RESEARCH ARTICLE

The child in the school, the school in the community, and the community in the child: Linking psychic and social domains in school violence prevention

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Abstract

Despite efforts to broaden the focus of school safety provision beyond eliminating individual problematic students, interventions in school contexts have traditionally focused on helping the troubled child adapt to the school; less often do schools view the child's symptoms as reflecting troubles in the community which in turn impact children. Even the "school climate" approach, which is innovative in viewing the child in light of social influences contributing to identity and affective co-regulation, may not sufficiently illuminate the interactions among neurobiology, teaching methods, family support/networks, organizational systems, and cultural/political disruptions. In this article, we focus on Cohen and Rappaport's complementary papers on preventing school violence. Although both papers thoughtfully consider individual *and* school-climate factors, a common feature in both is the replication of our cultural tendency to split the psychic domain from the social realm—to favor approaches that emphasize individual psychopathology over ones that view the individual and community as inextricably linked and mutually constitutive (Layton, 2020). Models for assessment often unconsciously favor frameworks for understanding individuals' symptoms as opposed to approaches that view symptoms as expressing the needs and troubles of both the individual and the community. We propose that the dialectical relationship between individual and community

is the nexus from which we can understand the impact of family and community distress on individual psychopathology in ways that could culminate in a violent incident. We will explore how, in the context of Cohen's policy proposals and Rappaport's case study, a community psychoanalytic model can mobilize different interventions and resources.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Who among us can forget the indelible and terrifying images of parents and community members standing outside Sandy Hook School, sobbing and comforting one another in the wake of an attack on a classroom of 20 children between 6- and 7-years old? Moreover, how can one shake loose the image of the single file evacuation of high school students at Parkland High after a 19-year-old boy murdered 17 people and injured 17 others with a semi-automatic rifle? These images and countless others are seared into memory by repeated viewing on TV and social media. Once the incident is reported, investigations reveal problems in the shooters' families, which often include proximal loss, divorce, neglect, homelessness, adoption, and social exclusion, made more devastating in the context of lack of community mental health resources for severely disturbed teens. Memorials are planned and witnessed, and victims are grieved. Efforts at prevention often involve fortification of the schools themselves and the sobering addition of active shooter drills to school routines.

Repeated over and over with each successive incident, this systematic structuring of the narrative has penetrated educational and social service responses to threats of school violence. We fortify our buildings, we attempt to increase attention to at-risk students and minimize neglect by teachers, administrators, and parents, and we add to our tools for assessing the threat of individual students. Resources are scarce and communities are emotionally taxed; so it can be rare for a deeper look to follow—one that might take into account the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, of racism in the community and its impact on the availability of mental health services, huge economic disparities, and political polarization.

Most of all, we do not consider how we are all implicated—indirectly, systemically—in one another's suffering (Rothberg, 2019). Following the murder of George Floyd and the guilty verdict which hung on the video footage of a young bystander, it is essential to consider the communal and social contexts in which violent incidents occur. We find that the work of Rothberg (2019) on the implicated subject offers a compelling mode of analysis and a method for finding remedies to community-based issues that arise out of historical contexts characterized by systemic racism, generational poverty, gender bias, and harsh methods of punishment. He suggests that expanding our perspective beyond the victim—perpetrator binary enlarges our field of vision in ways that permit problem-solving that improves on pathologizing and "othering" individuals. From this perspective, an individual seen as deviant continues to be held as a member of a community that is experiencing an insoluble problem. In this model, mutuality, caring, and nuanced assessment mean that all members of the community can be seen as fellow sufferers and implicated subjects. Therefore, expulsion is not a necessary remedy nor an objective; novel solutions may emerge as more participants take part in attempts to understand and address the systemic distress. The individual is viewed as a symptom bearer expressing the stresses extant in the community rather than as a bad kid. This model dovetails well with President Obama's (2013) plan, *Now Is the Time*, the school climate paradigm developed by Jonathan Cohen, and the important

contributions of school violence researchers Ron Avi-Astor (Avi-Astor & Benbenishty, 2019), Dewey Cornell (2015, 2018, and this issue), and Dorothy Espelage (2014).

2 | A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE CONCEPT

Educators have certainly not avoided thinking about how to stop school violence, which has been a major concern following the recent increase of in- and out-of-school bullying incidents, threats of violence to teachers and peers, and a great number of high profile mass school shootings. In 2003, an issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* focused on school violence revealed how expressions of both physical and emotional violence and other difficult behaviors are always affected by personal and interpersonal factors, including the meaning a person assigns to the violence itself (Twemlow & Cohen, 2003). Recommendations for managing social aggression focused on the development of student competencies: self-reflection, conflict resolution, and the abilities for making and keeping friends, controlling impulses, working cooperatively, and being socially responsible for the quality of one's social context. It was additionally recommended that schools create a climate of safety and emotional containment, while encouraging students to function not only as members of the school community but to extend their sense of belonging to the larger community. Specific policy proposals included identifying at-risk students, teaching social and emotional competence, and developing interventions at the school level to create a safe and caring atmosphere. Obstacles to enacting these measures included lack of funding, lack of education about child development and at-risk children, how to identify children, and a tendency to focus primarily on the physical aspects of safety. These reports highlighted a central psychological concept, mentalization—the ability to reflect on one's intentions and thinking about these reflections—as critical to the creation of a climate of safety (Fonagy, 1991, Fonagy et al., 2018).

This special issue of the *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies (IJAPS)* updates the state of the field, showing the progress made by educators and mental health professionals in responding to those problems. The innovations described build on the work of editor, Jonathan Cohen, whose work on school climate has been groundbreaking. School climate, the sense of students, teachers, and parents of the school's values, goals, practices, organization, and the style of fostering relationships to further learning, includes not just academic concerns but also social and emotional factors. A measure of the "quality and character of school life," the school climate concept is a quantifiable way of attending to and engaging with psychosocial trends in the school community and its students. It takes into account what Cohen calls "the entire village," including the voice of the community (Cohen, 2014a, 2014b, 2020; Cohen et al., 2009; Ice et al., 2015; Thapa & Cohen, 2017). Cohen's research resulted in the founding of the International Observatory for School Climate and Violence Prevention.

Two findings of the school climate research were students' feelings of unsafety and the pervasiveness of the perpetrator-victim-bystander dynamics in many schools (Cohen et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013). Conclusions stressed the importance of clarifying the meaning of interpersonal events within the school when they happen. Fostering emotional health and educating children and families about mental illness is another way to prevent potential sources of emotional injury and shame that can lead to adverse experiences. Further, effects of natural disasters and health crises such as COVID now call for our attention in ways that were unthinkable several decades ago. In order to create safety and to articulate the complexity of problems related to misunderstandings, microaggressions, and normative conflicts, improvement is still needed in regards to bullying, weapons in schools, and school shootings in numbers that suggest epidemic proportions.

In this article, we focus on Cohen and Rappaport's complementary papers on preventing school violence, which offer well-articulated perspectives. Cohen's work in the area of school climate has defined ways to identify evidence-based factors relevant to assessing the school capacity for creating positive expectations for student behavior and climate safety without over-reliance on punishment and building fortification. Rappaport's paper highlights the way a Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) of an individual student can be used to reduce the potential for administrative overreaction or student escalation of troubling behavior into frank violence.

Despite efforts to broaden the focus of safety provision beyond eliminating individual problematic students, interventions in school contexts have traditionally focused on helping the troubled child adapt to the school; less often do schools view the child's symptoms as reflecting troubles in the community, which in turn impact children. Even the "school climate" approach, which is innovative in viewing the child in light of social influences contributing to identity and affective co-regulation, may not sufficiently illuminate the interactions among neurobiology, teaching methods, family support/networks, organizational systems, and cultural/political disruptions.

Although both authors thoughtfully consider both individual and school-climate factors, a common feature in both papers is the replication of our cultural tendency to split the psychic domain from the social realm—or in this case the school community from the larger social surrounding—to favor approaches that emphasize individual psychopathology over ones that view the individual and community as inextricably linked and mutually constitutive (Layton, 2020). Quite typically models for assessment and intervention do just that, unconsciously favoring an individualistic framework for understanding symptoms as opposed to a dialectical, systemic approach that views symptoms as expressing the needs and troubles of both the individual and the community.

We propose that the dialectical relationship between individual and community itself is the nexus from which we can understand the potentiating impact of family and community distress on individual psychopathology in ways that could culminate in a violent incident. Individual students are nested in families, neighborhoods, and surrounding communities. We will explore how, in the context of Cohen's policy proposals and Rappaport's case study, a community psychoanalytic model provides an added perspective that potentially mobilizes different interventions and resources. These contemporary ideas have their roots in small projects and pilot studies and need further research to determine their efficacy and financial feasibility. They reflect the newest thinking in the area of community psychoanalytic approaches to violence prevention in school and community settings and may therefore point to directions for future program development and study.

3 | A COMMUNITY PSYCHOANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Using a community psychoanalytic framework,[1] we revisit the case study provided by Rappaport to illustrate an implementation of some of Cohen's policy proposals. Steven, an African-American seventh grader at Baker School, sent an email to a fellow student in which he commented, "The only way to get attention is to blow this school up. And, I could make a hit list." Of importance, the email exchange occurred soon after a teacher at a neighboring school had been murdered. Understandably alarmed, the school requested a BTA (Cornell, 2018) to evaluate the student's risk for violent behavior.

3.1 | BTA protocol

Rappaport's paper describes her administration of a BTA: she researched Steven's academic behavioral records, met with the staff and the student and the student's parents, assessed the staff-student conflict and the school climate, wrote a report, and shared recommendations with the principal and a small group of the staff. Her assessment included history-taking from the student's school career, noting his third grade onset of aggression correlated with pressure to read independently. The safety assessment evaluated the level of threat and whether he could return to school, and if so, what sort of safety plan might be needed. She also investigated factors such as mental illness, family dynamics, and school climate issues including racism, bullying, and sexism. Rappaport considered Steven's diagnoses and the findings of his Individualized Education Program and reported his risk factors as including late adoption (after a period of witnessing violent domestic abuse), being a black child in a white family, and diagnoses of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and learning disorders. She also identified outside-the-school resources for the child including tutoring and psychotherapy. She conducted meetings with staff who revealed that many teachers had little

confidence in the principal, who was considered unresponsive to their concerns. Multiple staff turnovers were also noted. Finally, she consulted with students and sent notes to other teachers, finding that some teachers were upset that Steven's parents had gone to the superintendent over the head of the principal.

In summary, Rappaport's comprehensive evaluation assumed the importance of history, context, family well-being, and disruptions in the school system. She noticed that the adoptive father had recently been diagnosed with cancer and understood that Steven's adoption issues would be significant to discerning the meaning of his behavior. She was sensitive to the potential effects of adoption on Steven.[2] While noting these complex challenges, Rappaport also highlighted his considerable strengths including his capacities for reflection, conversation, and trust in authority. She recognized as well the role of his racial difference, both in his adoptive family and in the school community.[3]

One of the many contributions of Rappaport's paper lies in its provision of an excellent model of how a threat assessment can be applied in a school setting. She offers a useful listing of contemporary technologies for remediating individual learning challenges in ways that are of benefit to classroom culture. Throughout her report, she shines a light on the messiness of actual applications of theory, which can contain unexpected or hidden dimensions.

Although Rappaport's evaluation was thorough and from all appearances ultimately quite helpful to the child and his family, the techniques used both reflect and constrain available approaches to assessing threat, perhaps even limiting the questions that can be asked. For instance: who is a threat (Steven, other students, teachers, family members, other community members?), in which ways, and to what degree? The BTA presumes that the individual student (with his/her particular psychiatric history and family dynamics) is the focus of threat intervention despite the fact that the family's perspective reflected concern about systemic influences on Steven's behavior, perhaps indicating overreaction and racism. Importantly, Steven was a frightened kid. The level of threat he experienced in school was inferred but not directly addressed.

At the community level, Steven's symptoms, both reflecting and refracting strains in the community, might tell a different story. The school's concern was stimulated by his online suggestion to his friend that he might get more attention if he threatened violence. Relevant developmental history included adoption at age three, after witnessing domestic violence, into a white family that included two non-adopted children and his adoptive father's recent diagnosis with cancer. In combination with his history of depression, pre-adoption abuse, and difficulty engaging in certain kinds of learning (particularly reading/writing), his communication evoked strong alarm. These combined with a dearth of individual and family relationships in the school community, due in part to the shame and isolation that can accompany families formed by adoption, children with disabilities, and family exclusion based on race or social status (Pivnick, 2018; Solomon, 2012).

When viewed from a community perspective, it is notable that Steven's parents felt isolated from community members who could have contributed a greater sense of bonding to and responsibility for this child and his conflicts. His dilemmas can in fact be viewed as shared community dilemmas insofar as they link issues such as race, adoption, health, and the partnership between the school and other institutions (like the neighboring school). The school's dilemma—Steven's evocation of violence—can be understood as an expression of his insecurity about whether and where he belongs. Viewed from a community psychoanalytic perspective, Steven is in need of "being adopted," not just by his nuclear family but also by other families, children, teachers, and community institutions. This child has already been born, but he needs to feel that his struggles are also being borne by others (Pivnick, 2013). Research shows that it is common for adoptees to have learning challenges and to enact surprising out-of-context behavior that is not understood because it relates to their pre-adoption experience (Pivnick, 2010, 2013).

If it were not assumed that Steven was the perpetrator, other questions could also be asked, such as how was the school's approach misattuned and possibly threatening to Steven? Studies have shown that Black boys tend to demonstrate insecure attachments to their schools, which are sources of shame and to be avoided at all costs (Vaughans & Spielberg, 2014). Moreover, a child with learning challenges, such as reading difficulties, who is met with teacher hostility can become fearful of texts that only unpredictably yield pleasurable mastery while at the same time stimulating punishment and shame anxiety (Boldt & Pivnick, 2013). The child's expectations, that a text cannot be mastered and that the teacher cannot be relied on for a sense of security, can create disorganized behavioral

responses indicative of "fright without solution" (Hesse & Main, 2000). To experience fear without recourse to an effective response can result in the activation of contradictory biological propensities—both to approach and to take flight—creating what has been called a disorganized attachment to texts themselves.

If our perspective shifts from assessing the individual to assessing systemic factors, we can learn different—more relational—lessons. It is our view that a system or school like Baker, fraught with high faculty turnover, faculty mistrust of administration, and conflicts between parents and the administration can also be in a situation of "fright without solution" for the faculty and parents. We offer the possibility that this system was indeed caught within such a dilemma in that the assessment models and tools were mainly calibrated to individuals and not to interactions throughout the system, and consequently, a relatively limited subset of stakeholders and community members were engaged in the attempts to address the problems Steven and his family presented.

We applaud Rappaport for going far beyond the usual sort of assessment, as evidenced by her extensive interviewing of many of the stakeholders to learn their views on what problems and potential interventions would matter most. We commend this approach even as we recommend that an even wider group of stakeholders be engaged in reflecting on her findings—for example, additional teachers in the school, other mental health professionals, and even other students and parents. Such an extension of reflective "thinking-together" might actually improve community functioning by engaging approaches that emphasize mutual aid, citizen responsibility, and implication in the well-being of children and families. From this perspective, Steven's comment can be understood as an expression of a stressor extant in the community itself. Indeed, Rappaport does refer to the "canary in the mine" perspective but does not develop it further. When the parents took it upon themselves to go to the superintendent, bypassing the principal, some teachers (and of course the principal) were upset and viewed the parents as "problems." It would be interesting to reframe their behavior as an example of citizen empowerment and the potential efficacy of a community-involvement approach to change-making.

Steven and his parents were both potentially at risk of becoming overly pathologized and scapegoated as news circulated about his threatening email and his parents' complaints about the school. Although the BTA kept the principal from over-reacting, we are concerned that a psychiatrically oriented perspective can stigmatize both child and parents. It is important to note that, arguably, the most impactful actions in producing change were Steven's communication with a friend at school (which called him to the attention of people who could help him with his anxiety) and his parents' reaching out for support from other parents. Ideally, the system could invite and accommodate less hierarchical and more non-linear communication pathways. For example, communications initiated by parents outside of the chain of command might be viewed as potentially empowering for citizens and students in that they can create non-routinized responses to troubled children in the system. This can strengthen a feeling of community responsibility and "implicatedness" (Rothberg, 2019) among community members.[4]

3.2 | School violence prevention policy

One important value of Cohen's paper lies in its comprehensive gathering and summarizing of data on well-recognized categories of school violence and the empirically supported interventions that have been most effective. Cohen offers a valuable and highly accessible resource for principals, administrators, superintendents, and policy makers as they devise programs and strategies to prevent violent disruptions and deaths.

Cohen's central assumption about school safety—common to most educators (including the authors) —seems to be that if administrators, parents, and teachers cared more, the problems of violence could be solved. Beneficially, this approach situates the relationship between school and community as an additional target of intervention for solving child, school and family problems. However, living in a culture of fear—as teachers, parents, and administrators clearly did—inevitably inhibits the sorts of expressions of shared vulnerability and caring associated with emotional safety.

3.3 | The community/cognition nexus

We agree with Cohen that social and emotional violence is as important as physical violence in undermining the kind of safety that fosters emotional growth and learning—as well as the contributions of strong interpersonal networks in the school/community—because violence diminishes mentalization, the ability to think, and the awareness that one is reflecting on one's own thought processes (Bragin, 2005, 2009). Mentalizing is severely impaired by experiencing traumatic levels of violence or anxiety, in part because in thinking about one's feelings one must re-experience the emotions that are associated with the event. Perry (1997, 2002, 2009) has documented the impacts of trauma on brain development and cognition, finding that children who have been victimized suffer developmental arrests. Bragin (2005; Bragin & Bragin, 2010) has developed school and community-based programs that remediate some of these cognitive delays and arrests through school and community-based programs.

Cohen's important observation—that both misunderstandings and misrecognitions of students' identities are highly salient to subsequent behavioral disorganization—offers support to emerging findings about the impacts of racism and ethnocentrism on neurobiology, cognition, and learning (Vaughans & Spielberg, 2014). Spielberg (2014) cites results from the Brotherman studies of black boys, which showed that Black boys, in seeking to protect themselves from feeling unwelcome or targeted, overwhelmingly develop insecure avoidant attachments to their schools *despite secure attachment to their families*. Unfortunately, "coercive insecure attachment behaviors, unconsciously designed to elicit help, negatively reinforce their situations" (p. 164). The Brotherman interviews revealed that Black boys "try not to know" that racial animus is involved in some of the hostility they encounter, which in turn affects their ability to concentrate and attend.

Studies have also shown that violence can impact brain development and interfere with the development of containment, communication, and coping skills (Bragin, 2005, 2009; Bragin & Bragin, 2010; Fonagy et al., 2017; Howell, 2020; Lyons-Ruth, 2002; Lyons-Ruth & Jacobovitz, 2008; Lyons-Ruth et al., 2003; Perry, 2002, 2009; Twemlow et al., 2001; Yasik et al., 2007). Because safety at a neurobiological level involves the activity of the vagal pathways—those stimulated by social engagement—fostering a responsive and empathic community is crucial to creating the conditions for optimal learning (Porges & Dana, 2018). For these reasons, and because violent trauma is often transmitted inter-generationally (Vaughans, 2017), we strongly support the development of intergenerational school–community partnerships. Recommendations growing out of the Brotherman study (Spielberg, 2014) indicate that Black parents need to overcome their own avoidance and negative expectations of the school so they can become strong advocates for their children, acting early and often to supervise, communicate, and troubleshoot their children's educations.

Bragin (2005, 2009; Bragin & Bragin, 2010) has designed several impressive programs that address children's difficulties with thinking, following exposure to chronic violence. All use teams of teachers and mental health professionals to help students tolerate and regulate their affects, symbolize their experience in words, work toward mentalizing, and, through those interventions usually done in small groups within a classroom, help the students succeed. Using school records, her 2005 study found that of the high school students, large percentages showed improved grades, improved behavior (as reflected in diminished referrals for detention or suspension), and evidenced improved attendance. Her 2010 program documented improvements in mentalization.

Following her success in the US, Bragin (2009) applied these ideas to a project in Sierra Leone, which went well beyond mentalization. Using principles derived in part from indigenous healing traditions and in part from Benjamin's (2017) conceptualization of the Moral Third, Bragin found that children who had been exposed to violence—whether as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators—and who were unable to speak about the horrors they experienced, expressed themselves in enacted violence by creating disruptions for the school community. She stresses that healing has to involve actual reparative activities not only in the school but also in the larger community. These interventions allowed students to engage with and enhance their own sense of goodness as well as the benign and containing aspects of community life, while at the same time to tolerate and speak of the hateful feelings they had lived through. Through co-created ceremonial activities, the children became able to share a mental space with their therapists, teachers,

and the wider community in which the formerly unthinkable could be experienced and transformed. Once recognized and "adopted" by the community in a way that emphasized mutuality, symbolic communication, and containment, the violence in their school communities diminished. These observations and outcomes are consistent with a community-based restorative justice perspective.

Twemlow and Cohen (2003) have noted that all violence prevention ultimately depends on personal relationships. To this point, we emphasize the significance of group membership in both small peer groups and the larger surrounding community group to produce feelings of identification with others, belonging, and responsibility for one another's welfare as well as the protection of democratic values, norms, and processes (Glassman, 2009). An important extension of these views is evident in restorative justice methods, such as "talking circles" among students, among parents, and among teachers and staff, in which representatives come together to search out a common ground, and creative solutions have been found to be effective in some school settings (Walsh, 2015). These approaches contribute to the empowerment of both students and community members and strengthen relationships throughout the community. By developing good relationships, we increase empathy, a sense of shared implication for one another's suffering (Layton, 2020; Rothberg, 2019), and a belief in citizen responsibility for solving community problems (McCluskey et al., 2013). Furthermore, community-based interventions can be powerful pedagogical tools.

4 | SUMMARY AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Rappaport and Cohen have indeed acknowledged some of the approaches we have suggested above. Even so, their recommendations rely heavily on teachers' capacities for absorbing and implementing new methods, thus adding to educators' already considerable burdens and stresses. We have seen how schools have to had to take on a larger share of providing a socio-emotional safety net as sources of mental health services, and other social supports have become more limited. We look toward community and systemic interventions to more widely spread the risks and burdens beyond the school—churches, youth programs, neighborhood organizations can all be involved. Because these approaches require considerable outreach effort and buy-in by all relevant stakeholders, they may be viewed as too expensive as well as circumnavigating and undermining school hierarchy. Community norms, existing institutional lines of authority, and economic realities press strongly toward maintaining the individualistic practices we have just critiqued.

Nevertheless, we hold that a child's welfare does not depend solely on one family and that the community shares the responsibility of raising that child. Until Steven communicated his distress to another child, interactions regarding his education and well-being were routed through the principal. After Steven signaled his distress to his friend online, his worried parents self-authorized by going straight to the superintendent and later to other parents to seek remedies and support. These actions reveal other points of leverage that can be positively mobilized in addition to well-worn institutional pathways. In this case, spontaneously emerging flows of interactions among kids and parents allowed for the creation of generative connections in the natural system.

Restorative justice interventions can provide a structure for these sorts of relational engagements, which have been shown to produce higher self-esteem as well as better mental health outcomes for community participants (Smokowski et al., 2018). These approaches have successfully been applied in school settings through the use of talking circles and community-based intergenerational art projects (Berman & Hassinger, 2012; Shein, 2021), which have in turn increased participants' ownership of the process, led to interruption of the school-to-prison pipeline, improvement of relationships, and prevention of destructive ways of engaging conflict, fostering meaningful dialog and increasing academic and social achievements (Ortega et al., 2016). Although their effectiveness in preventing bullying has been found to be equivocal, they have been found to reduce misbehavior and the need for disciplining (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Moreover, these interventions have enabled students, parents, and teachers to find ways of giving voice to community concerns while working together to strengthen communication and esprit du corps (Shein, 2021). In addition to teaching the skills of empathy, these programs promote prosocial values essential

to democratic citizenship (Cohen et al., 2019) while avoiding the categorization of offenders and creating pride in collaboration (Kaldis & Abramiuk, 2016).

Another advantage of restorative justice interventions is that they may compensate for the resistance often generated when social policy principles are imposed from above, since derailment is an all too familiar consequence of mandated requirements (Twemlow & Cohen, 2003). Furthermore, they can prevent the distortions and defensiveness in communication and repetitive microaggressions caused by racism in organizations and ensure that proposals for change will often be diverted into task forces where they languish (Davids, 2011).

Increasingly, empirical research (i.e., Kliman, 2011) demonstrated that many impacts of policy proposals are derived through cycles of action and reflection among all levels of community and stakeholders. For example, several middle and high schools have implemented partnerships among administrators, teachers, educational therapists, and families for teaching basic life skills and clearing up the residuals of misunderstandings and distorted, unrealistic expectations among participants. Programs utilizing Reflective Network Therapy, rely on multiple dyadic interactions, happening in real time, crossing all levels of the system, thus helping to make a significant change throughout the community (Ansari & Kliman, 2015; Kliman, 2011). Outcome research has shown that the proximity afforded by dyadic communication shifts negative attitudes toward the positive (Kliman, 2011). Studies of preschools and elementary schools that employed this method documented an increase in empathy and collaboration and a decrease in bullying. A follow-up pilot study for feasibility in a middle and high school for students with learning challenges, emphasized provision of Life Skills Classes instead of dyadic in-class interventions but implemented intensive communication among students, teachers, and administrators so that misunderstandings were easily rectified.

> Knowing the school system and its relationship to the community is the overarching plan for Reflective Network Schools. .... As the child learns to verbalize, relate to others, utilize and experience his peers, classroom therapist, parents, and teacher, he can be in mainstream classrooms again. In applying Reflective Network Therapy, the reflective processes among peers, teachers, and parents are powerful tools for interdisciplinary teams working synergistically. It works not only for those children who struggle with a multitude of cognitive and socio-emotional deficits, but also works with adults who work closely with them. (p. 725).

5 | CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have focused on several limitations of approaching school violence via assessing and treating individual psychopathology, even when school climate and family issues are included in the evaluation process. BTAs are a crucial aspect of school-climate-sensitive interventions since they take into account school-based community factors. Still, moving forward, we advocate for taking an even broader perspective, one more inclusive of Restorative Justice interventions that have been found to be highly effective at reducing the punitive responses that often result in the shuttling of students into a pipeline toward incarceration. Such approaches can encourage the development and implementation of groups, networks, and intergenerational engagements that strengthen the community as a whole.

The sorts of community engagements described above make powerful contributions to improving not only school climate but also the psychosocial development of the students and community participants. Psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1964, p. 54) teaches us that "group mental life is essential to the full life of the individual, quite apart from any temporary or specific need, and that the satisfaction of that need has to be sought out through membership in a group." Since social relationships form a receptive portal for facts, unless people share a relational context, they often insulate their truths from one another (Livingston, 2021). Rather than "getting tough" or fortifying the school walls, efforts to prevent school violence may benefit from opening pathways between the school and community so spaces can emerge for new forms of social engagements and civic responsibility.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest or funding for this research.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Alpert et al. (2003) and Pynoos et al. (2004) for expanded discussions of a community psychoanalytic framework and its use in school settings.

[2] As an adoptee, he was very likely vulnerable to separation distress and some developmental delays in executive functioning (Pivnick, 2010). In addition, adoptees can enact unformulated pre-adoption trauma (Pivnick, 2013).

[3] As a Black boy, Steven is at high risk for entering the "school to prison pipeline" should he be suspended from school (Vaughans & Spielberg, 2014; Morgan et al., 2014. *The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System*).

[4] For additional information on systems approaches to conflict resolution and formation of school-community partnerships, these resources may be useful: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1046&context=pcs https://www.communityschools.org/default.aspx https://www.nccs.org.

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