

Conceptualizing distal and proximal factors associated with Black girls' trauma: Working with forensic populations in a healing centered way

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- ***Clinical practice*** as a context for empirical research
- Understand the ***historical*** influence of ***oppression*** and ***trauma*** of Black/African American women and girls
- Recognize the role of ***protective factors*** and ***strengths*** in the individual, family and peer social domains
- Describe ***practical approaches*** to engage, partner and work with system-involved Black girls and women

Overview

- Black girls and women who were exposed to **violence** and **victimization** as children are more likely to experience violence as young women and adults²³
- Black girls and women possess a **resilience** that points the way to how we can provide meaningful opportunities for their development¹
- Symptom presentation and treatment responsiveness varies based on **cultural** and **social experiences**²⁴
- **Healing centered engagement** focuses on collective action and transformation²⁵
- Intervene based on client **strengths**

Implications/Conclusions



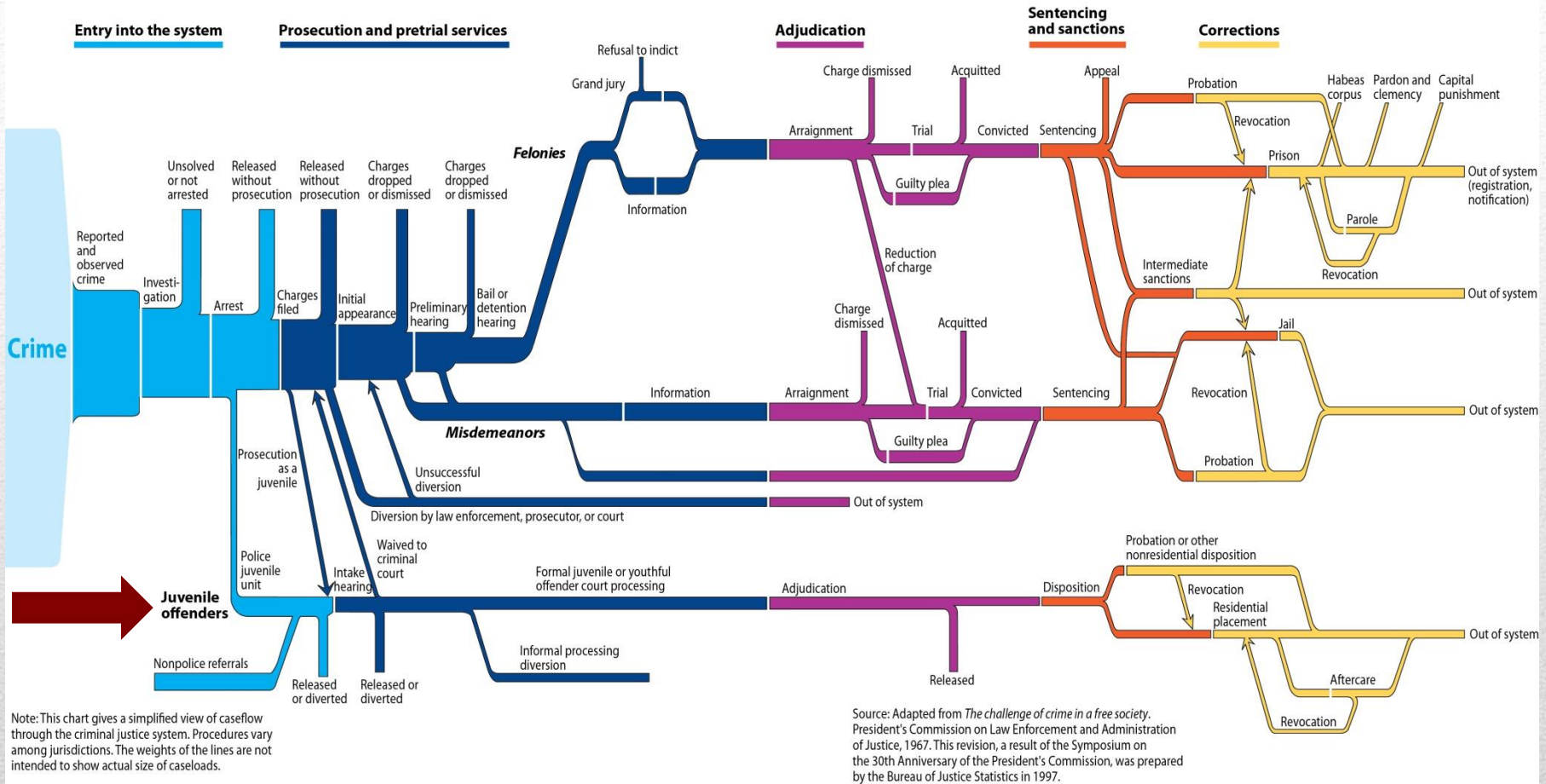
The context of legal system-involved Black/African American girls

Background

- **Youth punishment system (YPS)-involved** – youth or young adults involved with the juvenile justice system, i.e., police contact, court, detention, jail, prison or corrections³³
- **Criminality** – behavior, i.e., violence that could be considered a risk factor or part of a strategy by some youth to sustain resilience;² links between criminality, school experiences and coping³
- **Adultification** - a term used in this report to refer to the perception of Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than white girls of the same age⁴
- **Protective (risk) factors** – factors that modify or ameliorate the effects of risk⁵
- **Health equity** - value underlying a commitment to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities⁶
- **Healing/healing centered engagement** – holistic involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing; healing centered approach views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways that trauma and healing are experienced collectively⁸
- **Crime desistance** - phenomena of giving up crime⁷
- **Proximal (distal)** – factors closer to Black girls, i.e., parents, family, peers, etc.³²
- **Community-based participatory research** – stakeholders/community members become active participants in many phases of the research²⁰

Definitions

What is the sequence of events in the criminal justice system?



Background

PROXIMAL VS DISTAL

Background

- Proximal Factors – close to girls³⁸
 - Parents/family members
 - Peers
 - Community/Neighborhood environment
- Distal Factors – farther away from girls
 - Societal and structural factors
 - Intergenerational trauma

- Historical trauma²⁸
 - Slavery and Black girls and women²⁸
 - Adultification²⁹
 - Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome²⁸

Background – Distal Factors

And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen
children, and seen most all sold off to slavery
and when I cried out with my mother's grief
none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

[Image: A small, faint red rectangular graphic element.]

[Image: A small, faint white circular graphic element.]

Sojourner Truth

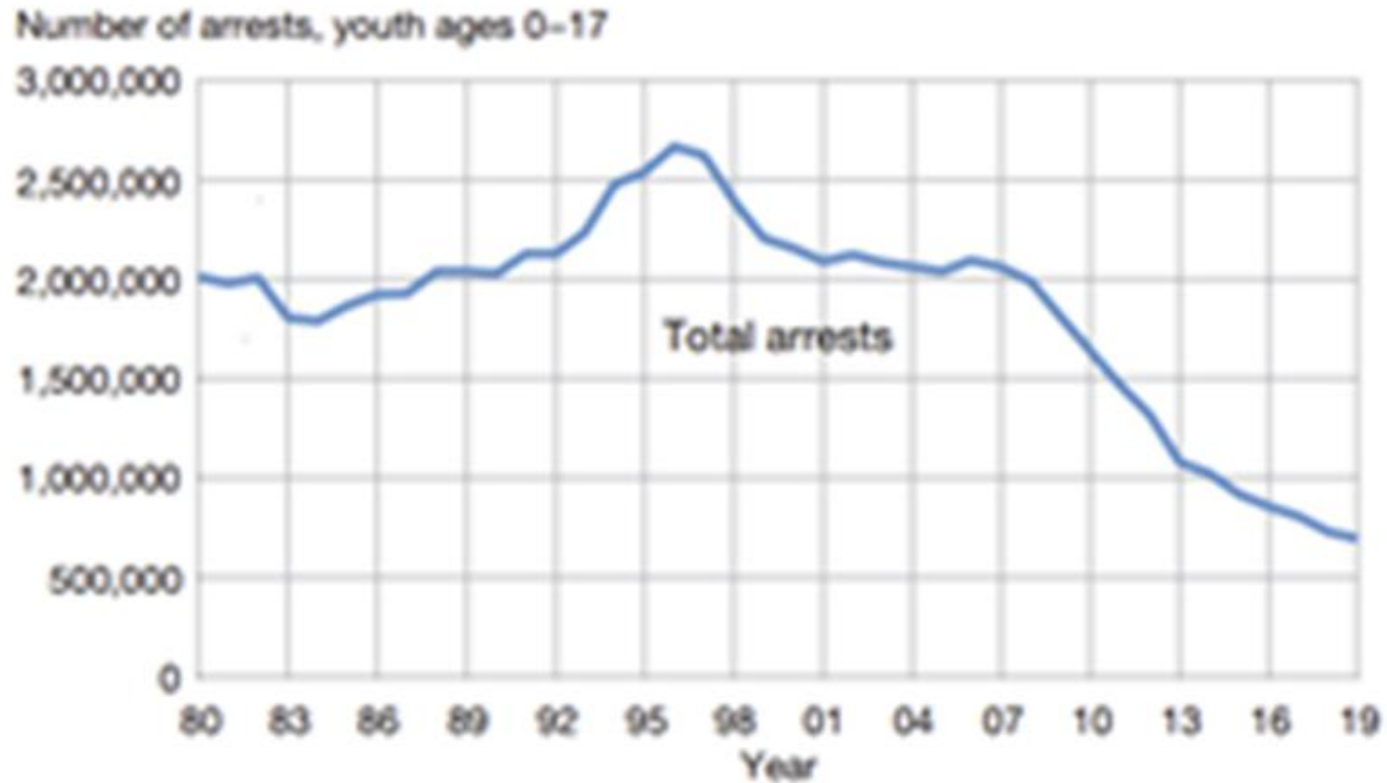
- Gendered racism of the Women's suffrage movement^{30,31}
 - Role of Black women
 - Oppression

Background – Distal Factors

- Black youth are the most overrepresented minority group in the youth punishment system (YPS)³³
 - In 2019, youth arrests dropped to their lowest in 40 years in the United States³⁴
 - Similarly, in England and Wales, children's arrest rates decreased by 77% in the last 10 years³⁵
 - Black children were over four times more likely than white children to be arrested³⁵
- Black/African American girls are:
 - Fastest growing group involved with the juvenile justice system⁹⁻¹⁰
 - Often bear the burden of undiagnosed or misdiagnosed mental health problems like trauma, etc.¹⁰

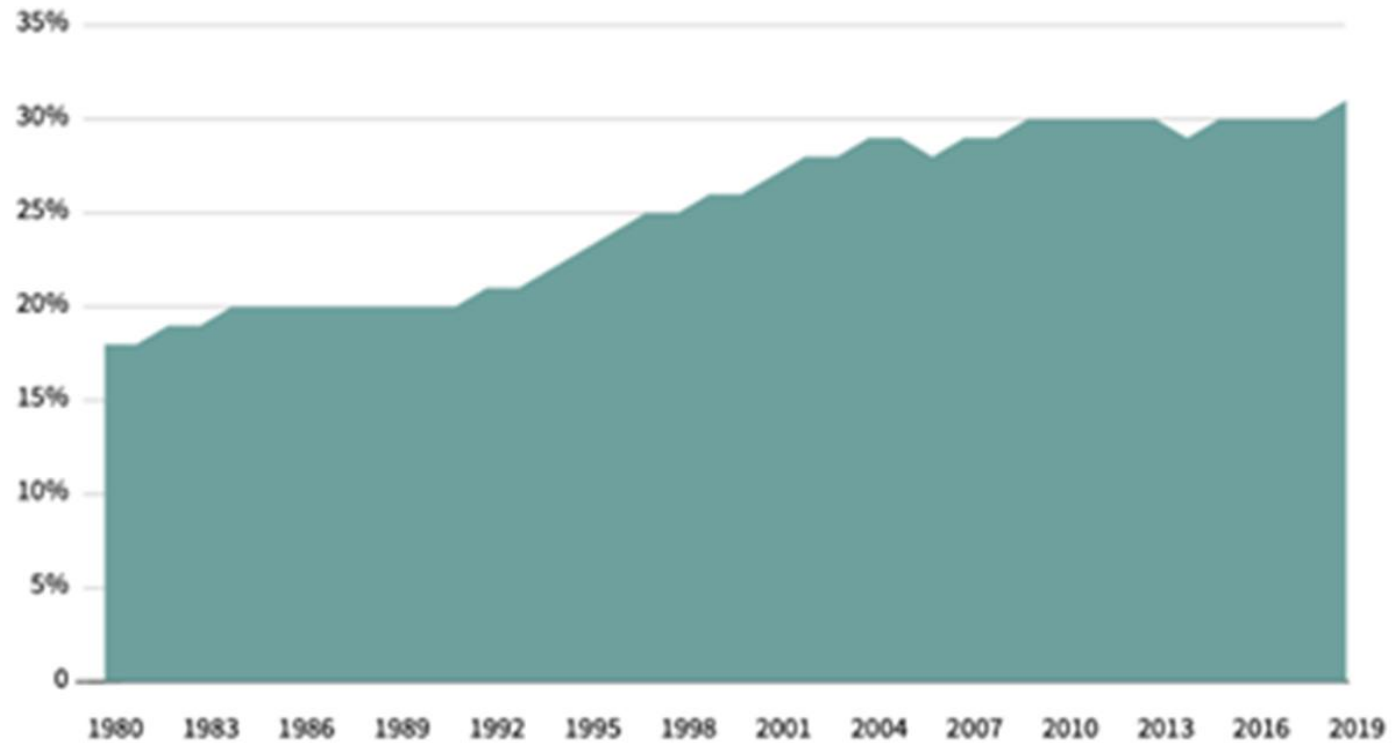
Background – Proximal Factors

In 2019, law enforcement agencies made an estimated 696,620 arrests of youth younger than 18—the fewest arrests of juveniles in nearly 4 decades



Girls Comprise a Growing Proportion of All Teen Arrests, 1980-2019

36



- Trauma – Black Girls’ Pathway to the YPS³³
 - Childhood sexual abuse - 40% of Black females report experiencing coercive sexual contact by age 18, reflecting a high rate of sexual trauma among girls of color^{1,7,10,37}
 - Un/mis-diagnosed mental health problems - Black/African American girls often bear the burden of undiagnosed or misdiagnosed mental health problems like depression and trauma¹⁰
 - Trauma history may increase myriad adverse health and mental health outcomes³⁷
 - Substance misuse³⁷
 - Sexual reproductive health issues related to multiple partners³⁷
 - Depression symptoms, stress and poor self regulation³⁷

Background – Proximal Factors



Research
Agenda

CRITICAL
RACE
THEORY

- *How do girls in the youth punishment system interact with their environments in ways that impact their mental health disparities (trauma, depression, and suicide) and law-breaking behavior?*



Sample, Measures and Analysis

Method

The Imara Study, Ralph J. DiClemente, PhD

- Imara is a Swahili name meaning “strong” or “resolute”
- Investigates the efficacy of a sexual risk reduction intervention an Indicated population of Black adolescent girl in a youth detention center in Atlanta, GA
- Analytical sample of Black girls aged 12-17 (N = 188)10
- Questions were administered with computer assisted interviewing (ACASI) technology
- This study is a secondary analysis of exempt data, so no further IRB approval was required.

The Imara Papers

SECONDARY DATA FROM A RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL OF A SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INTERVENTION, RALPH J. DICLEMENTE, PHD

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON STRESS DISORDERS IN JUVENILES

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Exploring substance misuse behaviors among black girls in detention: Intersections of trauma, sex, and age

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ABSTRACT

High risk substance misuse, trauma and gang involvement are prevalent in adolescents and often occur with youth involved with the youth punishment system. Evidence suggests that system involvement is related to trauma histories, substance misuse, as well as gang involvement. This study investigated the associations between individual and peer factors and their relationship to problem drug and alcohol use among Black girls involved with the youth punishment system. Data were collected from 186 Black girls in detention at baseline, as well as 3 and 6 month follow up periods. Measures assessed were abuse history, trauma history, sex while using drugs and alcohol, age, government assistance, and drug use. Significant findings from the multiple regression analyses indicated that younger girls were more likely to have a higher prevalence of having a drug problem than older girls at baseline. Having sex while on drugs and alcohol at the 3 month follow up period was correlated with drug use. These findings highlight how individual and peer factors can influence problem substance misuse, their behavior and peer relationships among Black girls in detention.

1. Introduction

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for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990; Tam et al., 2019). High SRH rates as well as abuse and trauma are associated

Abstract

Black American adolescent girls constitute approximately one third of the US youth legal system population. Their overrepresentation in the youth punishment system is an indicator of significant physical, sexual, and/or behavioral health needs. Since less is known about perceptions of HIV/STI risk among Black girls with juvenile justice histories, we used intersectionality theory to explore the following: (1) how a sample of Black girls in detention endorse their perceptions of sexual safety given the multiple intersections of their race, gender, and SES and (2) how their endorsements align with interlocking systems of social inequality for system-involved Black at the social structural level. We examined relational and behavioral factors associated perceived HIV/STI risk among Black girls in detention. Data were collected from 186 Black girls in detention at baseline, as well as 3 and 6 month follow up periods. Measures assessed were abuse history, trauma history, sex while using drugs and alcohol, age, government assistance, and drug use. Significant findings from the multiple regression analyses indicated that younger girls were more likely to have a higher prevalence of having a drug problem than older girls at baseline. Having sex while on drugs and alcohol at the 3 month follow up period was correlated with drug use. These findings highlight how individual and peer factors can influence problem substance misuse, their behavior and peer relationships among Black girls in detention.

Summary of Findings

- Mental health – trauma/PTSD and depression
- Substance misuse - younger girls and sex under the influence
- Relationships with adults and peers
- Being a Black girl is hard
- Protective factors remain
 - Self esteem and future orientation
 - Older girls



I AM POWERFUL

Intersectionality Theory



- Limitations of a secondary dataset.
- PTSD was not a clinical measure as it was self-reported.
- What is the possible role of racism and discrimination, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)?
- We examined direct relationships but there could be interrelated and mediating pathways accounting for PTSD among this population.

- Future research should:
 - Focus on other forms of trauma – intergenerational and trauma history (lifetime trauma)
 - Use critical theories like Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality
 - Consider healing approaches to address trauma, stress, and PTSD
 - Utilize mixed methods approaches

Strengths

- Black girls involved with the youth punishment system are both understudied and underserved
- Practical significance of findings for individuals that work with Black girls or women involved with the justice system
- Findings contribute to understanding the needs of Black girls with trauma histories, PTSD, as well as the need to heal relationships with their parents/caregivers

Conclusion

- Build and enhance parent/caregiver/family functioning that is associated with their responses to girls' trauma, abuse and PTSD.
- Bolster positive internal self images and hope given the protective effects of self-esteem and future orientation.
- Clinical services that address untreated trauma and promote healing and well-being can moderate and reduce the effects of trauma and PTSD are needed to increase crime desistance.



WHAT YOU
CAN DO
TODAY!

Practical Approaches

- Identify and conceptualize the *proximal* and *distal factors* that are associated with the individual's experiences, especially those of trauma
- Search for and identify “common ground”²⁷
- Identify and capitalize on the assets already present
- Create exercises to identify ways that client's self soothe
- Broaden your network of colleagues to develop relevant approaches

Practical Approaches

- Broaden your network of colleagues to develop relevant approaches
- Embrace the client's authentic response
 - Resistance is often how Black women and girls demonstrate personal agency²⁶
- Use theories and frameworks you like to address sensitive or controversial topics²⁶
 - Critical race and Mixed Critical Multiracial theories to have dialogues about race, racism or racial identity
- Learn about racism, historical and collective trauma, sexism, privilege, and interrogate your own life experiences
 - Your BEST you is your best TOOL!

medium.com

The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement

- Healing Centered-Engagement²⁵
 - Holistic shift in how we view trauma, its causes and its intervention
 - Involving culture, spirituality, civic action, collective healing
 - Develop your **story** and share it with your clients

- Black girls and women who were exposed to **violence** and **victimization** as children are more likely to experience violence as young women and adults²³
- Black girls possess a **resilience** that points the way to how we can provide meaningful opportunities for their development¹
- Symptom presentation and responsiveness to treatment varies based on **cultural** and **social experiences**²⁴
- **Healing centered engagement** focuses on collective action and transformation²⁵
- Intervene based on client **strengths** while considering their adversity

Implications/Conclusions

Acknowledgements

- BIPOC girls and women
- Practitioners, advocates, allies, students and scholars committed to this work
- Imara study participants
- Ralph DiClemente and Dexter Voisin

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Resources

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Thank You



Questions and Discussion

