Stigmatized youth - findings on stigma from the Transgender Research Youth Project (TRYP)

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Purpose of overall study

- Mixed methods assessment of HIV risk behaviors of 151 Male-to-Female (MTF) transgender youth
- Youth sampled from Chicago, Illinois and Los Angeles, California
Community-based research approach

- Transgender Advisory Committee (TAC)
  - 5-12 community members
  - Participation in design, implementation and analysis
  - Structured capacity building for TAC members built in
Age of MTF transgender youth sampled (n = 151)

- 15 years: 1% (3 people)
- 16 years: 3% (5 people)
- 17 years: 13% (20 people)
- 18 years: 13% (20 people)
- 19 years: 13% (20 people)
- 20 years: 10% (15 people)
- 21 years: 7% (11 people)
- 22 years: 13% (20 people)
- 23 years: 13% (20 people)
- 24 years: 18% (36 people)
Race/Ethnicity

- White
- Black/African American
- Latina
- Other

Percentages:
- White: 0%
- Black/African American: 5%
- Latina: 10%
- Other: 15%
- Other: 20%
First analysis: differences between youth with and w/o a history of sex work

- No sex work: 33%
- Sex work: 67%
“It’s weird man, because it’s like God, they just expect transgenders to be a transsexual. Like one time I’m standing up in the bus stop and the police were just looking like, you know, they thought I was, you know what I’m saying, selling my body. Like I’m just waiting for the bus, you know what I’m saying? So it was just like - they made me think about it, you know, that transsexuals mostly are transgenders, just nasty, you know, like they take it as negative. They just sell their body, you know what I’m saying? They just have sex with everybody they see. [emphasis added]”
School drop-out due to gender (n = 36)

- No hx of s/w: 17%
- Yes hx of s/w: 83%
“I dropped out of high school at the age of 17. My first year was very hard for me because I was still dealing with the identity crisis, trying to figure out myself, and that put me in a real bad depression phase where I would miss school a lot. It got to the point where I would ditch a lot because I just didn’t want to go.”
Employment difficulties due to gender (n = 71)

- No hx of sex work: 27%
- Yes hx of sex work: 73%
“Well the day I came out, not too many people were happy with that. Like my father, for example. My father was pissed off, he wanted to beat my ass and try to change me. Like him and my oldest brothers, they were like literally, they would have to tie me down in order for me to shave my head. That’s how bad it was... that was like a real difficult part of my life was when- like what the fuck did you go and tie me down for and shave my head for? Just let me be me. You know? But, to this day, my brother still doesn’t get why I am the way I am. And personally, I don’t specifically know why. But I tell him, you know, it’s just a part of life. And it’s- I wasn’t born like this. This is just something that happened.”
Reported HIV positive

- 79% HIV-
- 19% HIV+
- 1% Don't know results
- 1% Never went back

- 23% of youth w/ sex work hx were HIV+, compared to only 6% with no sex work hx
- *86% got tested for HIV at least once, and often more than once
Resiliency

- Young people are often found to be resilient despite adverse environments and experiences
- Protective factors (social support, community connection, self esteem) can encourage resiliency
**“My strengths is that I’m like a fighter. Like I just won’t give up on any situations. I’ll fight to be successful. I’ll fight to overcome any challenges in my life so that I think that’s good, because sometimes you could, you know, experience something very depressing, and you know, that’s how you get people to get suicide. Hopefully I’m strong enough to overcome anything like that, you know… As being transgender it makes me stronger, because I feel like we have a little bit, we experience, you know, have more odds against us then regular persons. And I mean, being a minority, being gay and being transgender, let’s say we have a few things working against us, so it makes me stronger.”**
Interventions Implications

• Prevention particularly important for youth
• Structural interventions needed to address stigma
  • Age-appropriate care and services
  • Changes in school system
    – Sensitivity training for teachers and administrators
    – Developmentally sensitive referrals for transitioning youth
  • Parental education and support
  • Protective employment laws
    – Advocacy for youth who are discriminated against