

Overlooked through Multiple Lenses: Sex-trafficked LGBTQIA+ Immigrant and Refugee Children in the US.

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<p>Introduction</p> <p>We take a child rights perspective under the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and apply it to a vulnerable population: sex-trafficked LGBTQIA+ immigrant and refugee children in the US.</p>	<p>Risk Factors for This Intersectional Population</p> <p>The children’s intersectional identities are linked to “exceptionality” and “extreme vulnerability,” with the latter intertwined with experiences of victimization, family rejection, foster care maltreatment, homelessness, etc. (Boukli & Renz, 2018).</p> <p>The intersectional vulnerability associated with immigrant LGBTQIA+ child victims of sex trafficking are well-explained within the victimological literature. It suggests that perceived notions of vulnerability, innocence and notions of being deserving of help (Best, 1990) are particularly key to an understanding of sex trafficking of children and youth.</p> <p>In the context of sex trafficking, the underlying assumption of an ‘ideal trafficking victim’ is one who is vulnerable, visibly abused, possibly a minor, with no visible support (Aradau, 2004).</p>	<p>Results and Conclusions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is unclear whether the rights of sex-trafficked LGBTQIA+ immigrant and refugee children in the US under the UNHCR are being protected. 2. Prevalence of this intersectional population is unknown. 3. There are few promising programs for this intersectional population.
<p>Framing Quotation</p> <p>“...children may face very different situations from one another depending on their gender identity; the social and cultural roles assigned to their gender in their community may accentuate inequalities and exacerbate discrimination ..., sexual violence as well as barriers to access education” (UNHCR, April 2021).</p>	<p>Risk Factors (continued)</p> <p>Environmental Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism • Bullying • Xenophobia • Involvement in child welfare or juvenile justice systems • Lack of legal, health and social support services for addressing the specific needs of unaccompanied minors' victims of trafficking. • Unrecognition of specific stressors and needs due to the limited awareness or knowledge amongst the first responders about sex trafficking victims in the given population. <p>Micro-level Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-generational abuse • Stigmatization • Immigration status • Housing instability/homelessness • Adverse childhood experiences • Family rejection, neglect • Risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases 	<p>Recommendations and Takeaway Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for further research: The challenges in collecting and the paucity of relevant data must be addressed. • Need for policy initiatives: Based on the UNCHR’s policy, the US needs to evaluate and adapt current policies to support this population. • Need for practice programming: Current promising programs need ongoing evaluation and replication, while additional programs focusing on these children’s unmet needs should be initiated. • Need for professional education: Students and practitioners across the professions working with children in this population need education about their prevalence, risk factors, and needs.
<p>Problems in Knowing the Prevalence of the <i>Individual</i> Populations Under Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence estimates of the overall number of minor victims of sex trafficking are difficult to ascertain. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, there were 23,500 runaways reported in 2018, out of which 1 in 7 were likely victims of child sex trafficking. • We further found the numbers of LGBTQIA+ children and immigrant and refugee children in the US to have been undercounted. According to a report on Fostering Safety (Gruberg & Hussey, 2014), LGBT youth account for approximately 19% of children in foster care and an estimated 12-15% of youth in the juvenile justice system. • It is believed that this population also represents a large percentage of the homeless youth population—approximately 40% (Choi et al., 2015). 	<p>Significant Needs of This Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification • Safety protection • Education • Culturally-responsive services • Trauma-informed healthcare and mental health treatment 	<p>Selected References</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boukli, A., & Renz, F. (2019). Deconstructing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender victim of sex trafficking: Harm, exceptionality and religion–sexuality tensions. <i>International Review of Victimology</i>, 25(1), 71–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758018772670 • Development Services Group, Inc. 2014. “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Sex Trafficking.” Literature review. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/CSECSexTrafficking.pdf • Gruberg, S., & Hussey, H. (2014). <i>Fostering Safety How the U.S. Government Can Protect LGBT Immigrant Children</i>. Center for American Progress. • Martinez, O., & Kelle, G. (2013). Sex Trafficking of LGBT Individuals: A Call for Service Provision, Research, and Action. <i>The international law news</i>, 42(4), sex_trafficking_lgbt_individuals. • Choi, S.K., Wilson, B.D.M., Shelton, J., & Gates, G. (2015). Serving Our Youth 2015: The Needs and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth Experiencing Homelessness. <i>Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund</i>. • Finklea, K. M., Fernandes-Alcantara, A. L., & Siskin, A. (2014). Sex trafficking of children in the United States: Overview and issues for Congress, report.
<p>Problems in Knowing the Prevalence of the <i>Intersectional</i> Population Under Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US maintains the best data on child maltreatment (Tran, et al., 2018). • However, our review of the literature found the prevalence in the US of data for LGBTQIA+ immigrant and refugee children is unknown. Without accurate data on this population and on those among them who may be sex trafficking victims, protecting them is highly challenging. • Due to the hidden nature of same-sex prostitution and the stigma associated with being LGBTQIA+, LGBTQIA+ victims of sex trafficking are even less likely than heterosexual victims to be reported to local authorities (Martinez, 2014). It is reported that a high percentage of homeless youth in the US identify as LGBTQIA+ and 58.7% of them are exploited through sex trafficking. • Challenges to data collection include, among many others: lack of awareness and knowledge of human trafficking, victim fear of self-incrimination, stigmatization of people involved in commercial sex, and siloes in information collection. Despite these challenges, it is clear that children and youth are victims of CST across the United States. 	<p>Contact Information</p> <p>nikita.aggarwal@ssw.umaryland.edu</p> <p>clong@ssw.umaryland.edu</p> <p>nfinigan-carr@ssw.umaryland.edu</p> <p>Thank you for your attention and interest!</p>	
<p>There Are Few National Programs Focused on This Vulnerable Population</p>		
<p>Below are some organizations that have taken some concrete efforts towards tackling sex trafficking; however, they do not exclusively focus on children/ youth immigrants.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polaris Project: is a nonprofit organization operating the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) and engaging community members in local and national grassroots efforts. Their work ranges from working with government leaders to protect victims' rights to offering direct outreach and needs-based services to victims. They provide information on human trafficking, including information on special populations such as child welfare-involved and LGBTQ youth. • Project REACH: provides consultation and brief MH services to trafficking victims throughout the US; it trains local service providers, including first responders and law enforcement, about working with trafficking victims and survivors, the psychological effects of trauma, interviewing techniques, and culturally appropriate, trauma-informed interventions. • National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC): provides assistance to parents, children, law enforcement, schools, and the community in recovering missing children and raising public awareness about ways to help prevent child abduction, molestation, and sexual exploitation. It also provides training, case management, clearinghouse resources, analytical support, family and peer support, and recovery services assistance on reports involving child sex trafficking, including CST analytical team, CST recovery planning and services and family advocacy and support. 		