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Background & Significance

- Adolescent girls comprise the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice system and represent 1 in 3 youth arrested (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).
- Feminist criminology characterizes gender as an ecological variable organizing social structure through gender norms and power-laden, which define girls’ lives and their risk for justice system involvement (Anderson, 2005).
- While there is substantial and growing discourse about the detrimental effects of oppression on girls, there has been little research to elucidate a) what oppression “looks like” in the lives of system involved girls, and consequently b) how programs might create opportunities for targeting oppression.

Goals of the Present Study

- Understand the lives of juvenile justice involved girls through an examination of the contextual factors surrounding their experiences of oppression
- Investigate the ways in which ROSES, a strengths-based, gender responsive advocacy program, may have created opportunities for restorative experiences.
- Address the following questions:
  1. How do girls understand and express how oppression leads to their entry into, or maintains their involvement in the justice system?
  2. What are the ways in which ROSES may impact oppressive dynamics in girls’ lives?

The ROSES Intervention

- Intensive advocacy
- 10-15 week intervention (60-150 hours)
- Targets girls’ contexts
- Promotes access to resources
- Relationship-based model of care
- Associated with reduced risk (Javdani & Allen, 2014)

Materials & Procedures

- Secondary analysis of de-identified interview data
- Open, thematic coding (Hill et al., 2005)

Method

- Participants
  - N=54 juvenile justice system-involved girls
  - 13-18 yrs old, Mean =15.2 years (SD= 1.4)
  - Black or African American (73%)

Girls’ Experiences of Oppression

Domain 1: Girls’ Experiences of Oppression

- Patriarchal Oppression
  - Parents policing behavior
  - Girls’ subjugation in the home
  - “My mom tried tellin’ the police that we were selling drugs in the house… she just wanted us out, because her husband was just worn down… so my mom got rid of us because he didn’t want us in the house.”

- Pathologizing Survival
  - “[He] sent me [to the inpatient psychiatric facility] twice… I didn’t need mental help, I needed support me, especially my mom!”

Girls’ Offenses

- Theft or Property offense 10%
- Running away from home 13%
- Assault after

ROSES Targeting Oppression

Domain 2: ROSES Targeting Oppression

- Relationships as transformative
  - “She gave me more pride in myself and more self confidence that I can accomplish anything that I want in life”.

- Relationships as generative of individual empowerment
  - “I’m happy that she let me go because, now she giving me space to, like she said, she wouldn’t have let me go if she didn’t feel like I was ready to venture off in the world and do what I need to do. She showed me that I didn’t need the tools that other people have given me, I had the tools all along I just needed guidance with usin’ them”

Materials & Procedures

- Secondary analysis of de-identified interview data
- Open, thematic coding (Hill et al., 2005)

Background & Significance (cont.)

- Promoting institutional empowerment
  - 100% of girls reported obtaining access to at least one resource
- The most commonly accessed resources were:
  - employment (71%)
  - education (60%)
  - legal (27%)
  - “I’ve never known these kind of things because my mom’s never been to college and she dropped out… I needed help because I wanted to know about my goals… you know, seeing people at the university they got a lot of goals and want to achieve them… I wanted to be one of those people… I can show other people how strong I am, how confident I am. how brilliant I am.

Conclusions

- Findings from the current study reveal particular ways in which oppressive dynamics increase girls’ risk for system involvement, and suggest that girls’ involvement with ROSES fostered transformative relationships and generated individual empowerment.
- Future interventions for girls should aim to identify the particular dynamics of oppression and would likely benefit from being multidimensional, involving families, schools, and strategies for appropriately addressing power dynamics in relationships (Zahn, 2007).

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