

MISSION STATEMENT

Advocates' Forum is an academic journal that explores implications of clinical social work practice, social issues, administration, and public policies linked to the social work profession. The Editorial Board of *Advocates' Forum* seeks to provide a medium through which SSA students can contribute to public thinking about social welfare and policy in theory and practice. Above all, *Advocates' Forum* serves to encourage and facilitate an open, scholarly exchange of ideas among individuals working toward the shared goal of a more just and humane society.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Advocates' Forum is published by the students of the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) at The University of Chicago. Submissions to the journal are selected by the editorial board from works submitted by SSA students and edited in an extensive revision process with the authors' permission. Responsibility for the accuracy of information contained in written submissions rests solely with the author. Views expressed within each article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board, the School of Social Service Administration, or The University of Chicago. All inquiries and submissions should be directed to:

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[http://ssa.uchicago.edu/
advocates-forum-student-journal](http://ssa.uchicago.edu/advocates-forum-student-journal)

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ON THE COVER

The University of Chicago
School of Social Service Administration
Photographer: Lloyd DeGrane

FROM THE EDITORS

Advocates' Forum was founded by students in 1995, and continues to function as a student-run social work journal at the School of Social Service Administration (SSA). The 2016 edition of *Advocates' Forum* builds upon the journal's tradition of engaging issues relevant to social work and social justice.

Christine Kregg's article confronts the gaps in mental health service provision for exonerees that have been wrongfully imprisoned. Savannah Felix's article also addresses the justice system, but from the perspective of youth who experience both systems of child welfare and juvenile justice. Kevin Langson's article explores the currently contested and highly visible issue of refugee resettlement, with a focus on the particular barriers that LGBTQ individuals encounter when seeking refuge and asylum. The article co-authored by Annie Zean Dunbar, Jessica Lloyd, Shauna Taylor, and Lucia Ramirez examines the impact of a youth program seeking to reduce racial tensions in Mari El, Russia.

These articles encompass a broad range of topics and perspectives, demonstrating the varied interests and skillsets of SSA students. Yet, they are all connected in their concern for how existing social structures produce oppression and inequality. They also propose recommendations for promoting positive change for individuals and communities that too often experience social exclusion. In this way, they reflect SSA's approach toward defining problems and shaping solutions. We further believe that these articles represent the aspirations of many social work students to engage across the spectrum of the discipline, integrating clinical and administrative perspectives, and considering local and global issues.

We have sought to engage an editorial process that is transparent, collaborative, and critically reflexive. To this end we have also included a letter from the Editorial Board in this year's edition of *Advocates' Forum*. This letter sheds light on the article review process and offers perspective into the dynamics of the SSA experience in 2016.

We would like to thank our authors for sharing their outstanding work, and their diligent efforts in preparing their articles for publication. We are also grateful to Assistant Professor Gina Fedock, who has shown unwavering commitment to supporting the editorial board in her first year as the journal's faculty advisor; to Daniel Listoe, Ph.D., our writing consultant that worked closely with authors to help them present their best work; to Julie Jung, Director of Marketing and Communications; and Dean Neil Guterman. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the Editorial Board. This year's journal would not have been possible without their dedication to the editorial process.

Andrea Haidar
Jessica Smith

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Advocates' Forum is a master's student-run, peer-reviewed publication at SSA. As such, remaining neutral and unbiased is core to our mission of presenting scholarly material to the academic community. Now in its 21st year, *Advocates' Forum* continues to publish scholarly work by students that reflects the views of the authors. We strive to ensure that the article selection process is informed by the quality of the research and writing, rather than the opinions expressed by the authors.

However, biases live inside each of us. As an Editorial Board, we have worked to become more aware of these biases by closely examining our experiences and intersecting identities. We are also lucky that with an Editorial Board of 17 students, we worked collaboratively toward addressing our perspectives and discussing the submitted articles in a less biased way. We recognize that these biases should not be discounted, nor will we ever be completely unbiased. Our hope is that we have selected articles based on their merit, and not on how closely they align with our own social and political ideologies.

As we looked at where SSA and the social work profession are in this moment, we were reminded of the history of *Advocates' Forum*. In the past, the journal was used as a space to memorialize and engage in discourse about the SSA community and the world at large. Taking a cue from previous Editorial Boards, we wanted to preserve our experiences as current SSA students for future readers.

In the past few years, there has been a push for SSA to acknowledge how identity and intersectionality impact our education and practice as social workers. As the Editorial Board of *Advocates' Forum*, we stand with those whose identities have not been competently addressed by the coursework and climate at SSA. Students with less privileged identities – in particular, students of color and students with non-conforming gender identities – have bravely stepped forth to advocate for increased inclusivity and diversity within SSA's institutional climate and curriculum. These courageous students have started a campus-wide conversation, and we hope the student body and those in power will work towards an inclusive curriculum and space that recognizes and validates these unique experiences.

The articles chosen for this journal were selected to the extent that they are relevant to social work values. These values of social equality, inclusivity, and social justice bolster the ongoing efforts to transform SSA. Student-led efforts are demanding that our institution work toward the dismantling of systemic oppression. Historically, this institution has been fraught with oppressive practices, but change is upon us as we attempt to diversify our student body and academic staff. University-wide, students are asking our institution to better its response in other areas such as campus sexual assault and policy reform.

Our goal for this year's edition has been to ignite academic discourse and bring attention to an array of topics relevant to social work. We are honored to have read so many wonderful submissions and grateful to all the students who bravely put their best work forward. We are excited about the future of SSA and the levels of insight demonstrated in the articles we read and discussed. Thank you for taking your time to read these articles. We hope that you examine how these articles resonate with your own experiences and identities.

OUTCOME EVALUATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY CURRICULUM

Annie Zean Dunbar, Jessica Lloyd, Lucia Ramirez, Shauna Taylor

Abstract

The diversity curriculum “We All Smile in the Same Language” was implemented at Camp Lesnaya Skazka in Mari El, Russia. The curriculum aimed to increase knowledge about diversity among campers ages 8 to 16. The evaluation is based on a review of the literature and analysis of a 20-question survey administered pre- and post-intervention. The evaluation sought to determine the impact of the curriculum on diversity awareness and self-esteem in campers ages 9 to 12. While the results were not statistically significant, the analysis contributes to improving the program and provides ideas for future design of international diversity education programs for children.

Mari El is one of many smaller republics that comprise the Russian Federation. It sits some 550 miles east of Moscow. During the time of the Soviet Union, Mari El was closed and has for the most part remained isolated and ethnically homogeneous. However, workers from Tajikistan and their families have recently arrived. The Tajiks have physical characteristics that make them easily recognizable in Mari El and have been the subject of xenophobic jokes and derogatory statements. Such ethnic distinctions and practices of social exclusion are not unusual in Russia.

According to Sevortian (2009) and Ziemer (2011), xenophobic acts that range from hate speech to physical violence have been on the rise in the country since 2000. According to Sevortian (2009), “the number of hate crimes has recently been growing by 20% a year” and they “have become increasingly cruel and often involve weapons and explosives” (p. 20). Sevortian (2009) points to the economic challenges that the country is facing coupled with the increase of immigrant arrivals as explanations, and cites groups such as the “movement against illegal migration” (p. 21) and the skinheads who have targeted populations who are visually different and seen as outsiders. According to Sue (2010), these aggressions

have physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impacts on individuals. They further fragment entire societies by reinforcing the marginalization of groups who are targeted because of nationality, race, gender, sexual identity, etc.

In response to this issue, an intervention program aimed at encouraging acceptance of diversity and promoting the ideals of inclusion was instituted at a youth camp in Mari El. The program was called "We All Smile in the Same Language" and designed for camp participants (ages 8-16). It was taught from June 15 to August 3, 2014. The diversity program was the first of its kind in the region, and this paper presents findings of an outcome evaluation of its effectiveness. As an initial evaluation, the study sought to determine the degree to which camp participants demonstrated a greater awareness of diversity and improved self-esteem levels immediately after participating in the program. It is the hope that the findings presented will improve the delivery of "We All Smile in the Same Language" and contribute to the design and implementation of diversity education programs for children in general.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Part of being a social worker is using effective, creative, and practical responses to the social issues we are professionally committed to solving. Responding to social exclusion and xenophobia is no exception. "We All Smile in the Same Language" came about because one of the authors (Taylor) was a summer counselor at Camp Lesnaya Skazka in summer 2011. After she was awarded the Davis Project for Peace Grant from the University of Chicago, she returned to Lesnaya Skazka with the program to address xenophobia in the area. She was one of only a few Americans to visit the republic and also most likely the first person of color that the vast majority of the campers, counselors, and Mari El residents had ever seen in person. Although as an African-American she, in her words, "stuck out like a sore thumb" in Mari El, Taylor truly felt like a member of the Lesnaya Skazka family. She hoped, therefore, that camp administrators and campers alike would be more open to learning about diversity awareness and appreciation from a former counselor.

Between March 2014 and early June 2014, Taylor developed the curriculum for "We All Smile in the Same Language." She also constructed the evaluation questionnaire used to analyze program effectiveness. The seven-week program curriculum was utilized in daily classes with groups of children. The curriculum followed the typical 21-day Russian camp session and was taught over two sessions. Every week, a new theme that revolved around defining and understanding stereotypes,

discrimination, and diversity was presented. All curriculum supplies and materials were funded by the Davis Project for Peace Grant, and camp administrators provided a classroom and technical support when needed. Participants did not self-select. Each class session was scheduled by the camp administration. Camp participants in the second and third sessions had the option to opt out of the lessons, but the vast majority opted in. Overall, 54 children participated in the treatment group of the program for this evaluation. Each group came to eight classes over the course of the 21-day session, or about three classes a week. Lessons were taught in English; two camp helpers and one counselor, all fluent in English, translated the courses for class participants (from English to Russian and Russian to English). Handouts and written documents, including the physical copy of the curriculum, were translated by a translator and professor of English at Mari State University. Two or three classes a day were taught, and if needed, counselors from each group would help facilitate activities in class.

Throughout the class and during the activities, the students were able to voice their opinions about diversity, stereotypes, and other related topics, something they had never had the chance to do before in a class context. When given the opportunity at the end of each session to give feedback concerning the class, the majority of the children stated that they would like to have more diversity classes taught at camp and that it was important for them to learn about such issues as racism and negative stereotypes. After reading the feedback the children had written concerning the curriculum, the camp director was very interested in the program because of the positive experience the children had while learning about diversity awareness and appreciation. As a result, the camp director, along with the rest of the camp administrators, invited Taylor to teach "We All Smile in the Same Language" at Lesnaya Skazka at any point in the future. The curriculum created and used for this program and its impact on youth development is further explored in "Outcome Evaluation of Cultural Diversity Curriculum in Youth Camp" (Kuzminykh, Taylor, Dunbar, Lloyd, Ramirez, & Powell, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The evaluation team focused its analysis on methods of increasing diversity awareness and instruments to measure diversity knowledge and awareness. Furthermore, it identified survey questions that would measure self-esteem levels and their relationship with diversity awareness. As a result, the team sought to measure how "We All Smile in the Same Language" fostered

the development of diversity awareness and to identify mechanisms for increasing self-esteem in classroom settings.

Diversity Knowledge and Awareness

There appears to be little in the literature that outlines best practices for teaching diversity and related topics to children. Wan (2006), however, proposes using multicultural children's literature to increase children's diversity awareness. The author designed a model that encourages children to read storybooks about similar topics but from different cultures and shows teachers how to promote discussions that address differences and similarities among people and their cultures.

Generally, the literature presents strategies for teaching college-age students that can be restructured for younger populations. Banks et al. (2001), for instance, present 12 principles for teaching in diverse cultures, including helping students develop social skills to interact with those who are different according to racial, ethnic, language, and social markers. More recently, Lee et al. (2012) offer recommendations for designing university courses rich in diversity, which included creating opportunities for internal reflection, purposeful interactions with fellow students, collaborating, and promoting discussions from different perspectives.

Cramer et al. (2012) highlight the three models of experiential exercise included in social work education to increase students' knowledge about human diversity: experiencing, self-discovering, and learning. In these models, students assume the role of members of society who are discriminated against so as to experience life from their point of view, use tools to identify and reflect on biases, view documentaries or go on field trips to expand their knowledge of different populations. "We All Smile in the Same Language" utilized multicultural books both in class and in a separate PowerPoint presentation where the instructor read books in English while a camp participant read from the PowerPoint presentation in Russian. In addition, camp participants watched a documentary about racial discrimination in America and participated in activities that simulated discrimination in real life.

There is a limited amount of applicable research on diversity awareness measures. However, a review of academic articles shows a number of normed measures for working with adults in the United States. Carrillo, Holzlab, and Thyer (1993) analyzed existing diversity measures over three decades. Some of the measures the authors discuss are the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981), Bem Sex Role Inventory (Beere, 1979), and the Acceptance of Others Scale (Fey, 1955).

Additional research by Pohan and Aguilar (2001) studied educators' personal and professional beliefs about diversity and developed two empirical measures. The 25-item Professional Beliefs about Diversity Scale consists of items measuring diversity with respect to seven facets: (a) race/ethnicity, (b) gender, (c) social class, (d) sexual orientation, (e) disabilities, (f) language, and (g) religion. The 15-item Personal Beliefs About Diversity Scale identifies the following seven diversity issues: (a) race/ethnicity, (b) gender, (c) social class, (d) sexual orientation, (e) disabilities, (f) language, and (g) immigration.

In general, diversity measures such as the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory created by Gertrude Henry (1986) have been normed in many studies. However, literature pertaining to measuring diversity is limited to the Western world. Kulik and Roberson (2008) found that diversity skills in academic settings are typically measured with a standardized self-assessment. The authors suggest that in order to improve evaluation of diversity awareness, participants' skills must be assessed with means other than self-report because of respondent bias due to social desirability. More recently, a study by Fehr and Agnello (2012) created a survey for students to assess teachers' diversity knowledge based on Henry's Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory. The researchers included questions related to more contemporary diversity issues such as immigration, languages, and sexual orientation, among others. The implementers developed 21 demographic items, 20 six-point Likert scale items, and eight open-ended items.

Self-Esteem

There are various interventions for enhancing children's self-esteem: community-based programs (Bourne, 2003), games (Plummer & Serrurier, 2006), group music (Choi, Lee, & Lee, 2010), art activities (Coholic, 2010), and group counseling using adventure-based principles (Wagner & Elliott, 2014). Teaching strategies to increase children's self-esteem have not been extensively addressed by the literature.

Dalgas-Pelish (2006) evaluated the impact of a four-lesson self-esteem enhancement program for 5th and 6th graders and found that girls showed greater changes than boys in the self-esteem score. Children who have friends showed significant changes between the pre- and post-tests. Moreover, children with lower socioeconomic status had lower scores at both pre- and post-testing. Butler and Gasson (2005) provided a review of the most common scales to measure self-esteem levels among children. They identified a set of common principles among the scales: (i) self-report, (ii) a focus on assessing self as "me" instead of "I", (iii) a focus on psychological notions about self, (iv) an assumption of variability, and (v)

an assumption that self-esteem is quantifiable. The evaluators found that the seven most common scales to measure self-esteem among children and adolescents are the (1) Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale, (2) Marsh's Self-Description Questionnaire, (3) Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale, (4) Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992), (5) the Self Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967, 1975, 1981, 2002), (6) Self Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985), and (7) the Self Image Profiles (Butler, 2001). Finally, Butler and Gasson (2005) argued that one of the limitations of these scales is their inability to be generalizable across cultures outside of the United States because most are developed there, with Western norms and cultural perspectives. Johnson (2013) also studied extreme responding patterns for the Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale and the Basic Self-Esteem Scale. The study concluded that the Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale is more sensitive to respondents' self-protective alterations (rejecting negative information about themselves) than the Basic Self-Esteem Scale.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Study Design

The evaluation team chose a quasi-experimental design using pre-test and post-test data from a waitlist group and a treatment group. Post-test data completed by a comparison group was also analyzed. The survey was normed with one child from the same age group as the sample population for translation consistency and age appropriate comprehension.

Study Population. The camp participants were divided into groups by age: 8 to 10 year olds, 11 to 13 year olds, and 14 to 16 year olds. A total of 440 out of 442 participants (see Table 1) took the survey at least once during the three 21-day camp sessions, with different children attending each session. A breakdown of the total campers who took the survey is as follows:

- Session 1: 115 students completed the survey as a post-test comparison group. None of the students in Session 1 participated in the program.
- Session 2: 145 students, ages 9 to 16, completed the pre- and post-survey. 25 of those students did not receive the intervention.
- Session 3: 133 students, ages 9 to 16, completed the pre- and post-survey. 24 of those students did not receive the intervention.

Sample and recruitment strategies. From the total camper population, the researchers evaluated the youngest group of children, so

participants included in the evaluation were close in age. The breakdown of groups evaluated is as follows:

- Comparison Group: Session 1 (58 students), ages 10 to 12. Of the 58 participants in the comparison group, only 48 were analyzed using the t-test.
- Waitlist Group: Sessions 2 and 3 (60 students), ages 9 to 12. Of the 60 participants in the waitlist comparison group, only 21 were analyzed using the t-test.
- Treatment Group: Sessions 2 and 3 (54 students), ages 9 to 12. Of the 54 students in the treatment group, only 28 were analyzed using the t-test.

Data collection and consent. Primary data were collected through self-administered surveys in the presence of the evaluator. The data collected from the surveys were input into a usable format by one member of the team following the third session. Verbal consent from the children, their parents and guardians, and camp administration staff was obtained prior to the study.

Table 1: Group Demographics

	GENDER			AGE
	FEMALE PERCENTAGE (N)	MALE PERCENTAGE (N)	INDETERMINATE PERCENTAGE (N)	MEAN (SD)
CAMPER POPULATION (N=442)	58% (254)	42% (183)	1% (5)	12.2 (1.5)
COMPARISON GROUP (N=48)	62.7% (30)	37.3% (18)	-	11.2 (0.71)
WAITLIST GROUP (N=60)	45% (27)	53.3% (32)	1.7% (1)	10.40 (0.69)
TREATMENT GROUP (N=54)	61% (33)	39% (21)	-	11.2 (0.71)

Methods and Measures

The hypothesis of the evaluation team was that the program would increase knowledge and positive attitudes about diversity and self-esteem. The variables of analysis were operationalized as age (independent variable), knowledge about diversity (dependent variable), and attitudes towards diversity (dependent variable).

A self-created survey was used to measure participants' awareness of diversity and their self-esteem. The survey included 20 scale questions and two open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Participants were also asked to list their age, gender, and religion. The scale questions were coded with an ordinal scale with "Never" coded as 1 and "Very Often" coded as 5. For the purpose of this evaluation, the team categorized eight questions relating to self-esteem and ten questions relating to diversity. As a result, a composite score for diversity awareness and self-esteem was created. Two of the scale questions from the survey were excluded because they were not clearly related to the measures. The two open-ended questions were not included in the analysis. The evaluators categorized the test scores into low, medium, and high scores. The highest possible score for the self-esteem questions evaluated was 40, with the score ranges as follows: low: 8-18; medium: 19-30; high: 31-40. The highest possible score for the diversity questions evaluated was 50, with the score ranges as follows: low: 10-23; medium: 24-37; high: 38-50.

Reliability and Validity

The evaluators tested for inter-reliability of the questions grouped to evaluate self-esteem levels and awareness of diversity. The Cronbach's Alpha for both self-esteem and diversity questions was .997. Due to the high level of reliability and validity of the instrumentation, the research team expects the survey could be conducted in similar interventions in the future.

PROGRAM EVALUATION RESULTS

The mean difference between pre-test and post-test and between the waitlist group and treatment group was not proven statistically significant (see Table 2). The average score for participants in the comparison group was in the "medium range" level for both diversity (M=21.42, SD=3.95) and self-esteem (M=28.6, SD=6.40). For the waitlist group, diversity scores before the intervention were M=27.33, SD=5.39 and after intervention were M=29.06, SD=5.28. Self-esteem scores before intervention were M=23.38, SD=2.17 and after intervention were M=22.95, SD=2.20. No significant difference was noted for diversity scores or self-esteem

($t(59)=-.918, p=.374$ and $t(59)=.583, p=.567$, respectively). Lastly, for the treatment group, the averages were very similar for participants in the comparison and waitlist groups. Diversity score averages before intervention (M=21.09, SD=3.65) were almost identical to those after intervention (M=21.29, SD=3.65). The same is true for self-esteem scores, which before intervention were M=28.04, SD=6.32 and after intervention were M=28.6, SD=6.40. Comparing means for diversity ($t(53)=-.406, p=.688$) and self-esteem ($t(53)=-.038, p=.970$) further illustrated the point discussed above regarding significance.

The evaluators tested whether post-test scores from each group were associated with the gender of the participants. Gender proved to be associated with the diversity scores in the waitlist group ($b = -5.54, t(26-2-1) = -2.41, p = .02$), with males scoring lower than females. Self-esteem scores in the treatment group were also associated with gender ($b = -3.66, t(37-2-1) = -2.86, p = .007$), with males scoring lower than females. It should be noted that the significance values for gender may have been impacted by running the logistic regression along with religion. Because of this, the team cannot definitively say whether gender had a strong impact on the participants' scores. However, it is important to acknowledge that this finding is consistent with the research of Dalgas-Pelish (2006) that found that girls had more significant changes than boys in self-esteem scores after interventions were implemented.

Table 2: T-tests for Outcomes by Group

	COMPARISON GROUP	TREATMENT GROUP	WAITLIST GROUP
DIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE			
SCORE MEAN PRE-TEST (SD)	-	21.09 (3.65)	27.33 (5.39)
SCORE MEAN POST-TEST (SD)	21.42 (3.95)	21.29 (3.65)	29.06 (5.28)
T-TEST (P VALUE)	-	-0.406 (0.688)	-0.918 (0.374)
SELF-ESTEEM			
SCORE MEAN PRE-TEST (SD)	-	28.04 (6.32)	23.38 (2.17)
SCORE MEAN POST-TEST (SD)	28.60(6.40)	28.60 (6.40)	22.95 (2.20)
T-TEST (P VALUE)	-	-0.038 (0.970)	0.583 (0.567)

A repeated measures ANOVA test was conducted for self-esteem and diversity comparing the treatment and waitlist groups. No significance was found for increased self-esteem scores when camp participants that received the intervention ($t(28) = 1.80, p = .083$) were compared with camp participants that did not receive it ($t(21) = .58, p = .567$). No significance was found between the awareness of diversity in the waitlist group ($t(15) = -.918, p = .374$) and the treatment group ($t(22) = .439, p = .665$) at the end

of camp either. The team noted that a follow-up survey for the waitlist and treatment groups would be valuable for better understanding the impact participation in the program had on campers' self-esteem and diversity awareness.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The program "We All Smile in the Same Language" aimed to increase knowledge about diversity and promote inclusion among camp participants ages 8 to 16. The evaluation team expected to find that participants developed a greater appreciation of diversity and increased their self-esteem after completing the program. It hoped to identify mechanisms to improve the program due to the possibility of its future replication. However, based on the lack of statistically significant results from the analysis, the evaluation team is unable to draw any definitive conclusions about whether the curriculum had an impact on the participants' awareness of diversity and self-esteem.

Implications

Although the results were not statistically significant, the evaluators could recognize a shift in the attitudes and language surrounding diversity and self-esteem among students who took the course. The participants seemed interested in learning more about diverse populations from around the world and applying what they learned in class to their real lives. Nonetheless, if "We All Smile in the Same Language" is to revise its curriculum, future research about teaching strategies for increasing levels of diversity and self-esteem knowledge, specifically in homogeneous communities, will be necessary.

Likewise, the evaluation team can develop a better survey based on normed peer-reviewed scales. Though the survey was found to be reliable, the evaluators would like to explore how findings from the literature can further enhance measurement. Furthermore, the evaluation post-test was administered immediately upon concluding the program. This timing may have limited participants' ability to process or utilize the new information they gained during the program.

In addition, the evaluators would like to consider other demographic information, such as family income level or participant age, that may have an influence on diversity and self-esteem levels and potentially prove beneficial to analysis. Because the participants were young, it may be too early to see any significant change in their self-esteem and diversity awareness.

Sample size was another limitation of the intervention. The team evaluated a small sample size, making it difficult to generalize the study findings to broader populations. Missing data for students also had an impact on the small sample size. The study sample was also not randomized; the participants were given the option to select whether they wanted to participate in the program once they were at the camp.

Also, evaluators can encourage camp administrators to promote interaction at camp between participants of different ethnic groups to help model the lessons taught during "We All Smile in the Same Language." In future implementations of the program, it would be advantageous to include lessons that discuss ethnic relations specifically, since this issue applies to this region. The instructors were not aware that children were separated based on ethnic groups and that cross collaboration was not encouraged in the classes. Minority ethnic group campers were in a different group that did not receive the intervention. Implementing the program in an environment with little diversity limited the opportunities for participants to utilize their new knowledge, which is possibly associated with survey outcomes.

Finally, the team would recommend a follow-up with all participants post-intervention to observe whether their responses changed significantly once they had been exposed to the outside world. Time could have an impact on participants' diversity awareness. This was the first time this curriculum had ever been taught, leaving room for improvement in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1A: Evaluation Questionnaire: Understanding What You Think Survey

READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. TO WHAT EXTENT DO THEY APPLY TO YOU? CHOOSE ONE ANSWER IN EACH LINE AND MARK THE RESPECTIVE BOX.	NEVER (1)	RARELY (2)	SOME-TIMES (3)	OFTEN (4)	VERY OFTEN (5)
1. I THINK I AM THE SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE AROUND ME					
2. I THINK I AM DIFFERENT IN SPECIAL WAYS THAN THE PEOPLE AROUND ME					
3. I THINK I AM DIFFERENT IN WAYS THAT CAUSE PEOPLE TO MAKE FUN OF ME					

4. I HAVE THE CHANCE TO LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT THAN ME					
5. I ENJOY LEARNING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM ME					
6. I LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN OTHER COUNTRIES					
7. I WONDER ABOUT HOW PEOPLE IN OTHER COUNTRIES DO THINGS					
8. I WONDER WHY PEOPLE DO NORMAL THINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN I DO					
9. I AM PROUD OF WHO I AM					
10. I AM PROUD OF BEING RUSSIAN					
11. I THINK ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BE FROM SOME PLACE OTHER THAN RUSSIA					
12. I THINK IF I WAS A DIFFERENT GENDER MY LIFE WOULD BE BETTER					
13. I THINK IF I WAS A DIFFERENT RELIGION MY LIFE WOULD BE BETTER					
14. I THINK IF I WAS A DIFFERENT RACE MY LIFE WOULD BE BETTER					
15. I THINK IF I WAS A DIFFERENT GENDER MY LIFE WOULD BE WORSE					
16. I THINK IF I WAS A DIFFERENT RELIGION MY LIFE WOULD BE WORSE					

17. I THINK IF I WAS A DIFFERENT RACE MY LIFE WOULD BE WORSE					
18. MY FRIENDS AND I TALK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT THAN WE ARE IN A TEASING WAY					
19. MY FRIENDS AND I TALK ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT THAN WE ARE IN A CURIOUS WAY					
20. I THINK I CAN CHANGE THE WORLD TO MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE					

Do you know what "diversity" means? Yes or No (circle one)
 If you circled yes, please write what "diversity" means

Do you know what "stereotypes" are? Yes or No (circle one)
 If you circled yes, please write what "stereotypes" are

How old are you? _____ Are you: girl or boy Your group number? _____
 What is your religion? _____

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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IMPROVING MULTISYSTEM COLLABORATION FOR CROSSOVER YOUTH

Savannah (Sav) Felix

Abstract

This article explores the understudied population of youth who interact with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. It argues that policy makers and practitioners should begin to use research to take on the challenge of altering the negative outcomes for these vulnerable youth. This article provides an overview of the current policies that impact this population and provides evidence in support of an improved policy approach that focuses on system collaboration as well as the expansion of federal Title IV-E and Title IV-B funding and reauthorization of key legislation.

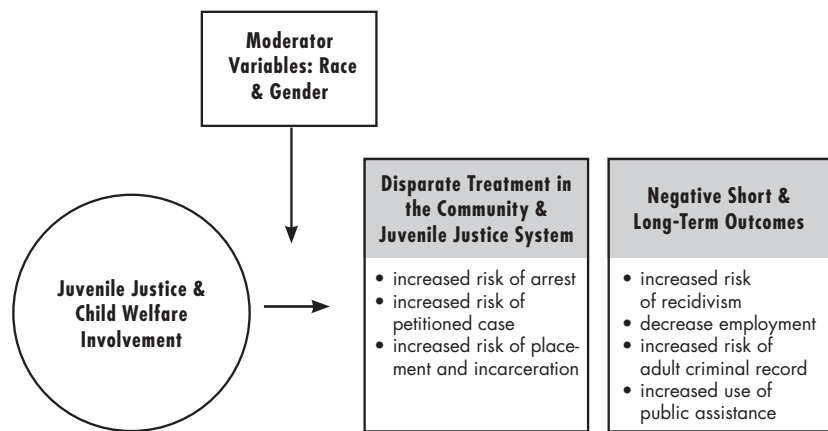
Over the last twenty years, the child welfare field has slowly acknowledged the small population of vulnerable youth impacted by both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This population has unique paths and positions in multiple systems, as well as strikingly negative outcomes. These youth are commonly referred to, among other terms, as "crossover" youth. The term "crossover" youth has been defined as a broad category of youth who have been maltreated and involved with the juvenile justice system at *some point* in their lives (Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010). These youth include those involved in the child welfare system and then the juvenile justice system; those who have a history with the child welfare system but no current involvement at the point when they enter the juvenile justice system; children who experience maltreatment but have no formal contact with the child welfare system and then enter the juvenile justice system; and youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system when they enter the child welfare system. This article provides an overview of the current policies that impact this population. It then provides evidence in support of a new policy approach to improve system collaboration. The fundamental goal of the article is to increase attention to the issues facing crossover youth, provide an overview of the

current state of policy impacting this population, and offer a new policy approach to improve system collaboration and outcomes for youth. It is imperative that policy makers and practitioners use this research to take on the challenge of altering the negative outcomes for crossover youth.

OBSTACLES FACING CROSSOVER YOUTH

Maltreated youth are disproportionately involved in and receive disparate treatment from the juvenile justice system (see Figure 1). Due to differences in defining crossover youth, there is varying data on the prevalence of crossover youth in the juvenile justice system. Recently, Halemba and Siegel (2011) found that 67% of juvenile justice cases in King County, Washington had some form of history with the child welfare system. When self-report data is used, prevalence rates for crossover youth increase to 79% (Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith, 1997; Herz & Ryan, 2008). On average, maltreated youth are 47% more likely than their peers to become involved in the juvenile justice system (Ryan & Testa, 2005). In part, the overrepresentation of crossover youth is due to their increased risk of arrest and case petition. Arrest rates for maltreated youth range from 13.9% to 21.6% as compared to 3.6% among the general population of youth (Widom, 2003; National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2014). In Los Angeles, 79% of crossover youth arrests occurred at Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) placements, 40% of which were group homes (Herz & Ryan, 2008). Crossover youth's cases are also more likely to be petitioned by the court than those of non-crossover youth. In 1999, the petition rate for crossover youth was 57% greater than for non-crossover youth (Ryan & Testa, 2005).

Figure 1: Disparate Treatment and Outcomes of Crossover Youth



Once they are adjudicated and formally enter the system, crossover youth face harsher court outcomes. Even when controlling for race, gender, and offense, crossover youth are more likely to be removed from their homes or detained. In Los Angeles County, the probability of receiving probation rather than placement or corrections was only 58% for DCFS-involved youth as compared to 73% for non-DCFS involved youth (Herz & Ryan, 2008). In a study of pre-adjudicated youth in New York City, Conger and Ross (2001) found that the probability of detention for crossover youth was 10% higher than for their peers. The higher risk of harsher outcomes is also evidenced by the prevalence rates of crossover youth at the deep end of the system. Up to 42% of youth in placement have had involvement with both systems (Halemba, Siegel, Lord, & Zawacki, 2004).

The overrepresentation of crossover youth in the juvenile justice system has also been shown to contribute to disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system as well as the significant increase in the female population of justice-involved youth. As compared to their white counterparts, African American youth in the child welfare system are two times more likely to be arrested at least once (Ryan & Testa, 2005). In fact, African American youth make up only 30% of the child welfare population but comprise 54% of the child welfare population that intersects with the juvenile justice system (Herz & Ryan, 2008). Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007), in a study of youth in Los Angeles County, found that open child welfare cases account for 14% of all African American youth entering the juvenile justice system. The child welfare system has also become a major pathway for females to enter the juvenile justice system. Females are the fastest growing population of justice-involved youth. Though the crossover population consists of more males than females, the child welfare system is the largest referral source for females to the juvenile justice system (Ryan et al., 2007). In fact, females make up 33% of the crossover youth population while only 26% of juvenile justice entrants from other referral sources are female (Herz & Ryan, 2008).

The crossover population's disparate treatment is made more difficult by their intensive needs. Crossover youth are more likely to come from challenging familial circumstances and are more likely to be younger at first entry into the juvenile justice system. They are also more likely to suffer from substance abuse, have mental health issues, and face educational difficulties. In a study of crossover youth from Arizona, Herz and Ryan (2008) found that 80% of crossover youth had substance abuse issues and 61% had mental health issues, while 70% had witnessed domestic violence, 55% had an incarcerated parent, 78% had a parent

with a history of substance abuse, and 31% had a parent with a history of mental illness. Female crossover youth are more likely to face gender-specific challenges. In particular, they are more likely to become pregnant than their peers in the juvenile justice system only.

Challenges faced by crossover youth are often not met with collaborative solutions across systems. In transitioning between systems, crossover youth face service interruptions when they become ineligible for system-specific mental health, substance abuse, and educational services. Due to their increased risk of out-of-home placement and incarceration, crossover youth are less likely to receive appropriate treatment services (Pumariega et al., 1999). For female crossover youth, who are at greater risk of pregnancy, there are few gender-specific programs that address their needs.

Given their risk factors, disparate treatment, and barriers to appropriate services, it is not surprising that crossover youth tend to have poorer short-term and long-term outcomes. In the short term, crossover youth are more likely to recidivate. In King County, Washington, within six months, 42% of crossover youth recidivated as compared to 17% of youth with no history of involvement in the child welfare system (Halemba & Siegel, 2011). Within 24 months, 70% of crossover youth recidivated as compared to 34% of youth with no history of involvement in the child welfare system (Halemba & Siegel, 2011). In the long-term, crossover youth face barriers to successful adulthood transitions. For example, when comparing outcomes of youth involved in the child welfare system only, the probation system only, and both systems, Culhane et al. (2011) found that crossover youth between the ages of 22 and 26 were more likely to be on public welfare, less likely to be employed, and more likely to have an adult criminal record. In fact, maltreatment increases the likelihood of arrest as an adult by 28% (Widom & Maxfield, 2001).

Not only do the experiences and outcomes of crossover youth impact the life prospects of youth, but they also increase the public burden. As recidivism and out-of-home placement increases, so do the costs of services. It has been estimated that placement costs for one crossover youth are between \$35,171 and \$38,000 (Culhane et al., 2011; Halemba et al., 2011). In addition, the lack of coordination in funding and operations across systems means that significant resources are wasted on duplicative and contradictory assessments, planning, management, and services. Furthermore, the deeper crossover youth go in the system, the less effective and more expensive their treatment becomes.

Clearly, the disparate impact faced by crossover youth, disproportionality of contact by race and gender, poor short-term and

long-term outcomes, and costs to society provide evidence that there is a need for a policy focus on the issue of crossover youth.

CURRENT POLICY ADDRESSING CROSSOVER YOUTH

Crossover youth straddle two systems with conflicting missions. The child welfare system seeks to protect them and provide victim-focused services. The juvenile justice system aims to “rehabilitate” and provide perpetrator-focused services. Bridging these two systems creates many challenges for states. Currently, individual state policies dictate protocol for handling crossover youth. There are three statutory approaches to handling the jurisdiction of crossover youth: concurrent jurisdiction, “on-hold” jurisdiction, and separate jurisdiction (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Approaches to Handling the Jurisdiction of Crossover Youth

Jurisdiction Type	Pros	Cons
Concurrent Jurisdiction: the child remains under the jurisdiction of and eligible for services from the juvenile justice and child welfare systems	-conducive to collaboration -few interruptions in services	-habitual and violent offenders could lose child welfare services due to incarceration or transfer to the adult system
On-Hold Jurisdiction: juvenile justice system assumes responsibility until adjudication	-may eliminate duplicative services -may encourage collaboration post-adjudication	-service disruption -role confusion due to shift in responsibility between systems -habitual and violent offenders could lose child welfare services due to incarceration or transfer to the adult system
Separate Jurisdiction: one system has jurisdiction at all times	-may limit crossover to juvenile justice system	-all crossover youth lose services from the child welfare system

Concurrent jurisdiction means that youth remain under both jurisdictions. Typically, one system has primary responsibility for the youth, but they continue to receive services from both. A benefit to concurrent jurisdiction is that it is possible for most youth to remain in their placement, retain services, and receive integrated case planning. Concurrent jurisdiction is also more conducive to system collaboration. A downside to concurrent jurisdiction is that incarceration or transfer

to adult court could result in termination from the child welfare system, causing habitual and violent offenders to lose access to critical services. In addition, though concurrent jurisdiction encourages collaboration, *effective* collaboration is rare.

“On-hold” jurisdiction means that there is a temporary break in child welfare system services as the juvenile justice system assumes responsibility for the youth up until adjudication. After disposition, if it is determined that the youth will enter institutional corrections, the youth will no longer receive services from the child welfare system. When juvenile justice system involvement ends, youth are able to return to their suitable child welfare placements. If it is determined at disposition that the youth will receive community alternatives, the youth will remain in the child welfare system. A benefit to this approach is that it may eliminate duplicative services. Further, after disposition, it allows most crossover youth to receive collaborative services. The weaknesses of this approach are that youth experience service disruption, and habitual and serious offenders may lose access to all collaborative services. Furthermore, inevitably, some youth fall through the cracks due to confusion over roles as responsibility shifts between systems.

Lastly, separate jurisdiction requires that the youth be a part of a single system. Therefore, if a youth is adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, that youth will be terminated from the care of the child welfare system. The benefit of this approach is that there is often a preference for youth to remain in the child welfare system, thus limiting the number of youth that crossover to the juvenile justice system. However, this approach also has many disadvantages that tend to negatively impact the most vulnerable youth. Youth that do crossover to the juvenile justice system lose all of the benefits of the child welfare system: placement, treatment, attorneys, advocates, social workers, and other targeted services.

On the federal level, legislation that addresses the needs of crossover youth is limited, but has begun to expand. In 2010, Congress reauthorized the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) for 5 additional years. The intent of CAPTA is to continue to improve the child welfare system. In the reauthorization, additional language was added to provide funding for states to improve data collection on this population as well as collaborative services for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems through research, programming, and demonstrations. The language of the act indicates that funds should be used to focus on:

Effective approaches to interagency collaboration between the child protection system and the juvenile justice system that improve the delivery of services and treatment, including methods for continuity of treatment

plan and services as children transition between systems (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, 2010, p. 10).

In addition, the act requires that states provide a report that indicates the number of youth involved in both systems.

There are several strengths to the 2010 reauthorization of CAPTA. First, it brings awareness to the issue of crossover youth. Second, it encourages multisystem collaboration. In particular, it asks states to begin to develop methods to improve treatment planning and case management processes between systems. Third, it requires the collection of data on the prevalence of crossover youth. There is limited data in the literature on how many youth are impacted by both systems; therefore, this requirement will fill an important gap. Finally, CAPTA provides states with much-needed funding to begin to meet the requirements of the act. However, CAPTA overlooks key areas that need to be addressed. First, it does not address the issue of information sharing. A major challenge to multisystem collaboration has been the limited guidance on how information should be shared. Second, it does not require the collection of prevention-focused data. Currently, the only data requirement is that states provide the number of crossover youth. In order to begin to understand the factors that increase the likelihood of dual involvement and lower prevalence, it is important that states begin to capture data on characteristics of crossover youth. CAPTA is due for reauthorization in 2016.

In addition to CAPTA, the 2002 Congressional reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJDA) is relevant. The act ran out in 2007 and remains overdue for reauthorization. The intent of JJJDA was to improve the juvenile justice system. In its 2002 reauthorization, language was added to require that states receiving formula grants begin to collaborate with the child welfare system by implementing record sharing policies and systems and providing continued child welfare services to youth that crossover. The Act reads in part:

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this paragraph, the Administrator shall conduct a study with respect to juveniles who, prior to placement in the juvenile justice system, were under the care or custody of the State child welfare system, and to juveniles who are unable to return to their family after completing their disposition in the juvenile justice system and who remain wards of the State. Such study shall include—the number of juveniles in each category; the extent to which State juvenile justice systems and child welfare systems are coordinating services and treatment for such juveniles; the Federal and local sources of funds used for placements and post-placement services; barriers faced by

State in providing services to these juveniles; the types of post-placement services used; the frequency of case plans and case plan reviews; and the extent to which case plans identify and address permanency and placement barriers and treatment plans (Library of Congress, 2002).

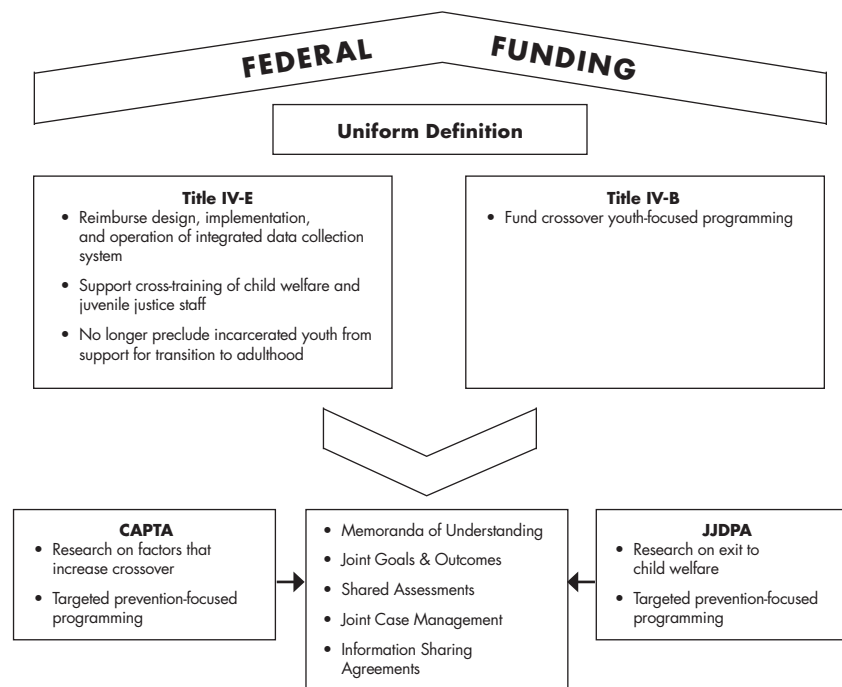
There are several strengths to the reauthorization. First, it requires the collection and use of child welfare data. As has been discussed, it is imperative that states begin to understand the characteristics and needs of the crossover population. This data can be used to improve decision-making and service provision for crossover youth. Second, it requires the protection of the rights of eligible crossover youth to case plans and case plan review. This allows crossover youth to maintain some of their rights as former Title IV-E eligible foster youth. Third, it requires states to conduct research on the crossover population that can improve understanding of the population’s experiences and needs. Despite these strengths, the reauthorization has several weaknesses. First, it does not require the sharing of juvenile justice data. While it is important that the incorporation of child welfare data is specified, it is also important that information sharing is reciprocated. Second, though the act requires that eligible crossover youth be entitled to case plans and case plan reviews, it does not require that foster care services continue. This may cause a gap in or lack of services for crossover youth when they return to the community. Lastly, it does not address collaboration for youth exiting the juvenile justice system and entering the child welfare system.

While CAPTA and JJDPa provide important guidance to the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, federal policy has yet to provide appropriate incentive structures to encourage states to enforce multisystem collaboration. In part, this is due to the lack of a uniform definition for the crossover population, contradictory goals and outcomes, and the absence of information and data sharing systems. This may be due to separate funding and operational structures. Currently, Title IV-E and Title IV-B prohibit reimbursement funds for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

AN INTEGRATED POLICY APPROACH FOR MULTISYSTEM COLLABORATION

Based on the need to address issues surrounding crossover youth and the weaknesses of current policy attempting to address the issue, it is recommended that a new approach be taken to improve system collaboration. The recommendation is an expansion of federal Title IV-E

Figure 3: Integrated Policy Approach to Multisystem Collaboration Framework



and Title IV-B funding, as well as reauthorization and amendment of JJDPa and CAPTA (see Figure 3).

The first step to the approach is to increase federal funding to support crossover youth by expanding Title IV-E and Title IV-B so as to include reimbursement for crossover youth. Not only will this establish a shared funding stream but also a fiscal incentive for states to pursue collaboration. In order to prevent confusion, it will be important to establish a uniform definition of the population that will be supported by this funding. It will also be important to encourage states to use a concurrent jurisdiction model since it is the most conducive to system collaboration and continuity of services. In expanding Title IV-E, it is recommended that states be reimbursed for design, implementation,

and operation of integrated data collection systems. In order to address the absence of information and data sharing systems, Title IV-E reimbursement would provide states with incentives to develop integrated data collection systems between the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. This infrastructure will ideally support coordination and communication across systems. States should also receive Title IV-E funding for training staff on policies, practices, and expectations of both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system, the characteristics and needs of crossover youth, and best practices for collaboration.

A further expansion of Title IV-E might end the exclusion of transition to adulthood services for incarcerated youth. Crossover youth exiting the juvenile justice system post-incarceration are vulnerable to recidivism, unemployment, and homelessness. Without access to the transitional housing, employment services, scholarship programs, mentors, and mental health resources provided to former foster youth, these youth face significant challenges (Wylie, 2014). The expansion of Title IV-B could support programming that addresses the risks faced by crossover youth. Currently, there are few programs targeted toward the crossover population and funding could encourage states to support the development and expansion of promising programs.

The second step to the approach is to reauthorize and amend both CAPTA and JJPDA. In amending CAPTA, states should be asked to focus on research aimed at understanding the mechanisms that contribute to the moving of a child from the child welfare system to the juvenile justice system. This research should inform the development, evaluation, and support of prevention-focused programming aimed at preventing crossover. Further, a critical aim of the research should be to address disproportionality by race and gender in crossing between the two systems.

In amending JJPDA, states should be asked to focus on research aimed at understanding the factors involved in moving a child from the juvenile justice system to the child welfare system. In Illinois, it was found that 10% of all youth exiting the juvenile justice system enter foster care within one year (Cusick, George, & Bell, 2009), yet little is known about this population. This research should inform programming such that programs aimed at preventing crossover are developed, evaluated, and supported. Both acts should include clear directives regarding collaboration across systems to provide appropriate and uninterrupted services. They should also continue to be reviewed and assessed for future amendment.

In taking the two-pronged approach that creates shared funding streams to support collaboration across systems and legislation that funds prevention efforts within systems, states are not only incentivized to improve their prevention efforts but also to increase collaboration across

systems. It is expected that collaboration will result in Memoranda of Understanding, joint goals and outcomes, shared assessments, joint case management, and information sharing agreements.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to provide evidence for the need for increased attention on the issues facing crossover youth, an overview of the current state of policy impacting this population, and a new policy approach to improve system collaboration and outcomes for crossover youth. Due to the disparate impact faced by crossover youth, disproportionality of contact by race and gender, poor short-term and long-term outcomes, and costs to society, it is clear that there is a need for a policy focus on the issue of crossover youth. Though there are strengths to current policy that address issues facing crossover youth, there are too many weaknesses and too few efforts by states to establish multisystem collaborations. A two-pronged approach that focuses on expanding federal Title IV-E and Title IV-B funding as well as reauthorizing and amending JJPDA and CAPTA is recommended as an initial strategy approach to increase multisystem collaboration and improve outcomes for crossover youth.

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RIGHT TO COUNSEL: MENTAL HEALTH APPROACHES TO SUPPORT THE EXONERATED

Christine Kregg

Abstract

The effects of wrongful imprisonment are devastating for exonerees and their families. Yet, few services exist to support the mental health and successful social reintegration of the exonerated. This article presents an overview of the psychological sequelae of wrongful imprisonment and how social workers can best serve clients in the aftermath of exoneration. It will address existing gaps in service provision and provide clinical practice suggestions to advance the well-being of exonerees in Illinois and beyond.

According to the National Registry of Exonerations (2015), more than 1,700 prisoners in the United States have been exonerated after serving an average of 10 years. One quarter were exonerated with the help of DNA evidence and nearly 7% were facing the death penalty for crimes they did not commit. Wrongful conviction exacts a disproportionate toll on African Americans; 60% of those exonerated are people of color and nearly half are Black. After leaving prison, the exonerated are “free,” but carry psychic wounds and the stigma of their long-term, unjust imprisonment. Post-release, many face unemployment, financial troubles, poor physical and mental health, and strained family ties (Roberts & Stanton, 2007).

Following their precipitous release from prison, exonerees need a wide range of supportive services to cope with the challenges of reintegration. According to Weigand and Anderson (2007), exonerees' long-term functioning is correlated with the support provided during the initial stages of reintegration. Immediately following their release is when the exonerated most need assistance with meeting their basic needs: employment, housing, transportation, education, physical and mental health care, and public benefits (Innocence Project, 2009). Few states, however, provide exonerees with immediate support services to aid their transition (Westervelt & Cook, 2010). And unlike those who have been

paroled, exonerees are not entitled to, nor are they well-suited for, re-entry services that target criminal risk factors. In other words, the exonerated “get the worst of both worlds—the stigma of prison, with none of the support services available to those who served time” (Innocence Project, 2009, p. 11). While compensation is available for a select few, such remuneration does little to address the horrors of wrongful imprisonment (Weigand, 2009).

In Illinois, state assistance for exonerees is scant. Advocates have pushed to increase support services for the exonerated incrementally; however, implementation has been sluggish. Illinois exonerees are eligible for state compensation, but the maximum amount is less than \$200,000, even after spending decades in prison (Court of Claims Act, 2009). In 2011, Governor Quinn abolished the death penalty in Illinois after 20 death-row exonerations, the second highest of any state in the US (Death Penalty Information Center, 2016; Warden, 2012). That year, Life After Innocence (LAI) at Loyola University Chicago School of Law—the only group in Illinois that advocates for the exonerated after their release—sponsored a state bill that passed with bicameral support (Civil Administrative Code of Illinois, 2011; LAI, 2016). The law grants exonerees in Illinois free mental health services from qualified clinicians as part of a state-funded re-entry services program (Zavala, 2011). The law, however, required the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) to promulgate rules establishing the eligibility of the wrongfully imprisoned to participate in the program, which it has yet to do. More than four years later, not a single exoneree has benefited from these services. LAI is working to identify pro-bono providers willing to work with this population and continues to advocate for DHS to abide by its statutory obligation to ensure exonerees' access to free mental health services.

This article presents an overview of the mental health challenges facing the exonerated and gives social workers an outline of best practices to promote exoneree healing, empowerment, and well-being. An overview of the impact of exoneration will be provided, with particular attention to the deleterious mental health outcomes of wrongful conviction and imprisonment and the difficulties experienced by exonerees and their loved ones during the transition home. Special populations of exonerees and their resilience in the face of enormous injustice will be highlighted, along with short- and long-term practice suggestions for social workers.

THE IMPACT OF IMPRISONMENT

Wrongful imprisonment is traumatizing and disorienting because imprisonment itself is traumatizing and disorienting. While exonerees face mental health outcomes that are unique to their wrongful conviction, the damage wrought by imprisonment is shared among most prisoners. The dominant feature of prison for many is fear and violence (Grounds, 2005). According to Haney (2001), prisoners faced with punitive, overcrowded institutions, isolation, neglect, and abuse can develop psychological adaptations that lead to negative outcomes, including diminished self-efficacy and self-worth, hypervigilance, emotional suppression, social withdrawal, exploitative and/or violent behavior, and post-traumatic stress responses. These reactions can impede post-prison adjustment and are particularly likely among exonerees.

Unjust arrest, conviction, and detention—as well as the distress imposed by coerced confessions—exacerbate the harms of long-term incarceration. Wrongful imprisonment involves the isolation, interrogation, and wrongful detention of an innocent person (Weigand, 2009), and amounts to “torture by human design” (Wilson, 2002, p. 1). Victimization at the hands of the state tends to invoke feelings of betrayal and injustice (Grounds, 2005). Wrongful conviction may thus be characterized as a state crime that results from the illegal actions of state actors or the misapplication of their authority; post-exoneration re-victimization by state officials occurs when they refuse to apologize, accept responsibility, acknowledge exonerees' factual innocence, or provide meaningful redress for their wrongful acts (Westerville & Cook, 2010).

One exoneree, who spoke at a panel discussion sponsored by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, described the trauma of wrongful imprisonment and the need for assistance following his release from prison after serving 18 years for a crime he did not commit:

I think that the State should have provided us with immediate counseling to help us deal with the emotional ups and downs that you go through. When you lose your freedom, you lose something...The person I had to become to survive 18 years of incarceration is not the person I wanted to be, and it's not the person that I am. It became a part of me because I had to survive in prison. It was hard. It was hard—every day, every night, every moment (cited in Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2002, p. 5).

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF WRONGFUL IMPRISONMENT

To date, few studies have examined the psychosocial impact of wrongful imprisonment. Death-row exonerees and those who have been freed based on DNA evidence have received some attention, but beyond these cases, little is known about the mental health challenges faced by the majority of exonerees. Grounds' (2005) descriptive clinical study of eighteen exonerated men is a notable exception and stands out as a rare source of insight into this population. As such, this article draws heavily from her groundbreaking research. Grounds found that the long-term psychological effects of unjust imprisonment manifest only after exoneration and can result in severe disruption, dysregulation, and dysfunction. These devastating mental health outcomes resemble that of military veterans and torture survivors who suffer from extreme forms of trauma. The psychological sequelae of wrongful imprisonment include severe mental health problems, such as persistent personality changes, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and adjustment difficulties, relationship impairments, feelings of chronic estrangement and isolation, and complex feelings of loss. Comorbidity is common. In addition to traumatic stress responses, many exonerees suffer from depressive disorders and substance abuse or dependence.

The Difficult Transition Home

Wrongful imprisonment often requires modes of adaptation: routines to cope with the fatigue and despair of prison and enduring legal battles. Such adaptations may enable survival in custody, but can wreak havoc on exonerees' home lives (Wilson, 2002). Many exonerated men in Grounds' (2005) study were so conditioned to take orders from prison officials that they found it difficult to function in the unstructured environment of home. As one exoneree put it, "I haven't still, today, been able to adjust to the world. It's like...I was on another planet" (cited in Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority [ICJIA], 2002, p. 3). Exonerees may, indeed, experience feelings of shock and "unreality" following their abrupt release from prison and struggle to make decisions for themselves or perform activities of everyday living. The exonerated in Grounds' (2005) study were often embarrassed by the practical difficulties of mundane tasks like crossing the street, using a microwave, or handling money.

In addition, barriers to securing employment are well documented due to the rarity of expungement, the omnipresence of exonerees' criminal records, and the notoriety of their cases (Knowles, 2015). In their research investigating the stigma of wrongful imprisonment, Thompson, Molina,

and Levett (2011) found that exonerees are likely to experience the most significant stigma regarding others' evaluations of their personal character. Regardless of their innocence, exonerees can expect to be greeted with fear and social rejection as a result of the staid cruelty of unjust imprisonment.

The Effects of Separation and Loss

The exonerated enter a realm of loss: the "loss of time, loss of feelings of security, loss of loved ones, and loss of self" (Westervelt & Cook, 2010, p. 268). Grounds' (2005) pinpoints a perhaps unexpected difficulty in shifting from incarceration to exoneration. Set free with little to no time to prepare for their release, the exonerated are often cut off from their lives in prison and thrown into a new reality. Once separated from their home and family through imprisonment, the exonerated are then abruptly separated from their prison existence. Such drastic cutoffs can result in protracted feelings of loss among exonerees. They may, for instance, be prohibited from having contact with anyone in prison and thus feel intense guilt about leaving others behind. After his release, one exonerated man tells the story of continuing to drive by the prison where he was held for more than two decades, calling that time "the best part of my life" (Grounds, 2005, p. 31). Rigid separation from one's life in prison—however wretched—can result in feelings of profound loss and estrangement that may feel impossible to reconcile among the exonerated.

As with most trauma survivors, exonerees may become withdrawn, express reluctance to disclose the painful details of their horrifying experiences, and feel less capable of emotional expression and intimacy. Grounds (2005) discovered that most of the exonerees in his study struggled to identify their emotions and were racked with shame and guilt. Distrust is likely to develop from the betrayal of wrongful imprisonment and can contribute to isolation as an involuntary coping mechanism to survive extended imprisonment. Grounds also observed that many of the men in his study would rigorously avoid social contact and continued to engage in self-isolation after their release from prison. Many described the horror of no longer feeling capable of loving their families. Such reactions may be particularly upsetting for exonerees who crave reconnection only to find themselves struggling to integrate back into their families and communities.

Grounds' (2005) study concluded that significant disruptions to identity and life stage development resulted from long-term wrongful imprisonment. The exonerated endure a permanent loss of innocence (Grounds, 2005; ICJIA, 2002), as well as their connection to themselves and to their identities as innocent people (Wilson, 2002). Wrongful

imprisonment also fractures normative life trajectories and can impair exonerees' sense of purpose and of future possibilities. During interviews with Grounds (2005), the exonerated men described feeling "dislocated in time" or "developmentally frozen," as though stuck at the age at which they were incarcerated. Many mourned lost opportunities to have or raise children. Such incalculable losses and ruptures to exonerees' developmental trajectories create significant and enduring distress long after they have come home.

Persistent fears of rearrest and imprisonment may pervade the psyches of the exonerated. Nearly all of the exonerees in Grounds' (2005) study expressed fear or paranoia of being surveilled or re-apprehended by law enforcement. Such terror led one participant to hide in the bedroom and refuse to leave his home alone. Hypervigilance and fear of rearrest may be particularly acute in cases that received significant media attention, though few exonerees are spared the fear that they can once again be wrongfully detained for someone else's crime.

The Challenges Facing Death-Row Exonerees

Research conducted by Westervelt and Cook (2010) draws attention to the particular harms suffered by death-row exonerees. Many condemned prisoners have borne witness to others being killed, not knowing when they might be executed. Acute trauma reactions were common among this population, including hyperarousal, feelings of hopelessness and apathy, intrusive thoughts related to their impending death, and difficulty envisioning the future and connecting with others (Westervelt & Cook, 2008). Westervelt and Cook (2010) found that the notoriety of capital cases and widespread misinformation fueled the stigma faced by death-row exonerees. Often with little choice other than to return to the communities where they were wrongfully convicted, it was nearly impossible for these exonerees to circumvent social rejection and hostility. Indeed, the "stigma of prison seems to hover over an innocent person as much as the guilty" (Weigand, 2009, p. 430). Many exonerees wrongfully convicted of murdering a loved one were denied the opportunity to mourn these deaths; instead, they were preoccupied with defending their innocence and their lives (Westervelt & Cook, 2010). As a result, death-row exonerees face particular challenges rebuilding their lives after being unjustly sentenced to die.

Families and Future Adjustment Difficulties

Families bear a great burden in the case of wrongful incarceration and frequently assume the greatest responsibility for exonerees' reintegration. With few resources from the state, the exonerated often turn to their families as the primary resource for housing, employment, and health care (deVuono-powell, Schweidler, Walters, & Zohrabi, 2015). Such support is vital for exonerees' well-being (Westervelt & Cook, 2010). But the relationship between exonerees and their families is usually far from cohesive, complicated by feelings of estrangement and loss of intimacy and cohesion. Grounds (2005) found that family visits were often particularly unbearable for the wrongfully imprisoned. Many times, exonerees and their loved ones would minimize their pain and struggles during their brief contact with one another. While intended as a strategy to minimize distress, with time it intensified the distance between family members and diminished their ability to relate to or understand one another.

Families of the wrongfully incarcerated have also suffered from victimization and ostracization. Relatives of those struggling to rectify their wrongful convictions described feeling as though it's "us vs. the world" (Grounds, 2005, p. 38). Grounds (2005) explains that many family members were overwhelmed by exonerees' psychological difficulties; some developed similar conditions in response to the trauma of their loved one's imprisonment. The stress and separation of wrongful incarceration hurts exonerees and their families long after freedom is attained.

Wrongful arrest and detention can also result in disruptions to exonerees' belief systems and hopes for the future. As Wilson (2002) explains, exonerees may attempt to find meaning in "willfully imposed injustice" (p. 2) and come up empty-handed; such miscarriages of justice are often inexplicable. Many will also experience a profound sense of social and spiritual abandonment due to the deprivation of their freedom despite their factual innocence. Similarly, the exonerated in Grounds' (2005) study questioned why they were forced to endure wrongful imprisonment. They grappled with the meaning of life and their suffering. Such existential anguish is common among the exonerated and represents a collateral consequence of the unfathomable injury of wrongful conviction.

Exoneree Strength and Resilience

The exonerated nonetheless manage this array of unbearable hardships with tremendous strength and resilience. In her work with exonerees, Weigand (2009) found that many attempt to give back to their communities despite all that has been taken from them. According to Grounds (2005), some of the initial hurdles of reintegration are

successfully managed by exonerees with the help of their support networks. Some find improvement of their distress symptoms over time. Some exonerees also drew strength from their refusal to admit guilt, participate in rehabilitative programming, or submit to conditions of parole. For many, preoccupation with their legal cases was a perpetual form of resistance to their unjust imprisonment. While exonerees possess considerable resilience to endure the scourge of wrongful imprisonment, the most prominent clinical features of exoneration appear to be enduring distress, impairment, and isolation.

BEST PRACTICES FOR HELPING THE EXONERATED

In Illinois, mental health care for exonerees is a legal and ethical mandate. It is imperative that the exonerated have access to immediate and ongoing comprehensive mental health services, including intensive case management; individual, family, and group counseling; peer support; and advocacy opportunities to assist with managing the complex reactions to wrongful imprisonment and to support social reintegration. Since exonerations are local events, they require services for exonerees and their families that are tailored to the local context and community (Westervelt & Cook, 2008). Interventions should also consider how the exoneree and their family adapt to their circumstances, and how the social environment has changed during the period of incarceration (Grounds, 2005). Social workers are uniquely positioned to provide such interventions in order to expand access to these critically-needed services.

Short-Term Services in the Aftermath of Exoneration

The days and weeks immediately following an exoneree's release from prison represent a critical period of early intervention. As with any trauma, it is only after the victimization has abated—or in this case, once an exoneree is freed—that the healing process can begin. Wrongful imprisonment is a form of chronic psychological trauma; therefore, social workers must be careful not to assume that any monetary compensation awarded to exonerees can ameliorate the catastrophe of wrongful conviction (Weigand, 2009). During this time, social workers can advocate for exonerees' access to needed services and assist them in identifying and overcoming barriers to reintegration (Weigand & Anderson, 2007). Such support is critical to exonerees' short-term well-being and adjustment to life in the community.

One model of intensive case management to consider replicating is that of the Social Work Department of the Innocence Project, which conducts

outreach to exonerees prior to release and administers an assessment to determine what kinds of supports are necessary to facilitate a successful transition back to the community (Innocence Project, 2013). This type of program offers the benefit of establishing a network of care prior to release, which can increase treatment adherence and continuity of care. Meeting clients' basic needs is a primary social work value that should guide the care provided to exonerees in the aftermath of their release in order to support the restoration of their functioning, relationships, and livelihoods.

Long-Term Services and Care

A number of long-term interventions hold particular promise for alleviating exonerees' suffering and supporting their healing and reintegration. Grounds (2005) recommends specialized treatment for specific conditions (e.g., phobia, social anxiety) in addition to long-term supportive counseling. He cautions that a diagnosis of PTSD may not be appropriate in cases of wrongful conviction due to the prolonged trauma and resultant personality changes and disruptions to exonerees' relationships, functioning, and sense of self. In addition, social workers should anticipate that exonerees may be distrustful of clinicians' intentions and wary of disclosing information about themselves or their cases (Weigand, 2009; Grounds, 2005). Therefore, clinical interventions should draw heavily from evidence-based, trauma-informed theories and modalities. Practitioners must also consider the multiplicity of factors that compel and impede growth and healing among exonerees. When delivered effectively, individualized services may prevent the most injurious of outcomes and assist exonerees to redress the trauma of wrongful imprisonment. From there, the work can help these clients to establish supportive networks of care and promote healing and recovery.

Psychoeducation regarding common reactions to exoneration and possible retraumatization is critical. This helps the exonerated normalize thoughts and feelings and avoid further stigmatization (Weigand & Anderson, 2007). Social workers would do well to acknowledge exonerees' possible feelings of disappointment and estrangement from their prison community and families. In this vein, clinicians can provide a space for exonerees to acknowledge any possible ambivalence about their hard-fought freedom and the challenges of adjusting to life on the outside without any meaningful connections to their former life in prison.

To encourage integration, Westervelt and Cook (2008) suggest working with exonerated clients to incorporate the exoneree identity into their existing self-concept and to identify potentially positive aspects of

exoneration. Others argue that it is imperative for exonerees to shed their former labels of “prisoner,” “murderer,” etc. in order to assume positive and healthy identities (Weigand & Anderson, 2007). Narrative therapy, for instance, can assist the exonerated to re-author their life stories and thus reclaim their innocence, while Acceptance and Commitment Therapy can assist exonerees to develop present-moment awareness and ease their attachment to harmful labels. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, and other somatic approaches to trauma integration may be especially useful for the exonerated. (Re)connecting with spiritual or faith-based communities can also aid exonerees to make meaning out of their wrongful imprisonment and provide sorely-needed fellowship (Westervelt & Cook, 2008). As with any client, social workers are encouraged to rely on their clinical expertise to tailor approaches to exonerated clients’ strengths, needs, and circumstances.

Relationship Building: Family and Group Work

Family counseling is critical given the adjustment problems between exonerees and their loved ones. Such therapy can promote cohesion and reconnection, help to build mutual understanding, and strengthen coping skills (Grounds, 2005). Therapeutic approaches to strengthen family bonds include cognitive behavioral interventions that support exonerees’ assumption of familial responsibilities, family mediation, family systems therapy, and parenting classes (Weigand & Anderson, 2007). Adapting research on transnational families and rituals of reconnection can likewise bolster exonerees’ reincorporation into their families.¹ Assisting the exonerated to meaningfully reconnect with their families is crucial to their long-term functioning and social reintegration.

Group work and peer support opportunities can strengthen exonerees’ healing and empowerment. These approaches can enable exonerees to relate to others who have faced and survived similar horrors. Weigand (2009) reports that support groups allow exonerees to process and share their feelings and experiences with one another. Such camaraderie allows the exonerated to explore wrongful imprisonment as a collective experience. Grounds (2005) also advocates the use of support groups, writing that exonerees frequently derived a sense of purpose from helping other former prisoners, which buoyed them from some of the most harmful effects of wrongful imprisonment. The Innocence Project’s Social Work Department lends a model for how exonerees can come together to share their stories and support. During their annual conference, the social work staff organized sessions for exonerees on holistic approaches to healing

from trauma, storytelling, and forgiveness (Innocence Project, 2013). Peer connections can also facilitate mentorship relationships that benefit more experienced exonerees as much as those in earlier stages of exoneration. The opportunity to channel one’s devastation into serving others can be one of the most rewarding outcomes following the tragedy of wrongful imprisonment.

Exoneree Advocacy Opportunities

Social workers can further support exonerees by facilitating opportunities for them to share their stories and engage in advocacy, which can promote empowerment and renew self-efficacy. Many exonerees express a need for formal acknowledgement of the harms they have suffered and a desire for the state to be held accountable (Grounds, 2005; ICIJA, 2002). Westervelt and Cook (2010) have shown that the desire for an apology is paramount among death-row exonerees struggling to reshape their identities as innocent people. At the request of exonerees, and when clinically indicated, social workers can arrange speaking engagements to allow exonerated clients to share their stories and push for reform (Weigand, 2009). Such advocacy can ignite exonerees’ self-esteem and promote leadership development. However, such activities must be carefully managed to avoid potential retraumatization of exoneree clients. Weigand (2009) warns that public and media exposure can provide hope for a formal acknowledgement of exonerees’ losses and meaningful reparations, but comes with the risks of disappointment and exploitation. It is critical for social workers to provide exonerees with proper support and preparation in these instances. Weigand (2009) created a policy manual for handling media inquiries regarding her exonerated clients and urges providers to prepare exonerees before, and debrief them after, media exposure. With the proper support, speaking out can be powerful means for the exonerated to reclaim their voices following wrongful imprisonment.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of experiencing state violence and the denial of their basic human rights, exonerees leave prison crippled by the trauma of wrongful imprisonment. Although few in number, existing studies on the effects of wrongful conviction identify a complex range of negative mental health outcomes for exonerees and their loved ones, as well as high rates of unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, poor health, and strained social ties (Westervelt & Cook, 2010; Roberts & Stanton, 2007; Grounds,

2005). The exonerated need and deserve comprehensive case management, individual and family counseling, peer support, and opportunities to share their stories in order to aid their transition and spur their healing and empowerment. However, access to traditional sources of help and meaningful advocacy opportunities are limited in the aftermath of wrongful incarceration. Despite a legal mandate in Illinois, no specialized mental health services are yet available to support the exonerated.

This situation requires our profession's urgent attention. Social workers in clinical and administrative settings can play a critical role in promoting the well-being of exonerees and their families by providing trauma-informed services while advocating for reforms that reduce the incidence of wrongful imprisonment and indemnify exonerees for incalculable damages. Such remuneration must move beyond monetary compensation to account for the totality of exonerees' losses and their entitlement to care.

¹ Refer to Falicov (2007) for examples of interventions that promote reconnection following the return of a family member who has been absent or displaced for an extended period of time.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHRISTINE KREGG is a second-year clinical student at the School of Social Service Administration. She has more than a decade of experience advocating for trauma survivors and people involved in the criminal justice system. Prior to enrolling at SSA, she was a program director for Just Detention International, a health and human rights organization that works to end sexual abuse behind bars. Christine currently works as clinical social work intern at the Trauma Unit of Stroger Hospital of Cook County, where she provides bilingual crisis intervention and ongoing services to patients and family impacted by life-threatening injuries. She is a co-leader of *Justice Works*, SSA's student group focused on social work and criminal justice. She also serves as a research assistant for Assistant Professor Matthew Epperson, working on a study of people with serious mental illness in the criminal justice system. Christine holds a B.A. in political science from Kalamazoo College.

CONTENTIOUS ENTRY:
LGBTQ REFUGE AND ASYLUM

Kevin Langson

Abstract

LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers form a particularly vulnerable group. They face threats in their countries of origin and barriers to entering Western countries that accept refugees and grant asylum. Some of these barriers come via the individuals tasked with determining who is allowed to enter or remain in the country and others in the limited help they receive from family, community, and LGBTQ groups and organizations. This article explores the problems with processes such as adjudication and suggests there are ways to improve the treatment of LGBTQ individuals throughout the resettlement process.

In December, 2015, Northwestern University's Center for Forced Migration Studies sponsored a forum entitled "The United States Refugee Resettlement Program: A Global Model for Successful Humanitarian Response?" The panel discussion exhibited a complex interplay of hope and despair, pride and shame. For instance, T. Alexander Aleinikoff, outgoing U.N. Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, boasted that the United States has the largest resettlement program in the world. Robert Carey, director for the U.S.'s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), noted that the Obama administration had increased the number of refugees it would accept (Aleinikoff & Carey, 2015). At the same time, Aleinikoff conceded that the extensive vetting process for refugees is slow and painstaking, precluding any agile response to crisis; Ngoan Lee, the Illinois State Refugee Coordinator, bemoaned the lack of funds for better assisting refugees in their initial months of resettlement (Aleinikoff & Lee, 2015).

Within this context, the particular issue of LGBTQ individuals seeking refuge or asylum in the United States remains a substantive problem. It is illegal to be LGBTQ in at least 76 countries, and 10 of those either have the death penalty for related offenses or a history of extrajudicial killings (Bieksa et al., 2012). In spite of this, attempting

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to garner asylum in the United States is likely to bring undue delays, cumbersome and potentially re-traumatizing deliberations, and, too often, unjust outcomes. Protecting sexual minorities from state-sanctioned or state-ignored violence is generally slow and inconsistent.

Gaining asylum requires an individual demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2008). Persecution for LGBTQ individuals can emerge from cultural norms or government laws against homosexuality. When the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees established guidelines and categories for qualification, it created the designation “particular social group” in an attempt to address persecution of individuals belonging to a group not explicitly included in the Convention’s other categories. In 1990, following the ten-year asylum fight of Fidel Armando Toboso-Alfonso, a gay Cuban man targeted extensively by the Castro regime, U.S. immigration law began to consider LGBTQ such a “particular social group” (Gruberg & West, 2015). In 1994 U.S. Attorney General, Janet Reno, required that immigration judges recognize sexual minority status as established grounds for granting asylum (Gruberg & West, 2015).

ADJUDICATION AND ACCOMPANYING PROBLEMS

Despite UN conventions and U.S. law, sexual minorities still face an adjudication process for asylum status that is fraught with barriers. Refugees are selected and vetted in their home countries and flown to the United States to be resettled. Then, they are offered short-term services. Asylum seekers, on the other hand, arrive in the United States on their own and plea either affirmatively or defensively for refugee status. According to attorney Neil Grungras, founder of the Organization for Refuge, Asylum, and Migration, they are not eligible for the government resources refugees receive and generally rely on family or community support (N. Grungras, personal communication, October 25, 2013). LGBTQ asylum seekers tend to lack this support. Often they are fleeing violently disapproving family members and fear compatriots’ homophobia (N. Grungras, personal communication, October 25, 2013). Thus, LGBTQ people often enter asylum adjudication suffering from duress and isolation (Gruberg & West, 2015).

In order to achieve a positive status determination based on sexual minority status, the asylum seeker must prove that he/she is indeed LGBTQ and has a well-founded fear of persecution in the country of origin due to this (Morgan, 2006). As Beiksa and others (2012) point out, in sexual minority cases, the credibility of the asylum-seeker is especially

difficult to ascertain. Unlike claims based on political opinion, religion, nationality, and race, these cases rely mainly on the subject’s testimony (Beiksa et al., 2012, p. 197). If an individual has had to conceal his/her identity, even witness testimonials may be difficult to secure (Beiksa et al., 2012, p. 198). In determining the threat posed by the country of origin, adjudicators draw on evidence such as hate crime reports and the existence of LGBTQ-related organizations (Swink, 2006).

In the United States, asylum applicants are required to submit applications within a year of arriving; LGBTQ applicants are believed to be even more hampered by this demand than others. The gathering of evidence (including supplemental testimony) takes additional time and the difficulty of “coming out” so publicly exacts a toll (Gruberg & West, 2015). The centrality of the personal narrative creates considerable pressure for both the claimant and adjudicator. The claimant must elaborate on life details that have often been sources of shame, danger, and uncertainty (Morgan, 2006) and yet the testimony, often the sole evidence, must be convincing. The adjudicator is tasked with making a weighty decision with little to go on outside that testimony (Beiksa et al., 2012). One can imagine how two independently acting adjudicators might assess the same case and arrive at remarkably different conclusions (Swink, 2006).

As Sridharan (2008) shows, there are three principles that adjudicators use for guiding their decisions in LGBTQ asylum cases: immutability, recognizability, and association. The first refers to the idea that the characteristic that defines an individual as a member of a particular social group cannot be changed or should not be required to be changed. Unfortunately, the immutability requirement gets elided when a judge decides that an applicant is not recognizably gay and therefore can presumably return to his/her country of origin and live discreetly and safely (Sridharan, 2008).

Courts have ruled that the notion that LGBTQ individuals can be denied asylum on the premise that they can conceal their identities runs counter to the 1951 Convention. Status determinations are supposed to be based on identity, not behavior; yet some judges return to behavior to argue that homosexual behavior can be altered or concealed (Sridharan, 2008). How can one account for these discrepancies between Convention rule and individual judgments? While immigration judges and officers are screened for their views on homosexuality, the ideas of immutability and what an individual can rightfully be expected to compromise in order to be secure remain ungoverned (Kahn, 2012).

The principle of recognizability is therefore problematic for several reasons. First, it allows for notions of gayness that are cultured, classed, and essentializing (Murray, 2014). The operating assumption is that

claimants from around the world should demonstrate authenticity through mannerisms, attitudes, and preoccupations associated with gay, white, middle-class men in the West (Murray, 2014). Second, recognizability often presumes a definitive boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality. The enforcement of such boundaries leads to cases in which a lesbian claimant can be rejected for asylum because she has children or has had relationships with men (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2015). Finally, recognizability both demands that asylum seekers emphatically articulate gayness and adeptly conceal it (Heller, 2009). LGBTQ individuals living in countries that persecute sexual minorities may well have become experts at covering or passing as needed for self-preservation, but may not have experience conforming to an essentialist logic of expressive openness.

On the one hand, the fear of fraudulence on the part of asylum seekers creates a greater desire for a straightforward and reliable means of determining legitimacy in LGBTQ claims (Murray, 2014). This fear results in greater suspicion on the part of some adjudicators and judges when claimants fail to demonstrate the expected, or even required, markers of group belonging (e.g. knowledge of gay bars and parades, public associations) (Sridharan, 2008). Take for example, Mohammad, an Iranian who was seeking asylum as a gay man but who had long learned the necessities of discretion. In Iran he had been self-aware as a gay man for a decade when a guard with whom he had been intimate told his family (Morgan, 2006, p. 144). Both the guard and his family threatened Mohammad's life (p. 145). After reaching the United States, however, he was denied asylum because he showed no signs of femininity and kept his relationship with his live-in boyfriend secret from his boyfriend's relatives (p. 146). It was only after he obtained affidavits from LGBTQ organizations that his status was "visible" enough to warrant, on his second appeal, the granting of asylum (p. 146-147). On the other hand, the principles of assessment that emphasize identifying stereotypical gay traits seem very much to invite rather than prevent fraudulence. An example of this can be found in the allegations that Nigerians are training asylum seekers to act gay in order to attain asylum (Murray, 2014).

REFORMING THE PROCESS

Reformation of the adjudication process might begin with a more nuanced consideration of each applicant's narrative. Tailored competency training could go a long way towards ensuring that adjudicators appreciate the nuances of a LGBTQ individual's conflicted path to seeking asylum. Adjudicators could be allowed to retain sufficient discretion while the

determination process is standardized enough so that officers do not veer into unreasonable lines of inquiry skewed towards rejection. In addition, there is the need for an understanding of inchoate LGBTQ identity.

As Middlekoop (2013) shows, some asylum applicants may not disclose their sexuality upon arriving in the United States because they are in an early phase of accepting their identity and may lack even the language to discuss it. For some, internalized homophobia acts as a formidable barrier to self-acceptance and articulating same sex desire (p. 155). A relatively "late" articulation tends to raise suspicions for adjudicators, but individuals should be offered the opportunity to alter their claims for asylum or initiate new (p. 162). Again, this can be done without compromising rigor in the determination process. Professional witnesses, such as psychologists and social workers, can play a larger role in communicating to officers the particular psychological challenges of migrating from a severely homophobic culture to one that is more accepting.

While the application process, once LGBTQ asylum seekers are in the United States, should be slowed down when it is necessary to accommodate the preparation of their legal claims, the process of recognizing LGBTQ refugees abroad and bringing them to resettling countries can be expedited. In many cases, individuals spend conflict-ridden months or years in transit countries that house them (on a temporary basis) while they seek resettlement through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (La Violette, 2013). In response to this, Heartland Alliance International (HAI) initiated a project, led by HAI Lebanon Country Director Marya Abdul Rahman, to provide social services to LGBTQ Syrians residing temporarily in Lebanon (M. Abdul Rahman, personal correspondence, December 8, 2015). Likewise, Helsinki Citizens Assembly has made a commendable effort to monitor and report on the conditions of Iranian gay men and transgender women who are temporarily in Turkey, where they are often plagued by police abuse, attacks from homophobic locals, and difficulty with housing and employment (Helsinki Citizens Assembly & the Organization for Refugee, Asylum & Migration, 2009).

While many migrants spend time in the compromised conditions of first asylum, others spend agonizing months and years in detention centers in the United States after having been apprehended at the border (Gruberg, 2013). The exact number is unknown because U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) does not collect data on sexual orientation. However, Heartland Alliance's National Immigrant Justice Center has documented abuses of LGBTQ asylum seekers in Department of Homeland Security (DHS) holding centers across the country (Gruberg, 2013).

As Gruberg (2013) shows, transgender women seem to be the most frequently mistreated in these settings, as some facilities, such as Krome Service Processing Center in Miami, “resolve” issues of abuse perpetrated by fellow detainees by placing them in solitary confinement (p. 6). Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail this system as well as the particular struggles of transgender asylum seekers, it is important to note detainment as an area in need of advocacy effort, including the extreme vulnerability of transgender detainees. Prior to 1996, only individuals considered a flight risk or a threat to national security were detained (p. 3). Currently, ICE operates under a mandate from Congress to fill 34,000 beds in 250 facilities across the country, regardless of the particularities of individual cases (p. 3). There are viable alternatives to detention that are less costly and more humane (p. 16). Just as the adjudication process can be re-traumatizing for this population, living like a prisoner upon arriving in a presumed haven is likely be re-traumatizing, even without the sexual abuse and other kinds of abuse that some detainees face (p. 6).

CONCLUSION

Though systems operated by government bureaucracies are generally reputed to be inflexible in the face of human nuance and slow in the face of exigent need, the stakes are particularly high for LGBTQ migrants. Death or a life of harassment and isolation could be the result of a failed asylum claim, and the protracted process of adjudication in the United States serves to exacerbate symptoms of trauma and estrangement. Beyond the reform of the system processing LGBTQ asylum claims, community centers, particularly in urban centers like New York City and Chicago, have the capacity to create programming aimed at integrating LGBTQ asylum seekers. More robust and inclusive social services could mitigate the current lack of state services. At the same time, there are meaningful ways in which agencies serving refugees and asylum seekers can prioritize addressing the needs of this population so that re-traumatization and social isolation are minimized. Both groups have a role to play in advocating for the U.S. government’s prioritization of LGBTQ individuals living in hostile environments during the process of refugee selection, as well as in reforming adjudication so that it is sensitive to the tough transitions endured during the application process.

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