Disaster Ecology Model

Graphic by Schultz, JM-Source: Shultz JM, Espinel Z, Galea S, Reissman DB.  
Disaster Ecology: Implications for Disaster Psychiatry. In Ursano et al. (eds.)  
Textbook of Disaster Psychiatry, Cambridge University Press, 2006.



Societal/Structural Context

Community Context

Individual/Family Context

**DISASTER:**

**Forces of Harm:**

Exposure  
to Hazard    Loss    Change



**Affected Population**

# Disaster Ecology Model

Graphic by Schultz, JM-Source: Shultz JM, Espinel Z, Galea S, Reissman DB.  
Disaster Ecology: Implications for Disaster Psychiatry. In Ursano et al. (eds.)  
Textbook of Disaster Psychiatry, Cambridge University Press, 2006.



# Closing thoughts...

- Be careful what you wish for
- Appreciate unanticipated consequences
- Growing pains
- We are onto something here (we may just not know what it really is) but...
  - Resilience is real
  - Our attention must go beyond illness models
  - We must embrace contributions from many fields
  - We are at the brink of an entirely different way of looking at behavioral and social science