

Collateral Damage

The Emotional Toll of Exposure to Violence in Urban Communities

University of Maryland School of Nursing, Virginia Lee Franklin Lecture

October 16, 2019

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Tale of Two Cities

The Story of Urban Violence (a powerful case vignette)

In United States a murder occurs every 22 minutes (US Bureau of Justice Statistics 2013)

60 Americans die by homicide each day (US Bureau of Justice Statistics)

23,000 people die each year

Homicide is the leading cause of death among African Americans males between the ages of 15 and 44 and African American females between the ages of 15-24

Urban Communities: Plague or Plight?

Police Brutality

Gangs Violence and Initiation

Trauma

- PTSD (Edlynn, Gaylord-Harden, Richards & Miller)
- Social Darwinism

Males and Females are equally exposed however females are often exposed to greater sexual violence

Urban Reality



Chronic Community Violence

Community Violence and Poverty are acutely concentrated in urban areas (Ronzio, Mitchell & Wang, 2011)

It affects the mental health of children youth and families (Morrison, 2001 Overstreet & Mazza, 2003)

Chronic exposure to violence is cumulative environmental risk factor which includes exposure gun shots, stabbings, sexual and physical assaults, armed robbery, home invasion, threats, and murders.

The Center for Disease Control has identified youth violence as a public health issue

Compounded Community Violence of young Urban adolescent women (Horowitz, Weine & Jekel, 1995)

Deep Exposure and Trauma Intensified

- When life threatening danger and children are involved
- Loss of home , neighborhoods or community integrity
- Extreme destruction of the environment or human violence
- Sensory reality of human death or disfigurement (smells, sights, sounds, tastes, touch)
- Extended exposure to dangerous environments
- Extreme emotional reactions of first responders or family members
- Exposure to the unknown like toxic chemicals or biological agent

Resiliency and Stress Resistance Among Urban Youth

Oxford Dictionary defines resiliency as the power to recover or function flexibility

Individual factors include temperament , cognitive skills or social engagement

Family- marked by caring, warmth and support, cohesion, and encouragement

External support- teacher, neighbor, clergy or coach

Resiliency: Analysis of coping

Distal influences

Cultural
Historical
SES
Political
Racial



Proximal Influences

Individual
Familial
Community
Supports

Risk of victimization

Exposure to Violent Event

Victimization Process
Psychological Well Being

Appraisal

- Recognition
- Meaning
- Intensity
- Concordance

Coping

Psychological adjustments

Behavioral Responses

short-term

long term

Responses to a Traumatic event

Physical- heartbeat increase, fatigue, tension, nausea, insomnia, gastrointestinal distress, hypervigilance, increased startle, body aches, sensory limitations, appetite changes, worsening chronic illness

Cognitive- Indecisiveness, worry, memory loss, difficulty concentrating, preoccupation, confusion, disorientation, intrusive thoughts, intrusive memories, increased attention deficit, recurring dreams, nightmares

Emotional- Anger, guilt, fear, shock, feeling numb, hopelessness, diminished capacity to feel pleasure or love , anxiety , despair

Responses continued

Behavioral – Interpersonal relationship problems may develop caused by distrust, irritability, social isolation, or withdrawal. Reduced relationship intimacy may lead to relationship break up and divorce. Other problems in school or work, over controlling others, substance abuse, resisting authority, excessive expectations of self and others through strong moral or ethical codes, avoidance of memories by limiting exposure to the environment, sleep problems

Spiritual- survivors begin to question good and evil and are unable to develop an existential understanding of why bad things happen to good people. This can cause anger towards their creator or their representatives (i.e clergy)

It gets worse, if long term exposure

Active duty war veterans, police, EMT, incest survivors, first responders, long term domestic violence, concentration camps, prisoners of war, physical violence due to corporal punishment, chronic illness, work in an emergency room, sexual harassment at work, prostitution, bullying

Many of these issues are prevalent in Urban communities

If untreated and unchecked- disassociation, depersonalization, amnesia, emotional numbing, avoidance memories, drop out of society, chronic homelessness, substance abuse, crisis of faith, severe mood disturbances, feeling permanently damaged

Assessment of Complex Trauma in Urban Areas

Assessment Treatment Flow Chart for Children ATF-C; Lanktree & Briere, 2015

Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Children -TSCC ; Briere, 1996

Children's Depression Inventory -CDI; Kovacs, 2014

Child Sexual Behavior Inventory- CSBI ; Friedrich, 1998

UCLA PTSD Index for DSM –IV –UPID ; Pynoos, Rodriguez, Steinberg, Stuber & Frederick, 1998

Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths –Mental Health- CANS-MH;
Lyons, Griffin , Fazio & Lyons, 1999

Key Considerations when working with youth whom have been exposed

Safety

Session Consistency

Play Therapy Materials (dolls, Music, playdo, Legos, board games, puppets, Neutral games ie Connect 4) Expanding the Child's Sense of Identity

Therapist's Behavior

- Non intrusive, visible positive regard, empathy, caring and availability, transparency, reliability, attunement, curious about client's perspective

Understanding Trauma in Urban Communities

No one who witnesses a traumatic event is unaffected

Mass crimes involving trauma and loss affect both the individual and the community

Most people pull together and function but the effectiveness is diminished by moments of being overwhelmed

Most people are resilient but a few that have previous histories of mental health or substance abuse are at greater risk

Mental health and Victims groups may not always be culturally sensitive

Law enforcement, medical examiners, hospital staff must be sensitive to the family's loss

When necessary the community should employ a multi-disciplinary Crisis Response Team

Families should seek support from their family, friends and community which they feel most comfortable with. (family may need to vent; be mindful of vengeance and vigilantism may be a way of expressing grief and a cry for restoration among youth)