Transphobia Among Transgender of Color

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**Objectives**
- Identify the effects of transphobia on the psychological vulnerability of MTF transgenders of color.
- Describe how mental health issues can vary among different ethnic groups among transgenders.
- Develop a community-based mental health intervention for transgenders of color.

**Background**
- Male-to-female transgenders (MTF TGs) are at high risk for mental health concerns, such as depression and suicidal ideation and attempts, due to their unique social context.
- Transphobia is defined as stigma and prejudice against transgender people.
- Experiencing transphobia can contribute to psychological vulnerability among transgender people.

**Methods**

**Study 1**
- Seven focus groups with 48 MTF TGs.
- All participants were ethnic minorities.
- Analyzed discussion relating to transphobia and socio-cultural conditions among MTFs of color.

**Study 2**
- Cross-sectional survey with 332 MTF TGs.
- All participants were ethnic minorities.
- Analyzed questions relating to transphobia, psychological vulnerability, and social support.

**Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>Cross-sectional</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 48</td>
<td>N = 332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age (range)</td>
<td>35 yrs. (19 – 55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% African Am.</td>
<td>70% Pre-op transsexual or transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31% API</td>
<td>23% Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% Latina</td>
<td>6% Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% Mixed/other</td>
<td>12% Other</td>
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</tbody>
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**Results**

**Transphobia in childhood**

“When I was 4 years old, I dressed up as a woman. I got hit by my sister. They kept me in a dark room for a whole day, since then I got numb, and I didn’t even know how to be who I was.”

**Prevalence of depression (CES-D > 15), by race/ethnicity**

“My main focus right now is depression. I have a very serious problem with depression. That’s always been a big issue for me, and it still is an issue.”

**Current intervention projects**

- Providing workshops regarding HIV risk reduction, substance abuse prevention, and health promotion. (Supported by SAMHSA, Grant # H79TI12592)
- Subcontract with a local substance abuse treatment agency that developed a transgender recovery program, the first in the nation.
- Currently expanding to accommodate FTM transgenders as well as gender variant people.

**Recommendations**

- Future research should investigate how cultural constructs among racial/ethnic groups influence psychological vulnerability and experience of transphobia.
- Intervention studies should incorporate community experience and input, and should be scientifically evaluated for efficacy.
- To minimize transphobia, education should have multidimensional approaches (e.g., classroom, workplace, healthcare, media, and policy).
- More research needed on other adverse health outcomes associated with transphobia, including rape and homicide.

**Conclusion**

- Both qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that depression among MTF transgenders of color is significantly associated with their experiences of transphobia.
- The negative effects of transphobia can be mediated by social support and involvement in the transgender community.

**Barriers to accessing health care**

“In order for us to get help, we need to go somewhere where we can get appropriate help, where we’re being treated equally. Because when I go somewhere and I don’t feel like I’m being treated equally, I’ll just leave. It’s gonna defeat the whole purpose, if they don’t care if I get well. Why should I care?”

**Mean levels of transphobia, social support, and transgender community involvement, by ethnicity**

**Multivariate analyses**

- Multiple regression analysis was conducted on the levels of depression by entering demographic variables at the first step and socio-psychological variables at the second step.
- Results indicated transphobia as the strongest independent contributor to depression.
- Involvement in transgender community had a significant inverse relationship to depression.