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Emotional Responses to Unintentional and Intentional Traumatic Injuries among Urban Black Men: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Purpose—The burden of injuries is disproportionately concentrated among Black men in the United States. Previous studies suggest that the mental health effects of trauma may vary by the intentionality of the injury (intentional vs. unintentional), yet little is known about this experience among Black men. We explored the emotional responses to traumatic injuries in the context of injury intentionality among Black men in an urban area.

Methods—We conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 74 Black men who were traumatically injured. The interviews took place three months after discharge from the hospital and they were audiotaped, transcribed, and de-identified. We used systematic thematic analysis to identify themes about post-trauma emotional responses to intentional and unintentional injuries.

Results—The narratives of intentionally injured men revealed persistent exposure to neighborhood violence and their distrust of others including the people they knew and to whom they felt close. Survivors of unintentional injuries did not express a similar distrust of others. Our findings suggest that survivors of intentional injuries experience loss of social support following their injuries.

Conclusions—Emotional responses can differ by intentionality of traumatic injury among urban Black men. Intentional injuries may be a marker for chronic exposure to violence and limited social support for recovery. Additional resources should be targeted to survivors of intentional

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injury who return to disadvantaged communities after medical treatment to decrease risk of re-traumatization and adverse emotional responses.

Keywords

Traumatic injury; emotional responses; mental health; black men; qualitative; intentional injury; unintentional injury

INTRODUCTION

Injuries are a major public health problem in the United States and worldwide, accounting for nearly 60% of all deaths among Americans 1 – 44 years of age and 4.8 million deaths globally [1,2]. In the U.S alone, approximately 27 million people are treated for injuries in emergency departments each year [1]. Black men in the United States are disproportionately affected by traumatic injuries. Unintentional injuries are the third leading cause of death and homicides are the fifth leading cause of death among Black men [3]. The age-adjusted rate of all injury deaths was 102 per 100,000 Black males compared to 92 per 100,000 White males in 2015 [3]. Many survivors of traumatic injuries face significant mental health challenges in addition to physical problems. Previous studies report that 16–93% of patients with traumatic injuries experience posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 24–44% of patients experience depression. [4–12]. Despite racial disparities in the distribution of injury in the U.S., limited literature describes Black men’s emotional responses to traumatic injuries.

Survivors of intentional injuries (e.g., gun violence and assault) may have increased risk of adverse mental health outcomes compared to survivors of unintentional injuries (e.g., falls and motor vehicle accidents) [8,13–15]. Contributing factors to stronger emotional responses among intentionally injured people may include increased perceptions of helplessness and lack of control, greater likelihood of knowing the person who perpetrated the assault which makes the traumatic event more personal, and greater exposure to violence and traumatic events in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantage [8,14,15].

Understanding emotional responses to intentional and unintentional injuries can help inform and improve public health planning and treatment efforts for individuals vulnerable to poor mental health after injury. The purpose of this study was to examine how urban Black men described their emotional responses in the three months after acute traumatic injury within the context of injury intentionality. We used qualitative methods to illuminate the complexity of responses among this underserved population.

METHOD

Our study sample was drawn from a larger study focused on the psychological effects of injuries among urban Black men. The purpose of the larger study was to examine individual, institutional, and environmental risk and protective factors across the lifespan that contribute to psychological symptoms after traumatic injuries. Participants were recruited at an urban trauma center in the northeastern United States. Black men were eligible for the study if they had a diagnosis of injury (ICD-9-CM codes 800–995), were at least 18 years old, spoke and

understood English, could provide informed consent, and resided in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan region. Men were excluded if they had pre-existing mental status dysfunction or central nervous system injury that impaired the ability to provide consent and participate in interviews, had an active psychotic disorder, had injuries due to suicidal intent, or were currently being treated for depression or PTSD at the time of injury. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania.

Participants were enrolled in the study during acute care after they were medically stable. A research nurse in the trauma service identified patients who met eligibility criteria, explained the study, and obtained written informed consent. Demographic and injury-related information was collected during the intake interview and from the hospital's trauma registry. Injury mechanisms were determined using standardized definitions (e.g., motor vehicle crash, fall, assault, pedestrian, pedal cyclist) [16].

In-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with participants at three months after hospital discharge at participants' homes or at a mutually agreeable location with a private space. Participants were asked open-ended questions about their injuries and their recovery. Questions were broad to allow exploration of issues raised by participants. The interviews were audiotaped and varied in length, sometimes up to one hour, but in general lasted approximately 30 minutes. At the completion of the interview, participants received a \$50 gift card.

Audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim with three steps for quality control. First, the tape was transcribed. Second, a different team member read the transcript while listening to the audiotape to check for accuracy. Finally, when questions arose over the word/wording, the interviewer was asked to listen to that portion of the tape and render a judgment on the accuracy of the transcript. Content analysis was used to systematically identify major and recurrent themes about participants' emotional responses to their traumatic injury. Co-authors reviewed participants' responses and reached consensus on the thematic labels. The qualitative interview transcripts were imported, managed, and coded using NVivo (QSR International).

RESULTS

The sociodemographic characteristics of the 74 participants are provided in Table 1. All participants were Black males. The median age was 33.5 years (range 18 – 84 years); 49 (66%) men had a high school education or less and 40 (54.1%) reported total annual household incomes less than \$20,000. Prior to injury, 38 (51%) participants were employed, 30 (41%) were unemployed, two (2.7%) were retired, and four participants did not provide employment information. Injury characteristics are provided in Table 2. Approximately 40% (n = 29) of the sample sustained unintentional injuries, of which almost half (48.3%) were injured in a fall and one-third (34.4%) were injured in a motor vehicle crash, with the remainder from other injury mechanisms. Of the 45 survivors of intentional injuries, 57.8% were injured by firearms and one-third (33.3%) were injured in stabbings. Major themes and representative quotes are presented below and in Table 3.

Perceptions of Traumatic Injuries: “I Got Damn Near Killed!”

Participants perceived their injuries to be serious and at times life threatening regardless of injury mechanism. A survivor of an unintentional pedestrian injury described his injury:

It got a rearview camera in the truck, nobody seemed to see, or the driver couldn't seem to see...I got damned near killed. I got crushed...And I'm under there pushing off the bottom of the tire, you know? And when the truck finally stopped, it stopped on this arm. I heard this arm when it broke.

Some men with unintentional injuries expressed feeling responsible for their injuries because they thought that they could have prevented their injuries from happening. A survivor of a fall said:

I find myself in a hospital setting that could have been avoided had I done something entirely different. That is not going into that bathroom where the floor had been removed and stepped off the rafter...I went into that room and I fell. That was dumb. So, I really need to kick myself in the shins for having done something so stupid.

However, for some intentionally injured men, avoiding injury is difficult because of the unpredictable nature of violence in their neighborhoods. One man was shot when he least expected to be, while he was walking to a store to pick up food:

I just kept thinking how did I let myself get shot. Because I wasn't expecting to just get shot like that. Out of the blue. Just, see you just walking outside of the house and you just get shot. For no reason. For no reason at all. Ain't do nothing. Ain't see nothing. Just getting shot. Mistaken, mistaken identity. That's what [the police] say. So called. No, I wasn't in no gang.

Another survivor of a gunshot wound further highlighted the persistent neighborhood violence he has faced:

There's been a few times guns have been stuck in my face and pointed at me but I've never been shot. And then to be shot by some 17-year old kid? It's crazy.

Flashbacks and Nightmares: “Make Sure You Don't Fall Asleep”

Both men who were unintentionally and intentionally injured described having intrusive memories of their traumatic injuries through flashbacks and nightmares. For example, a survivor of an unintentional pedestrian accident described having disturbing nightmares after his injury:

I might have some mental, uh, injuries or something. Something might be wrong with me. You know 'cause every time I look up now in the middle of the night, a lot of times, anyway, I would look up and I see the bottom of the truck...I keep waking up when I'm having my dreams.

A survivor of an intentional gunshot wound reported experiencing flashbacks when he hears conversations about other people getting shot:

Flashbacks. Memories. Anxiety attacks. And my leg be hurtin'. I hear somebody talk about how they got shot. It just... any little thing that I hear, it just set me off.

Flashbacks and nightmares are distressing for these men and can cause both emotional and physical reactions. It is noteworthy that some intentionally injured men know and hear about other people who were also intentionally injured, indicating pervasive exposure to violence.

Avoiding Places, Thoughts, and People: "I Block It Off"

The experiences with avoidance of trauma-related triggers differ between men who were unintentionally and intentionally injured. Unintentionally injured men tended to avoid physical spaces (e.g., cars and highways) that reminded them of their injuries whereas intentionally injured men described distrusting and avoiding people. A survivor of a motor vehicle crash reported having difficulty driving on the same road to work because that was where he was injured:

Uh, the hardest part is to be able to get back on the highway thinking about, you know, the incident that happened. You know, and when I see like a tractor-trailer truck again I get scared.

Intentionally injured men described avoiding people to avoid trauma-related stress. Some also described not wanting to leave their houses in their neighborhoods where other people could potentially harm them. A survivor of a stabbing said:

Like a lot of things stress me out. Or just will set me off. But since the accident, it's like I don't wanna be around people.

Avoidance of people was also related to perceived danger in their neighborhoods. A survivor of a gunshot wound expressed fear of being re-injured if he re-encounters attackers in his neighborhood:

I was scared to walk around everywhere. Scared to go outside. I was scared to go in my neighborhood 'cause I'm thinking that the same person probably have family trying to come after me. And I just try to avoid everybody.

To avoid distressing trauma-related memories, thoughts, or feelings, some men turned to substances including marijuana and alcohol. A survivor of a stabbing described using marijuana to avoid thinking about this injury:

I'm not gonna lie. You know, my counselor's Mary Jane. I'm not gonna lie to you. You know, like I smoke my Mary Jane. I'll be relaxin'. Make me think about other stuff to do. You know than sittin' keep talkin' about it over and over it.

Persistent Negative Beliefs: "I Feel Like I'm Somebody Totally Different"

Unintentionally injured men described having persistent negative emotions. A survivor of a pedestrian injury indicates how his thoughts about his injury have affected his relationship with his family:

I want to be able to look and talk to my family without crying. And I wanna be able to talk and sit down at a table, eat a meal with my family without just bawling over, start thinking about this truck.

An important difference between the experiences described by unintentionally and intentionally injured men is that intentionally injured men view the world as a place filled with dangerous people who threaten their safety. Feelings of fear and distrust of the intentions of other people were not expressed among survivors of unintentional injuries. The following quote is illustrative of the changes experienced by intentionally injured men:

Everything has changed for me. My entire life. From the way I walk. You know, sleep...It's, like, the way I think, I view the world, the way I think. My thought process towards people. Trust issues. Like a lot of psychological issues...My trust issues for people in general has led to fear for strangers and people I don't know. Even people I do know or once trusted. I distance myself. And actually like I do not like to go out...I'm not social at all anymore, anymore with anybody.

This emotional response demonstrates that increased distrust of others is a major change in the lives of survivors of intentional injuries. He not only fears the people in his neighborhood but he has also distanced himself from his family and friends because he no longer thinks that people are trustworthy. The same participant said:

Even my family. I push away a little bit. Just stay to myself...But since the accident, it's like I don't wanna be around people. I don't think people are trustworthy enough to want to be around or want to be myself. It's like I'm not the same person at all. Timid. Shy. All of a sudden. Just scary. Period. With like people. Especially, you know, it happened right across the street.

On Guard: "I Feel Like I'm Jumpy"

Both survivors of unintentional and intentional injuries described being vigilant in regard to potential threats to their safety. However, the types of threats they feared differed. Unintentionally injured men described experiencing fear of re-injury and heightened awareness of their surroundings. For instance, one man who was injured in an unintentional fall described feeling jittery and constantly aware of different kinds of safety threats posed by his surroundings:

I've been taking it very easy and being very cautious of my surroundings, what I'm doing. It's like, I ride a bike. I'm scared of falling down. I'm scared of getting hit by a car. I'm very jittery and nervous like I told you.

Similarly, another man who was injured in an unintentional motor vehicle crash described his fear of being hit by a car again when he crosses the street:

I think about a car just coming out of nowhere. And then hitting me. And, you know, ever since the accident that's what's been happening. So now every time [I] cross the street or see a car, I think -- anything like that ya know, pops back up in my head.

Intentionally injured men's descriptions of being on guard differed from those of unintentionally injured men. Survivors of unintentional injuries did not report being afraid that other people may want to harm them. In contrast, survivors of intentional injuries described feeling constantly tense in the presence of other people. A man who survived a stabbing described feeling jumpy around other people including his friends:

Like a lot of things stress me out. Or just will set me off. Like my friend now, like if he'll come in and sneak up or I don't hear it. I'm like Oh my god, like what are you doing? Like automatically assuming he's trying to get me. When I know deep down it's not the case...I feel different. I feel like I'm jumpy. I feel like I'm scared of people. When I never used to be afraid of anybody. Or afraid to do anything. Now I'm like, oh my god, I don't want to go outside.

Men who return to communities where interpersonal violence is a persistent problem after being intentionally injured may experience heightened emotional responses and changes in reactivity, which may serve as defense mechanisms to protect themselves against harm. A survivor of a gunshot wound described how distrust is necessary to protect himself from being attacked again:

Not knowing who did it. Or where it came from. To prevent it from happening again. 'Cause I don't know what I did wrong in the first place for that to happen. So, it's like, well is it— where it is coming from? Who did this? And is it somebody that's right next to me every day? Is it somebody I work with? Is it somebody who lives next door to us where we lived at before? Or is it a friend of mine who I've had for years? Is it something from—I don't know. So, just that fear of not knowing that the person who did that to me could be standing right next to me.

The experiences described by this participant demonstrate how intentionally injured men experience a loss of safety. A different survivor of a gunshot wound described the toll of persistent violence on his life:

People shooting out here every day. It's getting worse, a lot worse. A lot worse since I had got shot. A lot worse. So, now it's just like you can just get shot. Just coming out your house. Walking to the store. Anything. You just got to be really, really, really careful about who you around and where you go. You gotta get there and get there fast...When it happens, bullets don't got no names. They hit whoever...That's why I say the neighborhood is crazy nowadays.

The increased level of vigilance and distrust experienced by these participants interferes with their jobs, interpersonal relationships, and other important aspects of their lives. One survivor of a stabbing described how his distrust of others has impacted his ability to return to work:

Haven't been well. Been paranoid a lot. Looking over my back. Haven't been able to sleep. I haven't been looking for jobs no more. The job that I was working with when I got stabbed. They called me asking me to return...I'm not sure if I want to return there either because I'm so paranoid. I think everybody is literally talking about me. Out to get me.

Depressed: "Just be stuck"

Survivors of unintentional and intentional traumatic injuries described depressive feelings related to their perceived inability to return to their normal activities and perceived loss of independence. The participants described the negative impact on their ability to work, play

with their children, and take care of themselves. One man who suffered an unintentional injury said:

That's really like the suckiest part. Like sitting around all day. Nothing to do but, think about the accident.

Depressed feelings may also stem from having to rely on others for physical assistance more often. One man who was injured by a gunshot described having to rely more on his family than ever before in his life and not recognizing himself:

Dealing with having to rely on my mother and my sister. To actually rely on other-- Depend on other people to maintain at least a portion of my quality of life that I'm used to. That basically takes the cake over all. That's more depressing than anything. You know what I'm saying? Like, I don't wear a beard. I've never worn, haven't worn a beard since I was started growing it at 16...I've always shaved my hair since then. Like I've never looked like this. Never in my life. Like, I look at myself sometimes in the mirror and just be stuck. Like, just mesmerized by like the trifleness of it all... You know, the only thing I know about now is the pajamas and a urinal. Basically sums everything up.

Anger: "I have all this anger and hostility inside of me"

Both survivors of unintentional and intentional injuries felt angry about being injured and attributed their anger to their perceived lack of self-sufficiency and impaired abilities (e.g., physical, social, emotional) to return to their pre-injury lives. A survivor of a pedestrian accident said:

I get upset faster. Mad. Like mad fast. And upset. And not being able to do anything for yourself is very -- like it makes you angry. And nerve racking.

A survivor of a gunshot wound explained his anger about having difficulty fulfilling his everyday responsibilities after his injury:

I used to get up and take my daughter to school and pick her up every day. And go to the market. And go to doctor's appointments. And do a whole bunch of stuff throughout the day. Running back and forth. And I can't really do that now. 'Cause it does get to me. It slows me up. And that makes me mad. When I realize that I can't do that.

While survivors of intentional injuries also described anger about not being able to return to their pre-injury lives, they dealt with an additional set of challenges. Survivors of intentional injuries described negative experiences with law enforcement. One man who experienced a gunshot wound expressed anger about having his innocence in the assaultive event doubted:

It was painful. It was annoying. I just was goin' through a lot. Everybody was thinking I had something to do with it, like the detectives. They think I have something to do with it. They only come to find out that it wasn't. Everything that I said was true... So I have all this anger and hostility inside of me. I was just hurtin' and mad 'cause nobody want to believe me.

Worry: “Knowing I still have to live...”

Survivors of unintentional and intentional injuries described feeling nervous and worried about their recovery and ability to work again. Financial stressors can cause worry and stress among injured men and they may even eclipse the recovery process in terms of what concerns them the most. A survivor of a fall said:

Finances and figuring out how I’m gonna survive. How I wanna live. I wanna live. I want to be able to get help to live. That concern me the most right now. That concern me more than the broken ankle. Because, I know the ankle’s gonna heal. But, I’m you know. Knowing I still have to live after the ankle get well.

A survivor of a stabbing described feeling worried about his physical recovery and ability to return to work after his injury:

Just recovery. And trying to get back to doing a lot of things that I’m used to doing. ‘Cause my only fear is my hand. Being as though, I’m an electrician, and I do home improvement stuff. Yeah, I’m kind of worried... What concerns me the most is just being able to do what I need to do. Physically.

Survivors of intentional injuries may interact with the criminal justice system to take legal action against their assailants. Rather than focusing solely on their recovery, survivors may experience significant worry over having to face their assailants in court. One man described feeling distressed about having to see the person who stabbed him:

Having to face the person that did it. That’s what concerns me the most...But, due to the fact that I got stabbed I have to stick up for myself. And the DA and everyone won’t let this person walk away. They demand justice. That’s the only thing that scare me. Having to look this guy in the eye when I go to court.

DISCUSSION

The primary finding of this study was that emotional responses to traumatic injuries can differ by injury intentionality among urban Black men. The experiences of these men demonstrate that neighborhood exposure to violence is a chronic stressor in their lives with profound implications for mental health and recovery after intentional injury. Living in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantage and persistent violence offers no reprieve from stressors that may increase risk of re-traumatization or future assaultive events. Furthermore, for intentionally injured men, the violent nature of their injuries presents an additional set of challenges including interactions with the perpetrators of their injuries and the criminal justice system which may contribute to their feelings of anger and worry. Survivors of intentional injuries reported fearing and distrusting the intentions of others and, as a result, they distanced themselves from people in their lives. Survivors of unintentional injuries experienced negative emotional responses but did not describe distrusting people.

Survivors of intentional injuries who experience social withdrawal due to distrust of others may not receive adequate social support. Social support is the perceived and actual assistance received from others in the response to a stress event [17–19]. Social support may be a protective factor against the development of PTSD and its associated disability [13,20].

The experiences described by the intentionally injured men in our study indicate that there is a negative impact on the quality and quantity of received social support to aid in their recovery process [21–24]. After traumatic events, distress symptoms such as irritability, feelings of detachment from others, and restricted range of affect can lead to interpersonal difficulties and erode social support [25,26].

Intentional injury may further weaken already fragile social support for men who live in disadvantaged communities. Black men in these communities have increased vulnerability to traumatic stress and loss due to the unpredictable nature of violence in their neighborhoods [26–29]. Common types of violence exposure among Black men living in areas of concentrated disadvantage include witnessing violence, having direct exposure to violence, and surviving the homicidal death of family members and friends [26]. Exposure to violence may start early in life and these adverse experiences may accumulate across the lifespan, having negative effects on life-long health [30,31]. Future research should examine the prevalence and severity of posttraumatic symptoms among urban Black men living in chronically violent neighborhoods, especially for those who are survivors of intentional injuries, and the potential role that loss of social support plays in their mental health outcomes.

Survivors of unintentional and intentional injuries generally expressed anger about being injured. Past studies have found a strong correlation between anger and severity of PTSD among trauma-exposed adults, and that anger during and after trauma was more common among people who were physically assaulted compared to people with unintentional injuries [32,33]. Our findings extend this past work by indicating the ways in which intentional injuries present additional challenges, including interactions with the perpetrator of the assault and with law enforcement, that may contribute to increased feelings of anger and worry. Survivors' anger expressed at the perpetrators was coupled with worry about facing them in court. There may be benefits of prosecuting cases through courts such as having survivors' abuse acknowledged and validated, and receiving an apology [34]. Reporting a crime, however, may also be distressing and recounting experiences in court can be traumatizing [35,36]. Some intentionally injured men reported having their innocence in the assaultive event doubted by the police or feeling like they needed to make it clear that they were not a gang member, suggesting that these men experience racial discrimination and stereotyping which may contribute to adverse emotional and psychological responses. The adversarial nature of criminal trials can trigger secondary emotional responses as survivors face the perpetrator in court and remember details about the crime, as is well-documented in sexual assault [35,37]. Regardless of the source of anger, it behooves clinicians to help men identify, accept, and developing coping strategies to deal with their anger. Future research should examine the best strategies to help survivors manage anger and the distressing impact that the justice system can have on the psychological symptoms of survivors of intentional injuries.

Several limitations of this study should be considered in the interpretation of its findings. The data presented in this study examine emotional responses only among Black men living in Philadelphia and the themes and experiences described may not be applicable to other groups of injured adults. In addition, participants in this study made individual decisions

about what to disclose to interviewers and it is possible that trust issues could have affected what participants chose to disclose or explore during the interviews. A strength of this study is the large sample size for a qualitative study, with 74 participants providing detailed narratives about the impact of their traumatic injuries on their emotional health and daily lives.

Our findings emphasize the importance of future research on the role of injury intentionality in the development of emotional and psychological responses among urban Black men, and among other individuals in marginalized or disadvantaged communities. Future research should examine social support received among survivors of unintentional and intentional traumatic injuries and the effects of this support on mental health outcomes. Men in this sample reported having issues with trusting people, which may at first indicate that a social support intervention is not a fitting treatment. However, in a previous study published by our team, injured Black men indicated that a primary reason for why they entered a research study was for human connection, suggesting the viability of an intervention focusing on social support [38]. Clinicians should recognize that all injuries, regardless of intentionality, can elicit significant and potentially disabling emotional responses, but that intentionality can be an important consideration in understanding an individual's responses. Additional resources should be targeted to individuals with intentional injuries who return to areas of concentrated disadvantage after medical treatment, in order to minimize the risk of re-traumatization and mental health problems. Hospital-based interventions that include a trauma-informed model addressing trauma histories and current adversity may help improve mental health outcomes among intentionally injured urban Black men [39]. Trauma support groups can improve social support for trauma patients, help them develop effective coping strategies for managing the stresses they may encounter during recovery, and also increase patients' knowledge of and access to community resources [40].

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Table 1

Demographic characteristics of study participants

	All Interview Participants (n=74)	Unintentionally Injured Patients (n=29)	Intentionally Injured Patients (n=45)
Age (median, range)	33.5 (18–84)	47 (18–84)	31 (18–58)
Educational Attainment N (%)			
High school or less	49 (66.2%)	16 (55.2%)	33 (73.3%)
Some college	14 (18.9%)	10 (34.5%)	4 (8.9%)
Associate Degree	6 (8.1%)	1 (3.4%)	5 (11.1%)
Bachelor's Degree or more	4 (5.4%)	1 (3.4%)	3 (6.7%)
Total Household Income N (%)			
<\$20,000	40 (54.1%)	16 (55.2%)	24 (53.3%)
\$20,000 – \$39,999	11 (14.9%)	4 (13.8%)	7 (15.6%)
\$40,000	11 (14.9%)	5 (17.2%)	6 (13.3%)
Don't Know/Not	12 (16.2%)	4 (13.8%)	8 (17.8%)
Employment Status N (%)			
Employed	38 (51.4%)	13 (44.8%)	15 (33.3%)
Unemployed	30 (40.5%)	13 (44.8%)	17 (37.8%)
Retired	2 (2.7%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (2.2%)

* Some participants did not provide all demographic information

Table 2

Mechanisms of injuries of study participants

Unintentional Injuries (n=29)	
Mechanism of Injury N (%)	
Fall	14 (48.3%)
Motor vehicle crash	10 (34.4%)
Traffic-related pedestrian injury	3 (10.3%)
Stabbing	1 (3.4%)
Home repair related injury	1 (3.4%)
Intentional Injuries (n=45)	
Mechanism of Injury N (%)	
Gunshot wound	26 (57.8%)
Stabbing	15 (33.3%)
Assault without weapon	4 (8.9%)

Table 3

Themes with representative quotes

Theme	Number of sources (%)	Representative quotes
Survivors of unintentional injuries (n=45)		
<i>Life-threatening injury</i>	11 (24%)	<p>"I got damned near killed. I got crushed. My left side got crushed by a trash truck."</p> <p>"I was constantly reminded of having doing something stupid to get there in the first place. So, every day I, when I looked around--Every minute, I knew that 'Hey, brother you did this to yourself. That's the reason you're here.'"</p>
<i>Flashbacks and/or nightmares</i>	10 (22%)	"...I actually started getting impact flashbacks 'cause like the car making impact. But, it seems like I don't remember it. But, when I'm asleep or when I'm starting to doze off, I can—I can hear it. Sometimes I can feel it too."
<i>Avoidance</i>	2 (4%)	"It bothers me a lot. So, I'm not ready to drive yet. I never got over that fear of crashing again."
<i>Negative thoughts</i>	3 (7%)	"But, things flash through your head. But none of them that aren't normal. You just wonderin'. Most of the fears I have now is just thinkin' about 'Is it my time? You need to leave.' And stuff like that."
<i>On guard</i>	6 (13%)	"I hate coming down these steps because I feel like I am going to fall again. Now, as soon as I get here, I can feel my leg buckling."
<i>Depressed</i>	4 (9%)	"Like, oh man. When am I ever going to walk again? At one point I was so depressed because I didn't know when I was gonna walk."
<i>Anger</i>	5 (11%)	"My brother, my family, they does everything with me. But, they know I get mad 'cause I like to do it myself. But, some things I can't do. So, I have to learn to deal with things I can't do."
<i>Worry</i>	9 (20%)	"I've been anxious because I don't know how I'm going to pay the bills. I don't wanna be homeless. I'm constantly worried about that."
Survivors of intentional injuries (n=29)		
<i>Life-threatening injury/chronic exposure to violence</i>	18 (62%)	<p>"I got-- had my abdominal muscles shot out. I had my lung hit. My kidney gone. One of my kidneys removed. Half my liver has been shot. So, all they did was repair it. And, you know, even in my ribs. Bullets ricochet off my ribs and what not...Six times. 45 caliber. Yup. I'm surprised I survived."</p> <p>"People shooting out here every day. It's getting worse, a lot worse. A lot worse since I had got shot. A lot worse. So, now it's just like you can just get shot just coming out your house. Walking to the store. Anything."</p>
<i>Flashbacks and/or nightmares</i>	12 (41%)	"I could just be sitting here and we could just be having a regular conversation and...I'll zone out and that'll hit me and I think about it. It changes my mood. Not like I start ramming or nothing, but it like brings me down a little bit."
<i>Avoidance</i>	7 (24%)	<p>"Um, I was scared to walk around everywhere. Scared to go outside. I was scared to go in my neighborhood 'cause I'm thinking that the same person probably have family trying to come after me."</p> <p>"My trust issues for people in general has led to fear for strangers and people I don't know. Even people I do know or once trusted. I distance myself."</p>
<i>On guard</i>	9 (31%)	"So, I'm always jittery and just like I said I don't know who to trust. My friends and my family, I just be thinking like 'Who got my best interest at heart?'"
<i>Depressed</i>	5 (17%)	"Just having thoughts of the incident. And getting depressed from the different things that I'm not able to do."
<i>Anger</i>	3 (10%)	"When I was shot...the police like came first. Before like the ambulance and everything. So they like, I guess took me to the hospital. Like, the way they like grabbed me and like threw me in the car. And how they were questioning me like I was some kind of criminal for being shot. It was, I don't know, it just bothered me."
<i>Worry</i>	14 (48%)	"I got a prescription here I ain't never filled it out...Where am I gonna get the money to buy?"