
Prevalence and Correlates of Sex Trafficking among Homeless and Runaway Youths Presenting for Shelter Services

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The study reported in this article assessed prevalence and demographic correlates of sex trafficking in a purposive sample of 270 young people experiencing homelessness in three U.S. cities (Philadelphia; Phoenix; and Washington, DC) and at five host agencies. Participants were 57% male, 38% female, 4% transgender, and 1% other. The average age of participants was 20.7 years ($SD = 2.0$ years). The majority of the participants were African American (56%), followed by white (14%) and multiracial (14%). The Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure detected that nearly one in five young people were victims of sex trafficking, either due to force, fraud, or coercion (FFC); age; or both. Those who were sex trafficked were more likely than those who were not sex trafficked to be female, sexual minorities, or Latino and to have either dropped out of high school or obtained a GED. Differences between being trafficked due to FFC and being trafficked due to age were also investigated. Findings support the need for development of targeted prevention and intervention efforts for young people experiencing homelessness that address sex trafficking victimization and related risk factors.

KEY WORDS: *commercial sex; homeless youths; human trafficking; sex trafficking; shelter services*

According to the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(2016\)](#), sexual exploitation is the most commonly identified form of human trafficking, ahead of forced labor. Numbers released by the National Human Trafficking Resource Center suggest this also is true in the United States, where more than 5,500 cases of sex trafficking were reported in 2016 ([National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2017](#)). In the United States, runaway and homeless youths and children leaving foster care are especially vulnerable to being trafficked ([Fong & Cardoso, 2010](#)). Yet, due to the hidden nature of the crime and despite numerous attempts to estimate the annual number of sex trafficking victims in the United States, the exact number is currently unknown ([U.S. Department of Justice, 2012](#)). Early research estimated that between 244,000 and 325,000 children are at risk of domestic sex trafficking each year ([Estes & Weiner, 2002](#)). Later reports estimated that about two in five human trafficking offenses reported to federally funded task forces from 2008 to 2010 in the United States involved sex trafficking of children and youths ([Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011](#)). However, due to a dearth of empirical research on

domestic minor trafficking, the lack of the use of sound research methods, and the way in which the crime can be concealed, reliable prevalence estimates of sex trafficking of children and youths in the United States remain elusive ([Cole & Sprang, 2015](#); [Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2016](#)).

The federal [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 \(TVPA\)](#) defines *severe forms of trafficking* in people as “a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or when the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (p. 8). However, identifying victims and thus defining the scope of sexual exploitation is difficult. Many youths are vulnerable and marginalized young people who are transient, not firmly connected to social services, and may be reluctant to disclose their experiences ([Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013](#)). As such, homelessness has been identified as an important and malleable risk factor among young people who are victims of sex trafficking. For example, [Gibbs, Walters, Lutnick, Miller, and Kluckman \(2015\)](#), in a study of services to domestic minor victims of sex trafficking, found a common pattern of homeless young people exchanging sex to meet survival needs. Vulnerable young people will often exchange

sex solely to access housing or food (Murphy, 2017).

Prior scholarly work has identified problems with early estimates of sex trafficking in the United States due to unreliable methods (Fedina et al., 2016). Misidentification and definitional ambiguity between commercial sexual exploitation of children and sex trafficking of a minor have also been identified as barriers to ascertaining reliable estimates of the problem (Cole & Sprang, 2015; Jordan, Patel, & Rapp, 2013). As Schwartz (2009) pointed out, within the United States the existence of sex trafficking is well established but not well understood. Estimates of young people who are sex trafficked vary widely, reflecting the data source, definitions, and methodologies used (Gibbs et al., 2015). This leaves policymakers and practitioners without the tools they need to develop policy, allocate funding, design programs that prevent vulnerable youths from being trafficked, and help those who have already been victimized.

The present study addressed this gap by exploring the relationship between homelessness and sex trafficking, guided by the following research question: What are prevalence estimates and demographic correlates of sex trafficking among a sample of young people experiencing homelessness? It extends our understanding of the vulnerability and marginalization experienced by these young people and their need to turn to the street economy for survival. Learning to identify victims is the first step in preventing domestic minor sex trafficking and assisting survivors.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

A handful of both peer-reviewed and gray literature studies provide glimpses into both the challenges of assessing domestic sex trafficking in the United States and the range in estimates that this work offers. We identified nine studies from the literature offering prevalence estimates of domestic sex trafficking in the United States, with only two coming from the peer-review literature, which we review first.

Gibbs and colleagues (2015) interviewed 201 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 years who were receiving services for domestic minor human trafficking in San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City. They found that 55% ($n = 111$) of the sample were victims of sex trafficking, although they did not distinguish between victims who were

trafficked due to force, fraud, or coercion (FFC) and those trafficked due to age. Fedina and colleagues (2016) interviewed a sample of 273 individuals age 16 or older currently involved in the commercial sex industry in five cities in one Midwest state; 48% ($n = 115$) of the sample were identified as current or former domestic minor sex trafficking victims, per the definition in the TVPA. Victims were more likely to be members of racial or ethnic minority groups compared with nontrafficked adults engaged in the commercial sex industry.

The gray literature studies all come from Covenant House International and used the same measure of human trafficking (Human Trafficking Interview and Assessment Measure [HTIAM-10]) (Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013) originally developed and validated by Covenant House New York City with partners from Fordham University. The first study, conducted in 2013 in New York City (Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013), surveyed 174 young people between 18 and 23 years old who presented for services at the crisis center, drop-in program, or outreach van. They were 70% female, 28% male, and 2% transgender. Twelve percent of the sample were identified as current or former domestic sex trafficking victims, with half reporting victimization due to FFC and the rest trafficked due to trading sex for something of value while under the age of 18.

Murphy, Taylor, and Bolden (2015) replicated this work in New Orleans and surveyed 99 homeless and runaway clients receiving services at Covenant House New Orleans. Fourteen percent reported an experience that would be classified as human trafficking, including 11% who identified as sex trafficking victims: 8% were involved through FFC regardless of age, and 3% traded a sex act for something of value while under the age of 18.

Murphy (2017) replicated the 2013 Covenant House New York City in 10 U.S. and Canadian cities, interviewing 641 homeless and runaway youths seeking services at Covenant House programs. Participants ranged from 17 to 25 years old; 60% were cisgender male, 38% cisgender female, and 2% transgender. Nineteen percent of the sample were victimized by some form of human trafficking, with 14% reporting being trafficked for sex. Eight percent of the total sample (58% of those trafficked) reported victimization due to FFC regardless of age; 6% reported trafficking solely due to trading a sex act for something of value while under the age of 18 (42% of those trafficked).

Chisolm-Straker, Einbond, Sze, and White (2017) interviewed 295 young people seeking services at Covenant House New Jersey in Atlantic City, Elizabeth, and Newark. Participants ranged from 18 to 22 years old and were mostly black (65%). They were 50% cisgender female, 48% cisgender male, and 2% transgender/gender nonconforming. Fourteen percent were sexual minority youths (lesbian/gay/bisexual/pansexual/questioning, or other nonheterosexual sexualities). Nine percent of the sample reported being sex or labor trafficked ($n = 27$). Of those, 63% were sex trafficked ($n = 17$, or 6% of the total study population).

The current study builds on the existing research describing the prevalence of domestic sex trafficking of young people in the United States. Using the HTIAM-10, we assessed estimates and correlates of sex trafficking in a sample of young people experiencing homelessness in three U.S. cities. Second, we distinguished between young people who met the definition of sex trafficking due to FFC and those who met the definition due to age. Thus, this research contributes to the knowledge base on sex trafficking of marginalized and vulnerable young people and offers insight into potential ways to tailor specialized interventions for this high-risk population.

METHOD

Design and Overview

For this cross-sectional study of sex-trafficked young people seeking shelter services, researchers from Philadelphia secured participation from host agencies providing care to young people experiencing homelessness. Agencies were selected based on their existing relationships with researchers and their commitment to house the study. The participating agencies were located in Philadelphia; Washington, DC; and Phoenix and consisted of multiservice, non-profit organizations that offer homeless, runaway, and at-risk young people a comprehensive array of services including emergency or crisis shelter, transitional housing programs, case management, physical and mental health services, educational support, and career and life-skills programming.

Sampling and Recruitment Procedures

A nonprobability, purposive, maximum variation sampling procedure was used for this study. Such sampling procedures are considered advantageous for populations with characteristics that are difficult

to locate or for whom a sampling frame is not available (Daniel, 2012), such as marginalized and vulnerable young people involved in sex trafficking. Maximum variation sampling enabled us to collect data from a wide range of participants with different viewpoints regarding sexual exploitation and sex trafficking experiences. A total of 270 young people receiving homeless services were interviewed across the three cities (Philadelphia [$n = 100$]; Washington, DC [$n = 70$]; Phoenix [$n = 100$]).

Researchers provided training to shelter and program site staff on the study approach and recruitment. A study liaison was assigned at each location to screen for eligibility to participate in the study and schedule youths for interviews. All English-speaking youths 18 years of age and older, experiencing homelessness, and receiving services at the program site were eligible and invited to participate. Children under age 18 were excluded as there was no parent or legal guardian to provide consent to participate in the study.

Program staff was provided with a script to inform clients of the opportunity to participate in a study about their experiences that led them to seek services. Interviews in Philadelphia took place during once-weekly scheduled research days over a six-month period (September 2016 to February 2017). Interviews in DC and Phoenix occurred during scheduled multiday visits ranging from two to six consecutive research days between September 2016 and March 2017. Once consent forms were completed, the participants were formally enrolled in the study and the interview began. Participants were given a \$10 gift card following completion of the interview.

Data Collection and Measures

All interview sessions occurred in a private room at the shelter or program, away from caseworkers and staff offices, with only the researcher and the participant present, and were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. A paper version of the interview protocol (described later) was also filled out for each participant. Interview length varied from 20 minutes to two hours, depending on the circumstances of the participant. One MSW-level researcher conducted all interviews with the participants.

The HTIAM-10, previously validated by Fordham University in New York City, was used for the semistructured interviews (Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013). The tool's convergent and construct validity

with respect to revealing sex trafficking are acceptable (personal communication with S. Vuotto, assistant professor of psychology, College of Mount St. Vincent, Riverdale, CA, March 1, 2018). To validate the HTIAM-10, Fordham University researchers compared participant scores generated by the measure with the findings of the legal interviews and information from the private agency's intake survey. These data were triangulated to determine whether the screening measure was effectively and accurately detecting trafficking victimization. In assessing the degree to which scores on the HTIAM-10 correlated with other measures of the same construct (for example, the legal interview and intake data), developers of the HTIAM-10 were able to establish convergent validity. Preliminary data analyses indicated a 14% discrepancy rate, where the HTIAM-10 and legal interview determinations were discrepant on just four of 28 cases that warranted both the administration of the HTIAM-10 and the legal interview. Fordham researchers also used the known-groups method on a convenience sample of known identified victims ($N = 12$) and known non-victims ($N = 19$) of human trafficking. This method provides information regarding the construct validity of the measure. If the measure is valid, it should discriminate across two groups that are theoretically expected to be different on the measured construct (Hattie & Cooksey, 1984). Using the a priori known-groups method and based on group sample size, means, and standard deviations, differences between the known-victims and known-non-victims groups were tested for significance using analysis of variance testing. As hypothesized, there was a statistically significant difference between group means [$F(1, 16) = 19.55, p < .01$] indicating adequate construct validity.

Since original development by Fordham University, the HTIAM-10 has been used in trafficking studies led by Loyola University New Orleans. The tool is designed to retrospectively detect and identify victims of human trafficking, including sex trafficking, by qualitatively evoking stories regarding their sexual exploitation experiences that would indicate whether they had been victims of trafficking. Based on participants' responses to a series of questions pertaining to sexual exploitation and the interviewer's professional judgment about the likelihood that the responses indicate evidence of each item, sex trafficking is determined to have taken place. For example, the first question pertaining to

sexual exploitation states, "Sometimes young people who are homeless or who are having difficulties with their families have very few options to survive or fulfill their basic needs, such as food and shelter. Sometimes they are exploited or feel the need to use their sexuality to help them survive. Have you ever received anything of value, such as money, a place to stay, food, drugs, gifts, or favors, in exchange for your performing a sexual activity?" Participants were interviewed in a one-on-one, face-to-face format, allowing for follow-up and probing by the interviewer.

Sex Trafficking. The HTIAM-10 defines *sex trafficking* as a commercial sex act induced by FFC, or when a person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age. This definition is consistent with the TVPA, which defines *commercial sex act* as any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Demographics. The HTIAM-10 also collects data on demographics. Current age was a continuous variable measured in years. Gender was measured as male, female, transgender, or other. Race and ethnicity were measured in a single categorical variable, allowing for answers of white, black, Latino, American Indian or Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian, multiracial, other, and refused to answer. Highest level of education was measured as a categorical variable and assigned one of six values—high school diploma received; some college, GED received, still attending high school, dropped out of high school, or received college degree. U.S. citizenship was a binary variable coded as either yes or no. Parenting status was a categorical variable with five values—no, yes, pregnant or expecting, don't know, and refused to answer.

Human Subjects Protections

Human subjects research approval was received by the research team's university. Given the nature of the information shared by the young people, the research team also obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, which protected the identity of research participants, such as through disclosure of information in legal proceedings.

Data Analysis

Each completed HTIAM-10 interview protocol was entered into SPSS by a trained advanced-year MSW student. When needed, the student consulted the printed transcripts of interviews. Following

entry into SPSS, data were analyzed through means and frequencies. Where comparing groups, for example, of characteristics of those who were victims of sex trafficking with those who were not, bivariate tests were used: *t* tests for continuous variables and chi-square and Fisher's exact tests for categorical data.

RESULTS

The sample's demographic characteristics ($N = 270$) are presented in Table 1. Participants were 57% male, 38% female, 4% transgender, and 1% other. The majority of participants reported being straight (78%), followed by 10% bisexual, 6% gay, and 4% pansexual (3% refused to answer). Almost 40% reported receiving their high school diploma, 25% reported dropping

out of high school, 19% reported completing some college, 13% reported still being in high school, and 3% reported receiving their GED. All participants spoke English as their primary language, and nearly all participants reported being U.S. citizens. The average age of participants at time of interview was 20.7 years ($SD = 2.0$ years). The majority of the participants were African American (57%), followed by white (14%) and multiracial (14%).

Seventeen percent ($n = 45$) of the 270 youths experiencing homelessness reported that they were victims of sex trafficking. These youths were different from the full sample. They were more likely to be female or transgender [$\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 24.7, p < .01$], Latino, and less likely to be African American

Table 1: Demographics of Study Sample

| Demographic Characteristic | Full Sample | | Sex Trafficked | |
|---|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | <i>N</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| Gender** | | | | |
| Male | 155 | 57 | 14 | 31 |
| Female | 103 | 38 | 25 | 56 |
| Transgender | 10 | 4 | 6 | 13 |
| Other | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Race* | | | | |
| White | 38 | 14 | 5 | 11 |
| Black or African American | 153 | 57 | 20 | 44 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 11 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Latino | 23 | 9 | 9 | 20 |
| Multiracial | 36 | 13 | 7 | 16 |
| Other | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Refused to answer | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Highest level of education** | | | | |
| Some high school/still attending | 35 | 13 | 7 | 16 |
| Some high school/dropped out | 67 | 25 | 20 | 44 |
| GED received | 8 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| High school diploma received | 106 | 39 | 10 | 22 |
| Some college | 51 | 19 | 4 | 9 |
| College degree received | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| U.S. citizen | | | | |
| Yes | 260 | 96 | 44 | 98 |
| No | 10 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| Sexual orientation** | | | | |
| Heterosexual/straight | 210 | 78 | 27 | 60 |
| Homosexual/gay/lesbian | 15 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Bisexual | 26 | 10 | 12 | 27 |
| Pansexual | 11 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Refused to answer | 8 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| | Average | SD | Average | SD |
| Age | 20.7 | 2 | 20.13 | 2.1 |

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

$[\chi^2(7, N = 270) = 14.7, p = .04]$. They were also less likely to be straight or gay and more likely to be bisexual $[\chi^2(3, N = 270) = 19.6, p < .01]$.

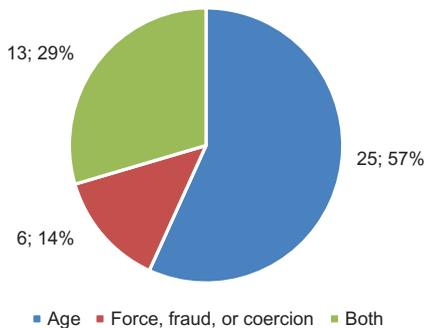
Level of education was also associated with being sex trafficked. Forty-four percent of trafficked youths had dropped out of high school and only 9% completed at least some college, compared with 19% of the full sample $[\chi^2(5, N = 270) = 18.6, p < .01]$. Those who received a GED were at the greatest risk of sex trafficking: of the eight who received a GED, three (38%) were trafficked, followed by those who dropped out of high school (30%).

It is also valuable to understand the differences in the two ways in which participants are categorized as having been victims of sex trafficking. As seen in Figure 1, 57% of the 44 were identified as sex trafficking victims based entirely on age, meaning that while victims could not legally consent to sexual activity because they were less than 18 years old, they did not engage in sex as a result of FFC. The categorization of sex trafficking (age versus FFC) was strongly correlated with demographic and background characteristics. Victims of FFC were more than twice as likely to be female than those who were trafficked based on age (79% versus 36%), although the average age at which youths were first sexually exploited was the same for men and women. Those who were victims of sex trafficking due to FFC were also 20% more likely to have dropped out of high school (58% versus 38%) and one-third more likely to be either bisexual or pansexual (48% versus 34%).

DISCUSSION

Nearly 300 youths experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia; Phoenix; and Washington, DC, and presenting for services were interviewed to learn

Figure 1: Sex Trafficking Category



about the prevalence and correlates of domestic sex trafficking. We found that 17% ($n = 45$) of participants reported that they were victims of domestic sex trafficking. This percentage is slightly higher than in previous studies conducted with youths presenting for services at other shelters throughout the United States. For example, the Covenant House New York City study found that 12% of their sample experienced some form of trafficking victimization consistent with the definition under federal law (Bigelsen & Vuotto, 2013). The Covenant House New Orleans study found that 11% of young people had been trafficked by federal legal definitions (Murphy et al., 2015). Murphy's (2017) 10-city study of Covenant House locations found 14% reporting being trafficked for sex. The Covenant House New Jersey study found that only 6% of study participants were sex trafficked. However, this study was conducted internally as part of the agency's intake process and not by external researchers. This methodological difference could account for the lower prevalence estimate. It is also possible that the three cities included in the present study simply have higher prevalence of domestic sex trafficking than the other similar shelter-based studies reviewed.

Other studies conducted with participants *not* currently experiencing homelessness and presenting for shelter services found higher prevalence of domestic sex trafficking in their study samples (for example, Fedina et al., 2016; Gibbs et al., 2015). Two likely reasons for this discrepancy are that (1) our sample was of youths experiencing homelessness and (2) other studies' samples were of people engaged in commercial sex. Gibbs et al. (2015) sampled young people primarily seeking services for sex trafficking victimization. Fedina et al. (2016) recruited participants from the community. Neither of these two studies sampled young people currently experiencing homelessness and presenting for shelter services.

Our study is among the first to examine demographic correlates of sex trafficking. Only one other study that we know of investigated similar youths. In their study, Fedina et al. (2016) found that victims of sex trafficking were more likely to be a racial or ethnic minority compared with nontrafficked adults engaged in the commercial sex industry. Our study compared young people who were sex trafficked and seeking shelter services with nontrafficked young people seeking shelter services. We found

that those who were sex trafficked were more likely to be female or transgender, sexual minorities, or Latino and to have either dropped out of high school or obtained a GED. Perceived vulnerability, lack of resources or financial support, and isolation all appear to increase the risk of being sex trafficked. For example, girls may be particularly vulnerable to being groomed by pimps and can often view their traffickers as boyfriends instead of predators. Sexual minorities may feel rejected by their parents and may be forced to leave their homes after “coming out,” making them more vulnerable for victimization due to social isolation, lack of resources, and subsequent homelessness. This kind of vulnerability was observed in a nationally representative phone-based survey concerning youth homelessness whereby lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) youths reported experiencing higher risk of homelessness than their non-sexual minority counterparts (Morton et al., 2018). In contrast, those who graduated from high school were less likely to be sex trafficked. This suggests that attainment of a high school diploma may provide for better financial security as well as the development of life skills that could stave off potential victimization.

Although this study found an increased risk of sex trafficking for bi- or pansexual youths compared with gay youths, the small sample sizes in these categories limit our capacity to dependably compare across groups. However, the patterns are noteworthy. Our study contributes to existing research on sexual minorities that shows a higher risk of homelessness among LGBT youths (Morton et al., 2018). Within the LGBT population, bisexual individuals may experience increased bias and vulnerability as heterosexual or homosexual groups may not accept them. Bisexual youths have been found to engage in higher incidences of some risk behaviors than gay, lesbian, or heterosexual youths (Movement Advancement Project [MAP], 2016), and to experience more sexual harassment and poorer well-being than their gay or lesbian peers (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016). In addition, there is some evidence that more transgender than cisgender individuals identify as bisexual (MAP, 2016).

Prevention and intervention efforts may need to be tailored to meet the unique needs of young people who identify as female, a sexual minority, or Latino, as well as those who drop out of high school or only obtain their GED. For example, programs

that assist young people experiencing homelessness with staying in school and obtaining their high school diplomas may want to consider how by doing so they are contributing to anti-trafficking efforts. Our findings also point to the need for LGBT and queer victim minimization services among youths experiencing homelessness, and for sex trafficking prevention and intervention efforts to potentially consider differences with respect to ethnicity among youths experiencing homelessness.

Our study also distinguished between young people who met the definition of sex trafficking due to FFC versus those who met the definition due to age. Of those who were sex trafficked, 14% of the sample were trafficked due to FFC, 57% were trafficked due to age, and almost 30% were trafficked due to both FFC and age. To our knowledge, our study is the first to investigate whether there were any differences between the two groups—that is, those trafficked due to FFC and those trafficked due to age. We found that young people victimized by FFC were more likely to be female, to be bi- or pansexual, and to have dropped out of high school. As our study found that the majority of young people were sex trafficked due to age, prevention and intervention efforts may need to be targeted with this in mind. In addition, intervention efforts to address the needs of young people trafficked due to FFC may need to take into account the differences we found and consider the distinct needs of young women, those who are bi- or pansexual, and those who do not complete high school.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, we used a nonprobability, purposive sample of youths presenting for services at five programs in three cities, rendering results not generalizable to the entire homeless youth population. There could be differences in victimization experiences between youths experiencing homelessness who seek shelter and those who do not. Youths who are currently being trafficked and those who are being provided shelter through commercial sex activity might not be seeking services from a program providing shelter for youths experiencing homelessness and, therefore, were not represented in the present study.

As all data were self-reported, we relied on the honesty of the youth participants. Self-reported data also increases the risk of response bias, or an individual's tendency to respond a certain way, regardless of the actual evidence they are assessing.

Some participants could have overreported experiences; others may have underreported experiences. There was also some fear about “true” confidentiality; youths often asked the interviewer if she “promised not to tell anyone.” The mandated reporting requirement of the interviewer may have also limited some youths from sharing about illegal activities.

Due to the highly sensitive nature of the topics discussed, there may have been underreporting of sexual exploitation experiences of some youths, including those not wanting to share personal history with a stranger and those fearing legal or personal repercussions. Male respondents may have been less likely to acknowledge sexual exploitation out of a sense of shame and fear of stigma (Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan, 2008; Estes & Weiner, 2002). Last, gender distribution was uneven across the participants. The overall study results might have looked different if the participants were more evenly distributed between male and female respondents and if the prevalence of transgender youths was greater.

Despite these limitations, findings from this study can inform service providers in their efforts to prevent sex trafficking and intervene to assist victims among the homeless youth population. Future research should consider the array of nondemographic correlates that also could be related to sex trafficking among this vulnerable group. For example, engagement with the child welfare system is one area that deserves investigation as a potential risk factor for trafficking victimization. Youths who have been maltreated may be at heightened risk for trafficking due to their physical and emotional vulnerability (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). In addition, youths who age out of foster care due to having reached the age of majority may also be at increased risk for trafficking victimization because of their marginalization, including lack of access to jobs or adequate wages, skills for independence, a place to live, or connection to a caring adult.

This study sheds important light on the prevalence and demographic correlates of sex trafficking among the vulnerable and marginalized population of youths experiencing homelessness. In our three-city study, nearly one in five young people reported having been victims of sex trafficking, due to FFC, age, or both. Although more research is needed in this area, findings from this study support the need for development of targeted prevention and

intervention efforts for young people experiencing homelessness that address sex trafficking victimization and related risk factors. By identifying those most at risk for sex trafficking, research can better inform prevention and intervention strategies. **SWR**

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HANDBOOK ON BULLYING PREVENTION

A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

Catherine P. Bradshaw, Editor

Bullying is a topic that has raised major concern for our nation, so much, that all states have passed policies that specifically address this issue. This problem is very common among youth and adults, and has the potential to have long-term effects. In the *Handbook on Bullying Prevention: A Life Course Perspective*, chapter authors provide recommendations for prevention and early intervention in bullying situations involving youth and adults across the life course.

There are very few books specifically written about bullying across the life course, and this handbook focuses on understanding causes and consequences, as well as prevention, in several different settings, not just schools. This handbook is intended to serve as a “go-to” resource to bring awareness and provide effective strategies for stemming the harmful impacts of bullying. *Handbook on Bullying Prevention* is a helpful guide for social workers, mental health clinicians, practitioners, researchers, and educators.

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Social Work

Mainstreaming Gender: An Intersectional Feminist Perspective on Social Work's Grand Challenges

Guest Editor: Jill Theresa Messing, PhD, MSW

The Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative, led by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, invites social work researchers to direct their work toward society's most pressing problems. This effort identified 12 challenges: ensure healthy development for all youths, close the health gap, stop family violence, advance long and productive lives, eradicate social isolation, end homelessness, create social responses to a changing environment, harness technology for social good, promote smart decarceration, build financial capability for all, reduce extreme economic inequality, and achieve equal opportunity and justice. None of the 12 challenges addresses gender, missing the dynamic social work scholarship that is being done from an intersectional feminist perspective.

Gender mainstreaming, developed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, identifies gender as a fundamental aspect of the goals, policies, research, practices, and institutions that work toward social change. Critical theoretical approaches to gender rely on an intersectional framework, recognizing that multiple dimensions of oppression are connected. This special issue will mainstream gender by placing it at the center of the conversation about the Grand Challenges for Social Work to advance our understanding of the ways that gender affects social policy, status, identity, rights, and responsibilities.

Submissions should address one (or more) of the grand challenges with the intent of describing the unique difficulties that women, particularly those with multiple marginalized identities, face and the unique strengths they bring to these challenges; addressing the unique prevention, intervention, or policy needs of women; and advancing feminist, empowerment-based social work practice. The deadline for submission is **July 15, 2019**. The journal encourages submission of full-length articles (no more than 20 double-spaced pages), practice updates, and commentary. To prepare your manuscript in proper format for submission, see Information for Authors: Social Work on our Web site at <http://naswpress.org/publications/journals/sw-info.html>. Please submit manuscripts through the online submission portal at <http://swj.msubmit.net> (initial, onetime registration is required) and indicate that your submission is intended for the Mainstreaming Gender special issue.