

The Community Resilience Model

As the science of social determinants indicates, the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age are shaped by a set of forces other than individual behavior. The Community Resilience (CR) model illustrates how economic, social, education and criminal justice policies and practices interact with one another to influence community characteristics and individual outcomes. **Many of the nation's poor live in areas of concentrated poverty not by choice, but rather by design—the cumulative result of social and criminal policies enacted over the course of our nation's history.** If resilience is defined by a person's ability to bounce back from adversity—community environments must provide an equitable opportunity to do so through buffers and supports that foster resilience.

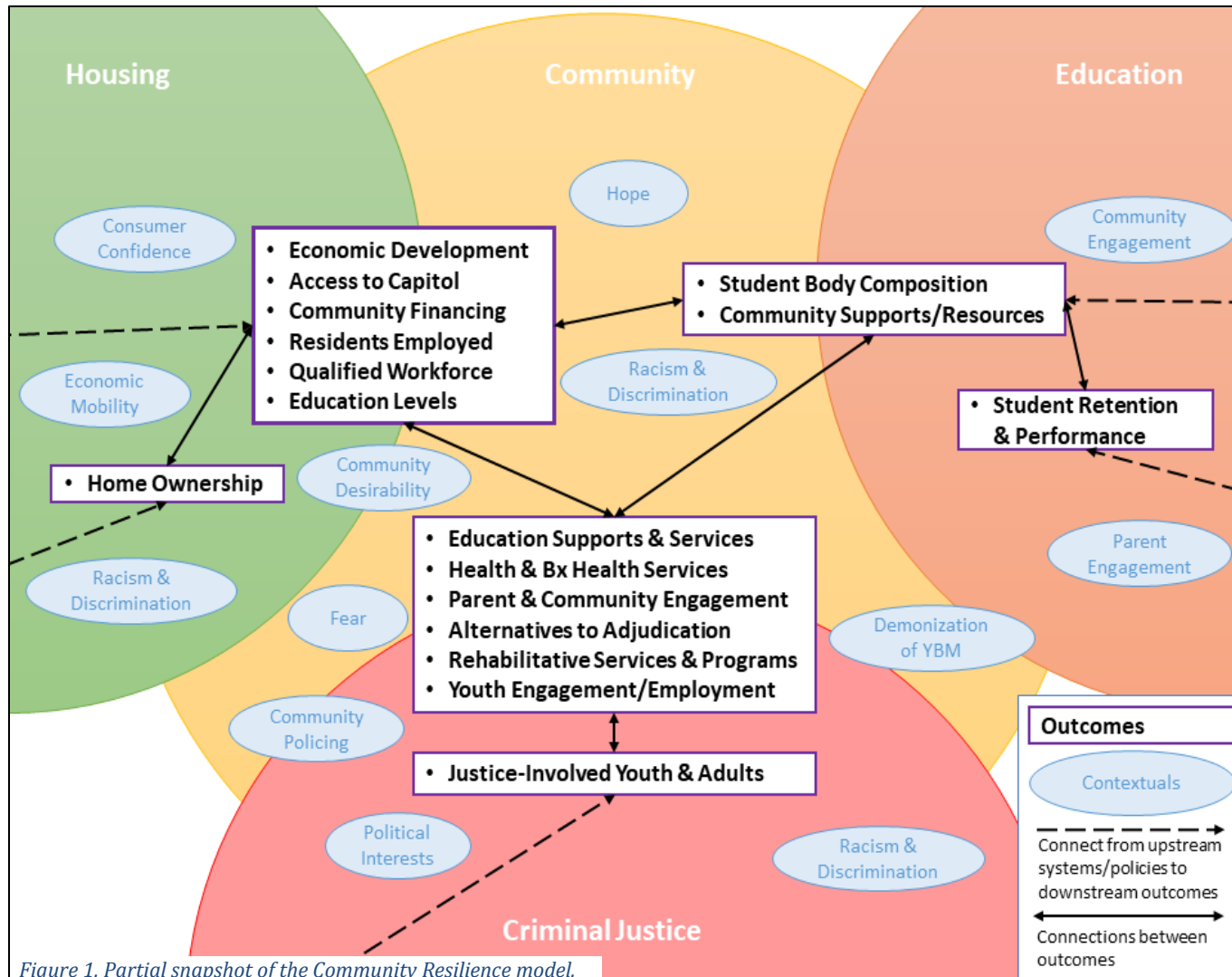


Figure 1. Partial snapshot of the Community Resilience model.

Resilience can be measured across a number of systems, reflecting how well a community provides access to supports that buffer individuals in times of adversity and to resources that support optimal health and wellbeing. These resources include safe and affordable housing, access to quality education, economic and social mobility, and supportive relationships within a community. Community resilience is relational, place-based and dependent upon the demographic makeup of residents, historical place-based racism and discrimination, jurisdictional policy and investment priorities.

Often described as social determinants, the CR model reframes these as **Systems Driven Community Outcomes** (depicted in white boxes) to place emphasis on the upstream source of many community characteristics that influence health and wellbeing. The fact that these outcomes are heavily influenced by policies across multiple sectors allows users of the CR model to isolate policies for reform, and address practice and programs within each sector. Programs and practices across these systems are also influenced by contextualls (depicted as blue ovals), such as racism and discrimination, economic mobility and political interests that vary by community.

Applying an equity lens, the Community Resilience model is designed to assist local

public health and partners from multiple sectors systematically identify, measure and address inequities that culminate in adverse childhood experiences and adverse community environments (the [Pair of ACEs](#)). As demonstrated in the model, many public sectors (housing, public schools and criminal justice) play a role in driving outcomes in a community. All of these outcomes, as well as many others, are well-recognized social determinants of health. While social determinants are thoroughly discussed in the literature, no previous models have brought together these outcomes using a dynamic systems modeling approach for public health to raise awareness of policy and practice driven inequities.

The Community Resilience Dashboard is designed to help public health strategists and cross-sector collaborators track systems indicators to their associated community and population health outcomes. Below is an example of how upstream policies in housing, public schools and criminal justice (far left) may be modified by context to produce community characteristics, social determinants and population health outcomes. Many of the outcomes suggested in the dashboard, such as homelessness and quality of life, can be directly attributed to policy and practice in one system (such as housing). But most are influenced and can potentially be prevented by the interaction of a number of policies, practices and programs across multiple systems.



As the CR model demonstrates, our public systems interact in a reinforcing fashion. Reinforcing processes compound change in one direction with even more change in that same direction. As such, they generate either growth or collapse. These are also known as vicious (collapse) and virtuous (growth) cycles. **Neighborhoods with concentrated poverty and failing schools are trapped in vicious cycles;** those in more affluent communities with additional local funding and investments available for public schools and economic mobility exhibit virtuous cycles.

Resilience and equity are multi-faceted concepts that require measurement of a number of factors that occur upstream. The CR model is essential to develop measures and monitor change over time that reflect systems-driven community outcomes. Leveraging the power of data across systems coupled with population health data, local public health leaders can be at the center of changing community environments through program, practice and policy to improve health and wellbeing.

Figure 2. Example of how upstream policies in housing, public schools and criminal justice (far left) may be modified by context to produce community characteristics, social determinants and population health outcomes.



Contact Us

Wendy Ellis DrPH, MPH
 Director, Center for Community Resilience
 The George Washington University
 wendye@gwu.edu