

CHAPTER 6

Mental Health and Transphobia among Transwomen Sex Workers

Application and Extension of Minority Stress Models

*Don Operario*¹

*Tiffany R. Glynn*²

*Tooru Nemoto*³

1 Professor of public health in the Department of Behavior and Social Sciences at Brown University.

2 PhD student in clinical health psychology at Miami University.

3 Research program director at the Public Health Institute.

SUMMARY

The aims of this chapter are to (1) describe the literature on mental health problems and their social determinants among transwomen sex workers, including findings from a study of 573 transgender women from San Francisco with a history of sex work, and (2) examine the Gender Minority Stress Model and its applicability to transgender female sex workers. On the basis of this analysis, we suggest implications for research and for social and health service providers working with transgender female sex workers.

KEY TERMS

depressive symptoms; exposure to violence; gender minority stress; minority stress; transphobia

REFERENCES

- Blosnich, J., Lee, J. G., & Horn, K. (2013). A systematic review of the aetiology of tobacco disparities for sexual minorities. *Tobacco Control, 22* (2), 66–73.
- Bockting, W. O., Miner, M. H., Swinburne Romine, R. E., Hamilton, A., & Coleman, E. (2013). Stigma, mental health, and resilience in an online sample of the US transgender population. *American Journal of Public Health, 103* (5), 943–951.
- Clements-Nolle, K., Marx, R., & Katz, M. (2006). Attempted suicide among transgender persons: The influence of gender-based discrimination and victimization. *Journal of Homosexuality, 51*, 53–69.
- Collier, K. L., Colarossi, L. G., Hazel, D. S., Watson, K., & Wyatt, G. E. (2015). Healing Our Women for transgender women: Adaptation, acceptability, and pilot testing. *AIDS Education and Prevention, 27* (5), 418–431.

- Decker, M. R., Crago, A. L., Chu, S. K., Sherman, S. G., Seshu, M. S., Buthelezi, K., . . . & Beyrer, C. (2015). Human rights violations against sex workers: Burden and effect on HIV. *Lancet*, 385 (9963), 186–199.
- Díaz, R. M., Ayala, G., Bein, E., Henne, J., & Marin, B. V. (2001). The impact of homophobia, poverty, and racism on the mental health of gay and bisexual Latino men: Findings from 3 US cities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91 (6), 927–932.
- Gamarel, K. E., Reisner, S. L., Laurenceau, J. P., Nemoto, T., & Operario, D. (2014). Gender minority stress, mental health, and relationship quality: A dyadic investigation of transgender women and their cisgender male partners. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28 (4), 437.
- Garofalo, R., Deleon, J., Osmer, E., Doll, M., & Harper, G. W. (2006). Overlooked, misunderstood and at-risk: Exploring the lives and HIV risk of ethnic minority male-to-female transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38 (3), 230–236.
- Glynn, T. R., Gamarel, K. E., Kahler, C. W., Iwamoto, M., Operario, D., & Nemoto, T. (2016). The role of gender affirmation in psychological well-being among transgender women. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 3 (3), 336.
- Goldbach, J. T., Tanner-Smith, E. E., Bagwell, M., & Dunlap, S. (2014). Minority stress and substance use in sexual minority adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Prevention Science*, 15 (3), 350–363.
- Graham, R., Berkowitz, B., Blum, R., Bockting, W., Bradford, J., de Vries, B., . . . & Makadon, H. (2011). *The health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people: Building a foundation for better understanding*. Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine.
- Haas, A. P., Eliason, M., Mays, V. M., Mathy, R. M., Cochran, S. D., D'Augelli, A. R., . . . & Russell, S. T. (2010). Suicide and suicide risk in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations: Review and recommendations. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58 (1), 10–51.
- Harcourt, C., & Donovan, B. (2005). The many faces of sex work. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 81 (3), 201–206.
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2009). How does sexual minority stigma “get under the skin”? A psychological mediation framework. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135 (5), 707.
- Hendricks, M. L., & Testa, R. J. (2012). A conceptual framework for clinical work with transgender and gender nonconforming clients: An adaptation of the Minority Stress Model. *Professional Psychology—Research and Practice*, 43 (5), 460.
- Herbst, J. H., Jacobs, E. D., Finlayson, T. J., McKleroy, V. S., Neumann, M. S., Crepaz, N., & HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis Team. (2008). Estimating HIV prevalence and risk behaviors of transgender persons in the United States: A systematic review. *AIDS and Behavior*, 12 (1), 1–17.
- Hoffman, B. R. (2014). The interaction of drug use, sex work, and HIV among transgender women. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 49 (8), 1049–1053.
- Hughto, J. M. W., Reisner, S. L., & Pachankis, J. E. (2015). Transgender stigma and

- health: A critical review of stigma determinants, mechanisms, and interventions. *Social Science & Medicine*, 147, 222–231.
- Kelleher, C. (2009). Minority stress and health: Implications for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 22 (4), 373–379.
- Kerrigan, D., Kennedy, C. E., Morgan-Thomas, R., Reza-Paul, S., Mwangi, P., Win, K. T., . . . & Butler, J. (2015). A community empowerment approach to the HIV response among sex workers: Effectiveness, challenges, and considerations for implementation and scale-up. *Lancet*, 385 (9963), 172–185.
- Lick, D. J., Durso, L. E., & Johnson, K. L. (2013). Minority stress and physical health among sexual minorities. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8 (5), 521–548.
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129 (5), 674.
- Mizock, L., & Lewis, T. K. (2008). Trauma in transgender populations: Risk, resilience, and clinical care. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 8 (3), 335–354.
- Nadal, K. L., Davidoff, K. C., & Fujii-Doe, W. (2014). Transgender women and the sex work industry: Roots in systemic, institutional, and interpersonal discrimination. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 15 (2), 169–183.
- Nemoto, T., Bödeker, B., & Iwamoto, M. (2011). Social support, exposure to violence and transphobia, and correlates of depression among male-to-female transgender women with a history of sex work. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101 (10), 1980–1988.
- Nemoto, T., Operario, D., Keatley, J., Nguyen, H., & Sugano, E. (2005). Promoting health for transgender women: Transgender Resources and Neighborhood Space (TRANS) program in San Francisco. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95 (3), 382–384.
- Operario, D., Soma, T., & Underhill, K. (2008). Sex work and HIV status among transgender women: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, 48 (1), 97–103.
- Poteat, T., Wirtz, A. L., Radix, A., Borquez, A., Silva-Santisteban, A., Deutsch, M. B., . . . & Operario, D. (2015). HIV risk and preventive interventions in transgender women sex workers. *Lancet*, 385 (9964), 274–286.
- Reisner, S. L., Greytak, E. A., Parsons, J. T., & Ybarra, M. L. (2015). Gender minority social stress in adolescence: Disparities in adolescent bullying and substance use by gender identity. *Journal of Sex Research*, 52 (3), 243–256.
- Sausa, L. A., Keatley, J., & Operario, D. (2007). Perceived risks and benefits of sex work among transgender women of color in San Francisco. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 36 (6), 768–777.
- Singh, A. A., & McKleroy, V. S. (2011). “Just getting out of bed is a revolutionary act”: The resilience of transgender people of color who have survived traumatic life events. *Traumatology*, 17 (2), 34–44.

- Taylor, R. D., Bimbi, D. S., Joseph, H. A., Margolis, A. D., & Parsons, J. T. (2011). Girlfriends: Evaluation of an HIV-risk reduction intervention for adult transgender women. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 23 (5), 469–478.
- Testa, R. J., Habarth, J., Peta, J., Balsam, K., & Bockting, W. (2015). Development of the Gender Minority Stress and Resilience Measure. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 2 (1), 65.
- Testa, R. J., Sciacca, L. M., Wang, F., Hendricks, M. L., Goldblum, P., Bradford, J., & Bongar, B. (2012). Effects of violence on transgender people. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 43 (5), 452–459.
- Vanwesenbeeck, I. (2001). Another decade of social scientific work on sex work: A review of research, 1990–2000. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 12 (1), 242–289.
- Weinberg, M. S., Shaver, F. M., & Williams, C. J. (1999). Gendered sex work in the San Francisco Tenderloin. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 28 (6), 503–521.
- Weitzer, R. (2009). Sociology of sex work. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 213–234.
- Wilson, E. C., Garofalo, R., Harris, R. D., Herrick, A., Martinez, M., Martinez, J., . . . & Adolescent Medicine Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions. (2009). Transgender female youth and sex work: HIV risk and a comparison of life factors related to engagement in sex work. *AIDS and Behavior*, 13 (5), 902–913.