UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE ON ADOLESCENTS

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DECEMBER 10, 2014
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Define community violence

Discuss different forms of community violence

Describe typical impact of community violence on adolescents

Name a change you might make to your clinical practice to improve outcomes and/or reduce barriers for accessing care
COMMUNITY VIOLENCE IS PREVALENT

In their lifetime, ~39% of adolescents witness community violence (Hanson et al., 2006; Zinzow et al., 2009)

In an urban sample, 60% of adolescents witness community violence during their lifetime (McCart et al., 2007)

In a detained sample, ~76% of adolescents witnessed at least one form of community violence (Voisin et al., 2007)
Low income
(O'Donnell et al., 2002; Pearce et al., 2003)

Minority backgrounds
(O'Donnell et al., 2002; Pearce et al., 2003)

Densely populated urban areas
(Garbarino et al., 2004)

Disadvantaged neighborhoods
(Margolin & Gordis, 2000)
There is no consistent definition for community violence.

(Thomas et al., 2012)
EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

Gang violence

Murders

Physical assault

Muggings

Shootings

Stabbings

Sexual assault
IMPACT OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH

- Depression (Fowler et al., 2009; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2011; Wilson & Rosenthal, 2003)
- Anxiety (Fowler et al., 2009)
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (Berman et al., 1996; Giaconia et al., 1995; Singer et al., 1995)
- Substance abuse (Voisin et al., 2007)
- Low self-worth (Copeland-Linder et al., 2013)
- Suicidal ideation (Lambert et al., 2008; Berenson et al., 2001)
EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIORS

- Conduct disorder symptoms \cite{McCabe2005}
- Violent behavior \cite{Barr2012, Mrug2010}
- Sexual risk behaviors and drug use \cite{Berenson2001}

Community violence exposure \rightarrow Delinquency

\cite{Barr2012}
IMPACT ON LEARNING

- Poor academic achievement and school failure (Saltzman et al., 2001)
- Student-teacher connectedness (Voisin et al., 2011)
- Low academic performance (Hardaway et al., 2014)
- Low school engagement (Fullerton, 2004)
“Loss of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to a stimulus that should elicit a reaction” (Johnson, 1986, p.116)

DESENSITIZATION

Qualitative research suggests there may be some form of desensitization (Johnson, 2013)

- Less empathic (Funk et al., 2003)
- More likely to commit violent acts (Garbarino, 1995; Ng-Mak et al., 2004)
AWARENESS

Numb awareness
Violence is normal; numb to community violence’s significance

Heightened awareness
Increased awareness of events

Distorted awareness
Some violent actions are normal and can be justified

Stunned awareness
Overwhelmed by amount of violence within the community

(Johnson, 2013)
CHALLENGES FOR THERAPY

Continuous exposure to community violence

Low socioeconomic status

Are general needs being met?

Transportation

Parental involvement

Trust

Additional stressors in general

Knowing what services are available

Trust

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Get Connected. Get Answers.
Support from peers and adults at school may benefit adolescents exposed to violence

(May not be a buffer against psychological distress

(Tatumala-Nara et al., 2014)

(Ludwig & Warren, 2009)

(Paxton et al., 2004)
CREATING TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS

- Requires entire school effort
- Train school staff to identify symptoms associated with traumatic responses \(^{(Fowler \text{ et al.}, \text{2009; McDonald \& Richmond, 2008)}}\)
  - Follow up on school absences
  - Utilize school counselors
  - Refer as needed
- Foster a safe at school environment \(^{(Trauma \text{ Learning Policy Initiative, 2014)}}\)
- Alternative discipline strategies \(^{(Hardaway \text{ et al.}, \text{2014)}}\)
- Help adolescents understand the connection between trauma exposure and school performance \(^{(Trauma \text{ Learning Policy Initiative, 2014)}}\)
Screeners

- Exposure to community violence scale (Suglia et al., 2008)
- Ask open-ended questions
- Early intervention

Help adolescents understand that violence is an issue (Johnson, 2013)

Teach coping skills (Fowler et al., 2009)

Use a nonjudgmental approach (Johnson, 2013)

Be knowledgeable of and sensitive to the adolescent’s situation

- E.g., Low socioeconomic status
IN CONCLUSION

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.

- Cesar Chavez
QUESTIONS?
REFERENCES


REFERENCES


PHOTO REFERENCES

Slide 3
- Hands diversity: http://sweetclipart.com/multisite/sweetclipart/files/hands_raised_0.png
- City: https://img0.etsystatic.com/035/1/5871846/il_340x270.507034284_jhn1.jpg
- Disadvantaged neighborhood: http://31.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m0f6x4Ns8z1qdeuyro1_1280.jpg

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- Thinking person: http://images.clipartpanda.com/guess-clipart-yTkG9jGTE.gif

Slide 5
- Mugging: http://www.eveningnews24.co.uk/polopoly_fs/1.1497122.1346239658!/image/2640479420.jpg_gen/derivatives/landscape_630/2640479420.jpg
- Stabbings: http://i01.i.aliimg.com/img/pb/870/047/790/790047870_966.jpg

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Slide 10
- Police: http://kotv.images.worldnow.com/images/18633910_BG2.jpg
- Low SES: http://inspiredeconomist.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Low-Income-Housing-From-v50-on-Flickr.jpg
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- Parental involvement: http://www.tuhsd.org/filestore/sidebargraphic_ParentInvolvement.jpg
- Trust: http://www.saccounty.net/news/latest-news/PublishingImages/HandShakeMaleFemale554x256.jpg
- Services available to them: http://www.csctulsa.org/files/image/211%20Logo%20New.jpg

Slide 12:
- Kids raising hands

Slide 13
- Adolescent with therapist:
  http://www.bingeeatingbulimia.com/storage/therapist%20patient.jpg?__SQUARESPACE_CACHEVERSION=1325707473027

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