

Survivor Informed Sex Trafficking Research: African American Girls & Women

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Defining Sex Trafficking

- Sex trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of sexual exploitation
- A human rights violation and criminal act, does not have to include crossing state or national lines and includes manipulation and domination by traffickers who may be strangers, family members, peers, romantic partners, or persons posing as potential employers (Hardy, Compton, & McPhatter, 2013; Reid, 2012; Bryant-Davis & Tillman, 2008)

Medical Model Research Questions

- Risk Factors
 - Protective Factors
 - Methods of Recruitment
 - Effects
 - Treatment
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- Locates problem in the survivor (girls and women)

Dynamics of Sex Trafficking

- May use physical force such as beatings or the creation of drug dependence, as well as manipulation by taking advantage of the victim's need for acceptance, love, and safety (Reid, 2012; Lloyd, 2011). Continued exploitation may also involve shame, humiliation, seduction, deception, betrayal, pressure for loyalty, and fear (Hardy, Compton, & McPhatter, 2013).

Risk Factors

(Andretta, Woodland, Watkins, & Barnes, 2016; Abas, Ostrovschi, Prince, Gorceag, Trigub, & Oram, 2013)

- Women and girls
- Impoverished persons
- Youth who are homeless, runaways, kidnapped, or living in foster care
- Persons who have prior trauma histories
- Persons in a high crime area and persons who are gang affiliated
- Gays and lesbians, transgendered persons
- Ethnically marginalized persons including African Americans

Mental Health Consequences

- Anxiety disorders, depression, suicidality, addiction, dissociation, distrust, disconnection, trauma bond with trafficker, and complex trauma (Andretta, Woodland, Watkins, & Barnes, 2016).

African American Survivors of Sex Trafficking

- African American youth are at increased risk for domestic minor sex trafficking, with being female, living in an urban area, and experiencing abuse prior to trafficking all being factors that are associated with risk for sex trafficking (Havlicek, 2016). Of the over 300,000 minors in the U.S. who are victims of domestic sex trafficking, it is estimated that 43% are African American girls (Harrell, 2016).

African American Survivor Informed Womanist Research (Bryant-Davis & Comas-Diaz, 2016)

- Centers problem in systems and societal factors
- Recognizes strengths and holistic lives of survivors
- Acknowledges issue is interdisciplinary and requires an interdisciplinary response
- Pursues research that survivor is interested in and will benefit from
- Disseminates findings in community not just academy

Shift Your Frame

Asking New Questions
Will Give New Answers

Research Questions About the Survivor

- Widen the frame: Who we are besides what was done to us
- Naming our strengths: The ones we see and the ones we don't see
- Addressing unspoken complexity:
 - Survivor and Recruiter
 - Powerless and powerful (status as dancer, porn star, quick money)
 - Mixed feelings (self, family, trafficker, trafficking)
- Interventions that work beyond symptom cessation:
 - Career
 - Relationships/Love Life

Widen Frame: What About the Trafficker?

- Did he care? Did/does he love me?
- Why did he pick me?
- What would happen if I went back to him?
- What interventions would change him?

Widen Frame: Family Dynamics

- Do they care? Do they love me?
- Why didn't they come for me?
- What would happen if I went home?
- Where would I be if I had a different family?
- What interventions would change them?

Widen Frame: Society

- What can you do to change how society sees us?
- What interventions could change how police perceive and treat us?
- What interventions could improve how probation officers see us?
- What interventions could improve how employers see us?
- What interventions could improve how the media portrays us?
- What policies will have an actual effect on the violence, racism, sexual harassment, trauma that cause us to live in a war zone daily?

Womanist Psychology Approaches to Care

- Centers the experiences of African American girls and women
- Attends to intersectional identity
- Celebrates and incorporates cultural strengths, empowerment, safety, and a sense of inclusion/efficacy/agency
- Acknowledges and addresses multiple forms of oppression
- Integration of spirituality, sexuality, and artistry
- Values community support, sisterhood, mutuality
- Goes beyond coping to resistance of internalized and external oppression (Bryant-Davis & Comas Diaz, 2016)

Wrap Around Service Evaluation

- Wrap around services including housing, legal assistance, medical care, educational support, and mental health services are often warranted (Fong & Cardoso, 2010)
- Address case management, educational, vocational, mental health services, addiction services, and medical needs (Hardy, Compton, and McPhatter, 2013).
- Do not just examine what is offered but the spirit in which it is offered. Compassionate, respectful, culturally congruent care is needed

Empowerment

- Treatment goals are not limited to processing the trauma but also include coping with psychosocial stressors, reintegration with social networks, problem solving, life skills, decision making, health management, and evaluating choices related to relational, educational, and vocational options.
- Media literacy with the aim of promoting positive images for the self, sexuality, and relationships (Harris, Irving, and Krumer, 2012)
- Providing supportive police officers, food, clothing, housing, medical and mental health care, drug detox services, and a survivor mentor (Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickie, Loubert, & Tutelman, 2014).

Methods: Shift the Frame

- Build Rapport - Not launching into intrusive questions without relationship
- Include in our questions and interventions:
 - Community/Social Support
 - Spirituality
 - Activism/Resistance - Ways for them to be included and honored
 - Humor
 - Culturally matched role models
 - Expressive Arts

African American Survivor Speaks:
“We are whole women who want to be fully seen
and heard and healed.”

Womanist Survivor Informed Research
Does Not Settle for Dissecting
But Uncovers Paths to Empower Survivors and Transform Society
So They Can Rise