



SAN JOSÉ STATE
UNIVERSITY



Lessons learned from a civic-partnered participatory action research study with first responders

Miranda Worthen, PhD and Soma de Bourbon, PhD





Background Context

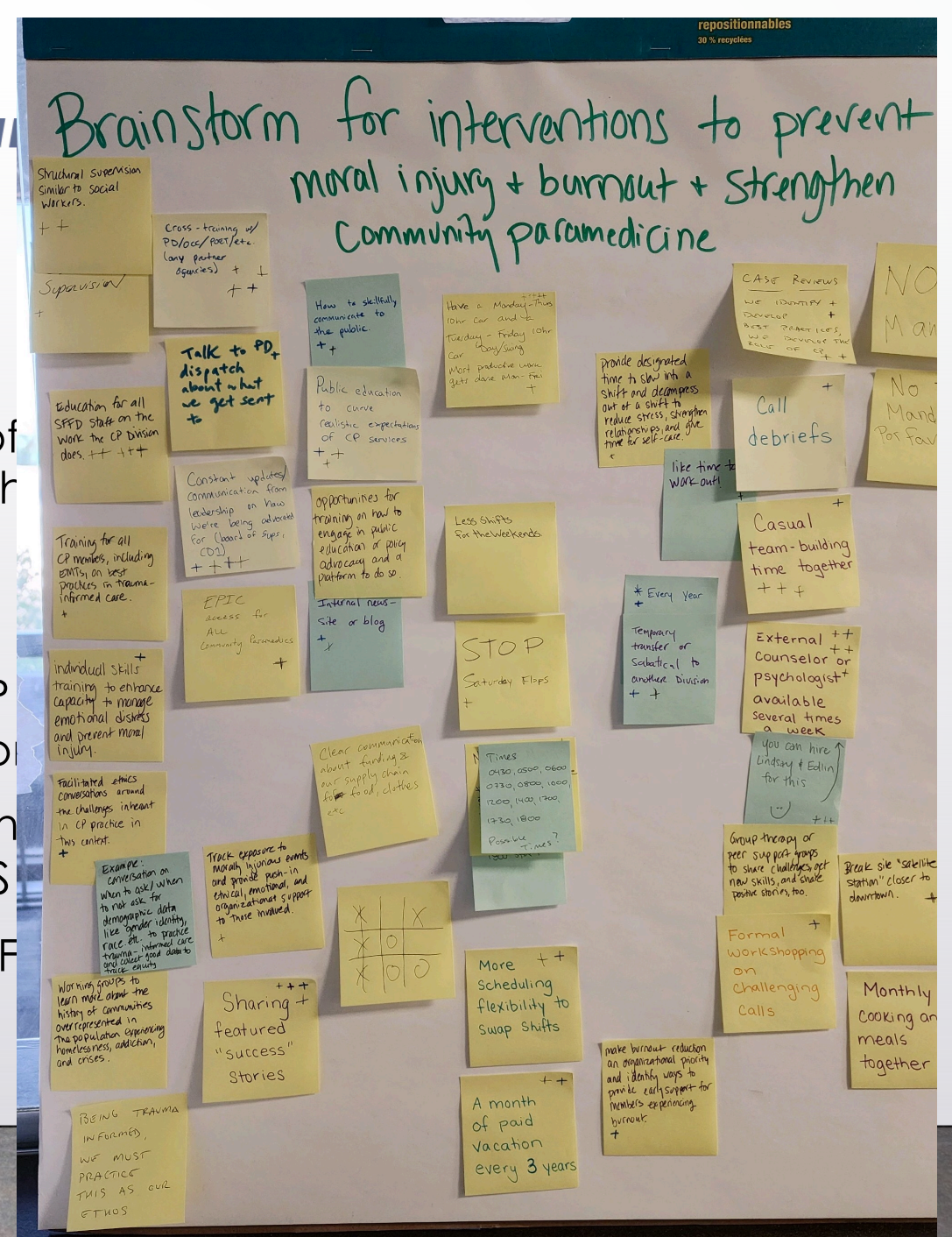
- An estimated 20% of police calls in the U.S. involve a person experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis
- Communities across the U.S. have recognized the need to shift responsibility away from police to alternative first responders.
- These programs also aim to increase connection to resources for people experiencing homelessness, addiction, and/or mental illness, thus reducing strain on emergency services, easing crowded hospitals, and saving cities money.




Our Partnership

- Began in Summer 2021 between Chief of CP and Miranda
- In Fall 2021, Miranda brought students in to discuss what is going on
- Soma & Miranda were already collaborating on a different project and began working together on this one in Spring 2022 with a broader group of members of the CP division leadership
- In Summer 2022, we were awarded a Planning Grant from the NSF Civic Innovation Challenge

- During the planning grant, we held a series of and with peer support specialists working with programs
- We met weekly with CP leadership
- In January 2023, we reported back to the CP and shifted to co-developing intervention co
- In Summer 2023, we obtained a grant from th a conference focused on data equity in EMS
- In Fall 2023, we obtained a full grant from NSF





Objective 1: Prevent and treat moral distress and injury in CP members

Research Questions:

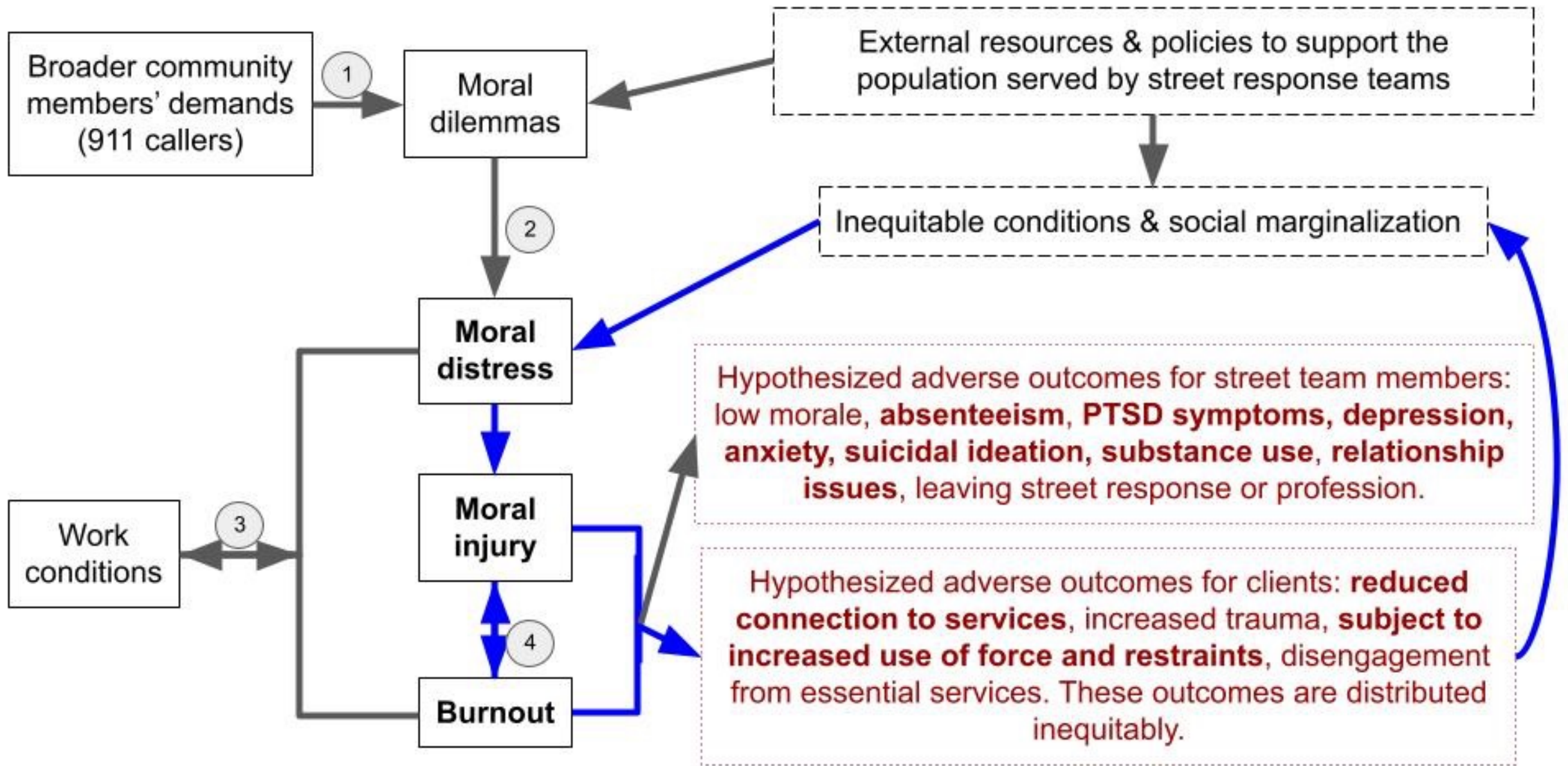
- What is the scope and magnitude of moral distress and injury in a sample of EMS and CP members?
- What psychosocial and functioning outcomes are associated with moral distress and injury in EMS and CP members?
- What intervention strategies prevent moral distress and injury and mitigate their negative impacts among community paramedics?



Objective 2: Strengthen equity capacity of community paramedicine

Research Questions:

- Does a group-based intervention on health equity improve community paramedics' knowledge and comfort with diverse clients and lead to better relationships with clients?
- What are best practices for field-based demographic data collection and data sharing agreements to backfill demographic data on clients to understand, monitor, evaluate and improve equity in community paramedicine?



Moral Injury Interventions	Strategy & Impact
Internal and external education campaign	Improve interactions between community and CP members; improve understanding of referral options; promote understanding of Street Response Programs; reduce moral distress; increase community members' knowledge. (Pathways #1 & 3)
Equity & Ethics Peer Conversations	Increase awareness and understanding of equity; increase resilience; promote connection within the workplace; reduce moral distress, moral injury and burnout; cultivate deeper understanding of clients. (Pathways #2, 3 & 4)
Shift meals	Promote camaraderie; reduce moral distress and burnout; institutionalize workplace culture changes. (Pathways #3 & 4)
RAMS Advisory Board	Deepen understanding of role of peer specialists in street based services; increase resilience and promote camaraderie; reduce moral distress, moral injury and burnout. (Pathways #2, 3, & 4)
Moral Injury Survey	Increase understanding of exposure to potentially morally injurious events, moral injury symptoms and burnout among San Francisco Fire Department members (Pathway #3)

Data Equity Interventions	Strategy & Impact
ASTRID: All Street Outreach Integrated Datasets	Promote data integration between SFFD CP and other agencies serving SF unhoused population. Collaborate with Mayor’s Office of Innovation to infuse project with equity lens.
California EMS Data Equity Conference	Host conference bringing together California EMS Agencies and Authorities to deepen understanding of equity in EMS and CP practice.
California EMS Data Equity Learning Community	Facilitate a year-long learning community to identify and share best practices and support adoption of strategies to understand, monitor, evaluate, and improve equity.



Some Challenges

- Fit of CBPR/PAR methodology with hierarchically structured organization and a grant mechanism that attempts to be community-centered but is from a very traditional academic funder
- Dynamic context – shifts based on supreme court decisions, leadership changes, the last emergency and more
- High budget and fast timeline of NSF grant meant we took on a huge scope of work, when a more focused scope and longer timeline might be more appropriate for this type of transformative work
- Environment is high stress and there is a high level of exposure to potentially morally injurious and traumatizing events
- Deeper and more structurally challenging aspects of the equity work will likely not continue within the organization



Successes

- Really well received interventions
 - Came from the members and the members like them and they seem to work
 - Many (mostly moral injury) will be sustained with internal agency funding
- Connections made across the state to support equity and moral injury focused work
- Institutional change through leadership transitions
- Diffusion of ideas through meetings, conferences, and public facing dissemination and trade magazines