Sometimes It Makes Me Wonder: Taking action on community trauma and structural violence

Young Minds Matter: Communities Connecting for Well-being Conference

Hilton Galleria Area

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Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience
Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma
1967, a riot erupted in the Grove Hall neighborhood. At left, a man is arrested. At right, police stood in the street on June 1 as tensions mounted.

The forgotten riot that sparked Boston’s racial unrest

Fifty years ago today, riots convulsed Roxbury, as the civil rights tumult of the ‘60s finally reached here. It was
It's Like a Jungle, Sometimes It Makes Me Wonder How I Keep From Going Under...

East Grand Three
R.I.P.
1983-2006
Trauma: What We Know

• There is growing understanding about trauma, particularly its prevalence and impact.

• Trauma is pervasive, and has a significant impact on development, health and well-being.

• Trauma-informed care is becoming a standard in a growing number of places.

• The predominant approach to dealing with trauma is screening and treatment, consistent with an individual medical model.
What about Community Trauma?
Trauma also manifests at the community level, and is not just the aggregate of individuals in a neighborhood who have experienced trauma.

Community trauma is the impact of chronic adversity (e.g., violence and structural violence) across a community.

There is an understanding that trauma serves as a barrier to effective solutions to promote health, safety and well-being.

There are manifestations, or symptoms, of community trauma in the social-cultural, physical/built and economic environments.
Community trauma is not just the aggregate of individuals in a neighborhood who have experienced trauma from exposures to violence. There are manifestations, or symptoms, of community trauma.

**Community Trauma is:**

- Cumulative and synergistic impact of regular incidents of interpersonal violence
- Historical and intergenerational violence
- Continual exposure to structural violence
Structural Drivers and Structural Violence

- Structural drivers are the **inequitable distribution** of power, money, and resources, and create the conditions that harm communities.

- Structural violence refers to harm that individuals, families and communities experience from the economic and social structure, social institutions, relations of power, privilege and inequality and inequity that may harm people and communities by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.

- Structural violence is **what inflicts harm** on communities and is driven by structural drivers.

- Structural violence also contributes to trauma.
Community Environment

Equitable Opportunity
Economic and Educational Environment

Place
Physical/built environment

People
Social-Cultural Environment
Sample Symptoms of Community Trauma

- Intergenerational poverty
- Long-term unemployment
- Relocation of businesses and jobs
- Limited Employment
- Disinvestment

- Deteriorated environments and unhealthy, often dangerous public spaces with a crumbling built environment
- Unhealthy products

-Disconnected/damaged social relations and social networks
- The elevation of destructive, dislocating social norms
- A low sense of collective political and social efficacy
Life in the killing zone

By Anastasia Hendrix
Chronicle Staff Writer

This is a place dozens of murders were committed last year within walking distance of an 11-year-old's doorway. This is a place eighth-graders learn to read percentages and averages by studying homicide statistics from the streets at surround their classrooms — numbers that represent gunned-down neighbors, idols and even family members.

Violence is the most pervasive part of growing up in East Oakland. From the loud blast of a car stereo to the heavy breathing of a friend playing a video game, the threat of violence is always there, always lurking.

The most recent addition to this list is a young boy named Rami. He was injured this past Wednesday when a bullet entered his room through a small hole in the wall. The hole is in the kitchen, just a few feet away from where Rami was sleeping.

Rami's father, Khalid, was in the living room with his family when he heard the sound of a gun being fired. He ran into the room and found his son on the ground, bleeding from a wound in his leg.

The family said they were lucky no one was hurt in the incident. They were also relieved to hear that the police are investigating the case and that they may have some leads on the shooter.

Khalid said he feels safe in his home now that the police are on the case. He added that he hopes the investigation will bring justice to his family.

The family is now focused on recovering from the incident and getting Rami back on his feet. They are grateful for the support they have received from the community and are determined to make sure their family is safe and happy.

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By Annette Sierra
Chronicle Staff Writer

Rami's family said they were shocked when they heard about the incident. They were relieved to hear that the police are on the case and that they may have some leads on the shooter.

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Community Factors

- Physical or Built Environment
- Structure of Opportunities
- Social Organization
- Social Networks
- Social Relationships
- Social Norms
Community Trauma Factors

- Physical or Built Environment
- Structure of Opportunities
- Social Organization
- Social Networks
- Social Relationships
- Social Norms
MY NEIGHBORHOOD IS KILLING ME
It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and physical environment conspire against such change.

- Institute of Medicine
The Key

A Framework for Preventing Violence And Building Community Resilience – ACE/R

Building Community Resilience Requires Comprehensive and Sustained Policy and Action
Toward a Resilience Framework to Address and Prevent Community-Level Trauma

• Community resilience: the ability of a community to recover from and/or thrive despite the prevalence of adverse conditions. In the context of community-level trauma, this means putting the conditions in place in which the community can heal from trauma and/or be protected against the impact of trauma.

• It’s rooted in community factors, such as social networks and trust; willingness to act for the community good; living wages/local assets and wealth; healthy, equitable community design and infrastructure; and healthy products and services.
What can be done to prevent the problem from occurring in the first place?
Moving Upstream

We are still standing on the bank of the river, rescuing people who are drowning. We have not gone to the head of the river to keep them from falling in.

That is the 21st century task.”

Gloria Steinem

http://static.flickr.com/90/207590972_a30260c293_b.jpg
Note: The systems listed are examples of the types of systems across which we need to work to address community trauma.
Healing: A Starting Point for Community Agency

- Healing circles
- Vigils
- Restorative justice practices
- Acknowledgement/reconciliation
- Arts and engagement in the arts

- Community dialogues
- Practices that are culturally and community rooted and acknowledge harm and promote resilience
Strategies Among People

• Increase civic engagement and participation
• Supporting multigenerational relationships
• Coming together to build community efficacy
• Advancing positive norms
Strategies Among People

• Uplifting positive narratives of hope and resilience from within the community
• Enhanced community engagement and advocacy
• Trauma informed community building
• Reconnecting with cultural identity
Strategies within the Community (Place)

- Reclaiming land, spaces and public places
- Arts and cultural reflection/expression in the community
- Focus on ensuring stable housing with dignity
- Creating safe and supportive places for regular gathering/coming together
Strategies within the Community (Equitable Opportunity)

• Workforce and economic development
• Restorative justice in schools
• Resident ownership of businesses
Establishing informal gathering places for networking, resource connection and support that also strengthen life skills and community/civic opportunities.
Strategies Across Systems

• Trauma informed systems transformation

• Public health solutions to police-community violence

• Power-sharing (e.g., participatory budgeting, shared leadership and decision-making)
Making Connections for Mental Health and Wellbeing Among Men and Boys in the U.S.

A Report on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Men and Boys in the U.S. and Opportunities to Advance Outcomes related to Prevention, Early Intervention and Stigma Reduction
Making Connections: Report Findings

- **Limited notions of masculinity** socialize males toward isolation and not seeking assistance

- **Boys and men of color are disproportionately impacted** – with far reaching implications related to fathering, families, and communities

- **Military service members, veterans, and their families** experience trauma and its effects disproportionately

Photo: Teri Clark, Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors
Making Connections: Report Findings

- Prevention is not at **scale to maximize impact** needed

- **Indigenous and lay people approaches are emerging** – supporting healing and mental wellbeing

- **Resilience is a critical protective factor** – and can be catalytic for community-wide prevention approaches

Photo: Teri Clark, Nebraska Association of Local Health Directors
Making Connections for Mental Health and Wellbeing Among Men and Boys

The Community of Practice is inclusive of 14 sites, with diversity in geography, organizational leadership, and population
A Gendered Lens
Making Multiple Connections

- Bridging mental health to population and community level approaches

- Focusing in the places where men/boys spend their time, through the people with whom they interact and trust

- Connecting systems and institutions to mental wellbeing and each other

Photo: YES - Nature to Neighborhoods
Making Multiple Connections

- Reconnecting to cultural identity and expanded notions of masculinity
- Supporting connection in coping with stressors (past, present and future)
- Connecting men and boys to each other, their families and community

Photo: Tony Alter, Creative Commons
Four Imperative Shifts

- From mental health meaning mental illness to an emphasis on wellbeing and resilience
- From a focus on treatment only to also expanding upstream prevention
- From a focus on the individual to transforming communities
- From one size fits all to applying a cultured and gendered lens
Community of Practice

A focal point for advancing mental wellbeing among boys and men
Comprehensive Upstream Strategies

• Creating space for being/doing/connecting
• Creating networks for gendered and cultural approaches
• Building capacity to help self and others
• Supporting civic/community action to enhance wellbeing
• Facilitating advocacy for changes in policy, practice, and/or systems
• Amplifying narratives of healing and hopefulness
Emerging Pillars of Wellbeing

Hope
Dignity
Trust
Safety
Belonging & Connection
Control of Destiny
Creating Space for Being/Doing/Connecting

United Women of East Africa
San Diego, CA
Building Capacity to Help Self and Others

Legends of Lawndale, Sinai Health System
Chicago, IL
Supporting Civic/Community Action to Enhance Wellbeing
Amplifying Narratives of Healing and Hopefulness

Image source: Boston.com, greenhouse
Strategies to Address and Prevent Community Trauma and Substance Use
Developing a community-trauma informed approach to the opioid epidemic in Ohio

The need to address adverse community experiences and community trauma

Prevention Institute’s Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience (ACE[RI] Framework has been eye-opening as a lens that helps communities grappling with the tremendous impacts of the opioid epidemic. With high rates of opioid use disorder (OUD) in Ohio, staff of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), Bureau of Prevention were searching for a strategy to address opioid overdose deaths and prevent the epidemic of opioid and other substance misuse from growing every day in the state. When they came across PI’s ACE[R Framework, the concepts of community trauma and building resilience to address harm in the community resonated deeply with what they saw driving the crisis in the state: loss of industry, high rates of unemployment, broken relationships and lack of social supports, social isolation, and a pervasive sense of hopelessness in communities hardest hit. Holly Stone, Chief, and Valerie Leach, Prevention Administrator, OhioMHAS Bureau of Prevention, were interested in seeing if the framework had applicability to developing a prevention plan for the state.

“Trauma reaches beyond those who directly witness or experience it, affecting communities on many levels. There’s a need for healing and building resilience to prevent future community trauma. We’re excited to be a part of this innovative approach to addressing community trauma resulting from the opioid epidemic.”

— Molly Stone, Prevention Bureau Chief, OhioMHAS

PREVENTION INSTITUTE
The Ohio Experience

• The concepts of community trauma and building resilience to address harm in the community resonated deeply with what 12 Ohio counties adversely impacted by OUD and Opioid Overdose Deaths saw driving the crisis in the state:
  • loss of industry
  • high rates of unemployment
  • broken relationships and lack of social supports
  • social isolation
  • pervasive sense of hopelessness in communities hardest hit
The Ohio Experience

- This approach has been used to:
  - build community trauma-informed teams
  - support the development of local theories of change that consider community trauma
  - reduce stigma that arises when issues are seen solely as problems of individual behavior versus through a broader lens of contributing community factors
  - link root causes of OUD to other “wicked” problems such as social isolation, joblessness, and poor educational opportunities
  - develop a strategic roadmap that considers underlying factors and root causes driving OUD
Local Priorities

- Promote Social Connectedness by Increasing Utilization of Parks and other Public Spaces
- Increase Economic Stability
- Reduce Social Isolation by Increasing Access to Transportation
- Increase Safe, Affordable Housing Options
Milwaukee’s Blueprint for Peace

Charting the path forward with the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework
Milwaukee’s Blueprint for Peace – The Need

• Milwaukee homicides jumped from 86 in 2014 to 145 in 2015. In 2016 Milwaukee was ranked as the fifth most dangerous city in the US. Milwaukee faces high rates of other forms of violence such as intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

• Violence takes an inequitable toll on specific neighborhoods and populations, including youth, women, and people of color.

• Milwaukee has high degrees of economic inequality and residential segregation, low degrees of income mobility, and high rates of incarceration of African American men.

• These and other factors contributed to high levels of community trauma, reflected in disconnectedness among residents and institutions and limited community-government trust.
Milwaukee’s Blueprint for Peace – The Need

• Mayor Tom Barrett saw the need for an all-hands-on-deck approach to promoting safety and preventing violence in Milwaukee

• Milwaukee would take a public health approach to reducing violence which includes addressing underlying factors that contribute to violence, building on community assets and culture, and applying data and science to ensure effective solutions
Milwaukee’s Blueprint for Peace – Who

- Diverse steering committee
- Inclusive and transparent process that centered the voices of those most impacted
- Broad community engagement focused on collaboration, solutions and action
Focus on preventing violence before it occurs, as well as intervention efforts after violence has occurred to reduce its impact and prevent future perpetration and victimization.

This approach is separate but complementary to criminal justice system’s efforts to reduce violence.
Focus on Risk and Resilience Factors

- Effective violence prevention efforts reduce risk factors and strengthen resilience factors.

- Risk factors are conditions or characteristics that increase the likelihood that violence will occur.

- Resilience factors are conditions or characteristics that are protective even in the presence of risk factors, thus reducing the likelihood of violence.

- In the Blueprint, the promotion of resilience factors is emphasized, including at the individual, family, and community levels.
Guiding Principles

- Community
- Equity
- Individual & Community Resilience
- Action
Strategic Goals

1. Stop the shooting. Stop the violence.
2. Promote healing and restorative justice.
4. Promote economic opportunity.
5. Foster safe and strong neighborhoods.
6. Strengthen capacity and coordination of violence prevention efforts.

Milwaukee is a safe and resilient city where the lives of all residents are valued, promoted and protected.
Resources

• Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace - https://city.milwaukee.gov/414Life/Blueprint

• Milwaukee’s Blueprint for Peace: Charting the path forward with the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework - http://preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Milwaukee%20ACER%20profile_0.pdf

• Community Organizing to Prevent Violence (podcast interview with Reggie Moore) - https://soundcloud.com/user-676580582/community-organizing-to-prevent-violence
Each One Teach One

Youth leaders, young warriors, come forward

We will write our own history books.
We will dance with love in our hearts for all.
We will protect the weak from the powerful.
We will not surrender to poverty.
It is inexcusable to live on the streets in the land of millionaires.
We will not take away freedom.
The love within our hearts will end all violence.

Peace and love.
Violence can never end violence.
The real criminals will go to jail.

Addiction to tobacco, alcohol and crack cocaine will be no more.
Families will never be separated.
We will not be under the control of drugs.
Drugs is violence.
We will not abuse our families and children.
The establishment is trying to keep us at-risk, poor and locked down.
We will not be at-risk.
We will not be poor.
We will not be locked down.
The revolution will not be televised.

You can keep your corporate junk food and cheap Star Wars movies.
We will not be used and abused by any system.

Save the children.
If one child goes hungry, the whole system has failed.
If one child cannot read, the whole system is dumb.
If one family is homeless, the whole system has failed.

All parents, youth and community people are fighters for social peaceful change!

From the Heart: A Message to the Future

We will love the poor and the homeless.

Gangs will stop gentrification.
Peace brothers peace
We will care for the sick.
No more unemployment.
All families and youth will have respect.
No more roach motels in the kitchen.
Educate by and for youth.

We are teachers.
We must and can educate ourselves.
When you walk off this stage, we walk with you.
When you graduate from college, we graduate with you.
When you go to work everyday, we go to work with you.
When you cry for a loved one, we cry with you.
Can you imagine a world without war?
Can you imagine a world without poverty?
Can you imagine a world without hate and violence?

Life is very short.
Life is a we thing.
No one will be left alone.
No one will suffer.
We all must make it together.
Look into your hearts to find your true SELF.
Love all, forgive all — all power to the youth!
Free the youth.
Free the community.
Free RAP.
Free KPFA.
Gervasio Mendez, sixth-grader at the E.C. Reem Academy of Technology and Art in Oakland

Life in the killing zone

By Anastasia Hendrix
Chronicle Staff Writer

This is a place where dozens of murders were committed last year within walking distance of an 11-year-old’s doorway. This is a place where students learn survival techniques by studying homicide statistics from the streets at arm’s length and remembering the names of their classmates and even family members.

Violence is the most pervasive part of growing up in East Oakland.

For example, police tape blocking off a fresh murder scene is a common sight. There is sorrow and outrage, but the deadly pattern always continues. Violence affects even the smallest matters of everyday life. Take H.,

random bullet — use that hand to clean your father, who was relaxing on the couch at the time.

Though the bullet did not hurt Mr. Mendez, it greatly wounded his son’s already fragile sense of security.

His favorite show is “West-Crime,” which details how to survive life-threatening situations such as how to cut the trunk of a car by breaking an arm and pulling out wiring so it cannot fit through and attract other attention.

“It makes me feel better to be like this,” Rigo said. “I’m always looking for ways to save myself, so I’ll know what to do if anything bad happens to me.”

His bedroom, located just a few feet from the kitchen, Rigo has tar