

Community Resource Critique Paper:
Exodus Cry and Aftercare for Survivors of Human Trafficking
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Introduction

Human trafficking is one of the most understated social issues in our world today. It is not a dramatization to say so; it is estimated that 800,000 individuals are trafficked every year globally (Macy & Johns, 2011). Some say that this number is on the low end of the scale. Much of society is uneducated about the reality of human trafficking, and sex trafficking in particular is an uncomfortable subject to talk about. According to Countryman-Roswurm and Shaffer (2015), “those subjected to sex trafficking endure psychological, physical, sexual, social, and spiritual abuse that results in physiological trauma” (p. 1). Silence can no longer be the status quo when it comes to this issue. It is far too grave of an ordeal to let it simply slip by unnoticed any longer.

For these reasons, I have chosen to write this critique paper about human trafficking and some of the aftercare practices in place here in the United States. Specifically, I am examining a program called Exodus Cry, which is based in Kansas City, Missouri, which raises awareness and provides programs for prevention, intervention, and holistic restoration for victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Literature Review

The field of human trafficking and the treatment of its survivors is a new but growing one. Much of the current research and literature is focused on figuring out exactly how best to aid victims of human trafficking. The goal of this literature review is to examine what the current literature says about providing care for victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Prevention Through Education and Awareness

First, this literature review will discuss some existing guidelines for raising awareness and educating the population about human trafficking. When tackling any social issue, proper education and promotion of community awareness is crucial. In fact, in order for something to be

classified as a social problem, it must be something that the majority of people recognize as such. Due to the nature of human and sex trafficking, it is vitally important that the general population – and particularly those individuals who wish to work with survivors of trafficking – be educated appropriately.

According to Yakushko (2009), education of media personnel is important in order to reduce stereotypes related to trafficking (p. 164). Typically, the singular approach to educating the public has been to educate them about the effects of human trafficking on victims. However, Yakushko also argues that addressing the source of human trafficking is just as important if not more so.

According to Yakushko (2009):

[It is important to address] the rising demand for cheap labor, including that for sexual services. For example, Hughes (2001) highlights the relation between a growing demand for sexually explicit materials, including pornography and child pornography, and new web technologies, which is resulting in an increasing number of trafficked and enslaved individuals used for such services. (p. 164)

Yakushko (2009) also notes that another avenue for prevention and education is through policy-related actions (p. 165), which will not be discussed as thoroughly in this literature review in order to focus on other suggestions for prevention and education. However, this type of prevention effort is important to remember for later discussion.

Dr. Karen Countryman-Roswurm is the Executive Director of the Center for Combating Human Trafficking at Wichita State University. Countryman-Roswurm, alongside Bailey Patton, a member of the CCHT staff, has done research on effective education and prevention tactics. Countryman-Roswurm and Patton emphasize the importance of treating survivors of human

trafficking with the utmost respect, especially by being conscious of the sensitive nature of many survivors' stories. There have been plenty of well-meaning organizations who have further "exploited" and even traumatized survivors of human trafficking by sharing their stories publicly, without any censorship.

Say Countryman-Roswurm & Patton (2014) of this issue:

Within the anti-trafficking movement, more and more survivors are being used as propaganda. They are asked to share their stories in order to raise funds or awareness with little thought to the effects of such exposure. In addition, rather than being recognized and/or compensated as experts and leaders in the anti-trafficking movement, survivors are being taken advantage of in the pursuit of a story that has emotional pull. (p. 3)

Countryman-Roswurm and Patton (2014) urge programs that are aimed at assisting trafficking survivors or raising awareness to be cautious and respectful when working with survivors. They offer some paradigms for healthy and conducive communication and interaction such as respecting the individual, building trust, exhibiting boundaries and discretion, educating by addressing rather than exploitation, and recognizing victims' expertise (p. 3). They also provide some suggestions for victims and survivors as well, such as encouraging them to be thoughtful about potential consequences before agreeing to share their story. According to Countryman-Roswurm & Patton (2014), "Ultimately, there is no cause significant or important enough to jeopardize the emotional and physical well-being of a survivor. Survivors of human trafficking have overcome exploitation and they should not be further commodified by those trying to help" (p. 6).

It is clear from the current research by the field's experts that prevention needs to primarily target the demand for human trafficking. This is best done through thoughtful education and communication of the facts and realities of human trafficking and how damaging it is to its victims.

Intervention and Initial Victim Treatment

Next, this literature review will explore recommended methods and approaches for intervention and treating the immediate needs of victims of human trafficking. According to Countryman-Roswurm & Shaffer (2015), the first priority when treating a survivor of human trafficking should be meeting their basic needs (p. 6). This includes "providing a consistent and safe space and offering a committed set of stable and supportive caregivers, mentors, and peers" (Countryman-Roswurm & Shaffer, 2015, p. 6).

According to Countryman-Roswurm and Shaffer (2015), direct-service interventions should:

strive to develop and/or enhance the factors that increase resilience in survivors of ST [sex trafficking] such as: a positive view of self, insight, the ability to conceptualize trauma as an opportunity for growth, a sense of inner strength, and an ability to visualize and plan for the future (p. 6).

In other words, programs that intervene in situations of human trafficking should not immediately label the individuals they are helping as victims. These individuals need to feel a sense of empowerment as they are coming out of a life of powerlessness and victimization.

Yakushko (2009) provides helpful guidance for mental health professionals who are helping people exit the sex and trafficking industries. These professionals need to be aware of the "severe psychological and physical abuse" (p. 161) that these individuals have been through. At

times, they have been “struggling to survive under extreme and at times life-threatening conditions” (p. 161). Along with this kind of suffering comes a constant sense of hypervigilance: these victims do not even feel safe in their own skin. Yakushko (2009) asserts that “counselors must begin with helping their client to establish safety” (p. 163). Clients should be allowed to express their own definition of safety and to ask for help in putting that kind of preferred environment into place.

Survivors are often experiencing a myriad of physiological responses and most likely have problems with affect regulation (Yakushko, 2009, p. 161). Their range of emotions can seem intense and overwhelming, and they may be experiencing a loss of personal initiative or autonomy, which would make it incredibly hard – at least initially – to encourage them with a sense of empowerment. It is also important that mental health professionals are aware that self-medication is highly likely for survivors of trafficking (Yakushko, 2009, p. 161).

As new programs for intervention are being developed, they should be aware that there are many guidelines already in place that are mostly focused on law enforcement personnel taking action, while humanitarian and social programs and agencies seek to help victims with their basic needs (Yakushko, 2009, p. 161).

Given the complexities of the situations that victims of trafficking are coming out of, those who are trying to help them must be informed of appropriate ways of offering care. The literature today suggests a highly trauma-informed approach to intervention and initial treatment.

Inpatient Treatment and Aftercare Services

In the final section of this literature review, guidelines and recommendations for inpatient treatment centers and aftercare services will be reviewed and discussed. This is, perhaps, where the majority of the current literature is focused, and for good reason. Inpatient centers and

aftercare services are few and far between in our country today, probably because their task is an extremely difficult one to undertake.

According to Countryman-Roswurm & Shaffer (2015), “responding to the trauma of ST in a manner that allows a survivor to restructure and develop psychophysiological homeostasis” requires a multidisciplinary team of responders to practice a multifaceted treatment approach (p. 5). Responders must practice good self-care, build trust with the survivor, provide consistent and empowerment-focused care, engage on a holistic level with the survivor, and intervene as soon as possible (Countryman-Roswurm & Shaffer, 2015, p. 5).

Clearly, this is no light undertaking. Perhaps this is why Yakushko (2009) points out that “although psychological rehabilitation is frequently highlighted as being vital to victims’ healing and integration, it seems to receive only minimal attention and resources” (p. 161). In fact, oftentimes survivors vocalize that they wished they would have received some sort of counseling or therapy. Those who did receive counseling reported “many positive outcomes, including a stronger sense of self and a feeling that they have grown stronger from having survived the trafficking experience and coped with its aftermath” (Yakushko, 2009, p. 162).

Clawson and Goldblatt (2007) conducted a study in which they visited four different facilities across the country that served victims of human trafficking. They compiled a list of necessary components for a residential facility based suggestions from the professionals working in those facilities. These components included homogenous populations served in each facility, smaller programs of congregate care, the presence exclusion criteria, an intentionally decisive length of stay, voluntary stay on the survivor’s part, program location either in an urban setting near where the girls were found or in rural areas distanced from the urban core (depending on the

professionals' opinions of which location is more beneficial), security of the facility, program staffing, and services provided (Clawson and Goldblatt, 2007).

In terms of services provided, basic needs, intensive health care management, mental health treatment, medical screening/routine care, life skills and job training programs, youth development programming for minors, education, and family involvement/reunification were all listed as services that were necessary to provide to survivors of trafficking (Clawson and Goldblatt, 2007). Macy and Johns (2011) would agree with this list of comprehensive treatment plans: "Overall, our review of this diverse body of literature regarding the needs of aftercare services for international sex trafficking survivors into the United States revealed a consensus that survivors have numerous, significant needs that are best addressed through comprehensive services" (p. 89).

Another important factor to remember is the scope of the time that survivors are living in residential facilities. According to Macy and Johns (2011), "survivors' needs when initially freed differ from their needs when they begin to recover from sex trafficking, and those needs again changed as the survivors began to establish independence and reintegration into the community" (p. 89). This is why it is so crucial to provide a "continuum of aftercare services to help survivors" (Macy & Johns, 2011, p. 89). Macy and Johns argue that long-term services such as life skills, education and job training, permanent housing, and family reunification need to be implemented so that clients are not left high and dry once they leave the inpatient facility.

Conclusion

The current literature is coherently decisive: trafficking victims and survivors are facing a multitude of physical, psychological, emotional, and mental issues and these all need to be

addressed on a comprehensive and holistic scale. We will take this information into our evaluation of the program I have chosen.

Program/Service Description

The program I have chosen to review is Exodus Cry, which is a program based in Kansas City, Missouri. It was founded by Benjamin Nolot in 2007. According to their website (2016), they are “built on a foundation of prayer and committed to abolishing sex slavery through Christ-centered prevention, intervention, and holistic restoration of trafficking victims.” Exodus Cry seeks to prevent human trafficking primarily through prayer, awareness and education, and legal reform. One of the ways they have sought to promote awareness of human trafficking is through a widely successful documentary film called *Nefarious: Merchant of Souls*. They also work with governments and legislatures – both domestically and internationally, “striving to implement legislation which will prevent sex trafficking and bring justice to the victims and perpetrators.” Their methods of intervention are locating victims, providing them with an avenue to escape, and subsequently empowering them by helping them take steps forward towards a new way of life.

The program was developed by Benjamin Nolot, who is a Senior Leader at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri. Nolot developed a burden for victims of sex trafficking and a passion for doing something about the epidemic of human trafficking. He received a donation that allowed him to start up this non-profit organization in 2007. Women who are allowed into the program must meet three criteria: they must express free-will consent to participation in the program, they must be 18-30 years of age (minors are accepted on a case-by-case basis), and they must be a female victim of commercial sexual exploitation, entailing the exchange of money or valuable goods for sexual services.

Their restoration programs are holistic in nature. Their website claims that “restoration is the process of renewing a broken life and returning a person to wholeness. It is the reintegration of healthy relationships with community, God, and self.” It goes on to say that their restoration program “uses a holistic approach to care for victims. Our goal is to see each woman restored physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and to walk along side her in the intricate process of rebuilding a life.” Their kind of holistic care includes ten specific facets: weekly trauma therapy sessions, housing assistance or placement in a family, education, special interest classes, nutrition and fitness training, life and job skills training, a mentorship program, spiritual development, medical and dental care, and legal counsel and advocacy. They offer residential care – specifically, a home called Kansas City Lighthouse – as well as outpatient options.

Program/Service Evaluation

Alignment with Research

Prevention through education and awareness. In many ways, Exodus Cry aligns with the research I reviewed above. Firstly, Exodus Cry prioritizes influencing public policy to make it more difficult for the trafficking of persons to occur, just as Yakushko (2009) suggests is important. Specifically, Exodus Cry “[mobilizes] support for legislators around the world who are working to combat sex trafficking and advocating for the legal rights of women and children.” The fact that they are active in this form of prevention – along with their other prevention efforts – reaffirms their approach as holistic in nature.

Additionally, Exodus Cry’s prevention efforts include raising awareness, especially through their film *Nefarious: Merchant of Souls*. They also have a blog on their website where they share testimonies from both sides of the story: survivors and former perpetrators alike are featured. From what I could tell, Exodus Cry’s ethical motivations behind these testimonies were

appropriate. Most of the identities featured in the stories were censored unless explicit permission had been given to share them; this usually only happened in the case of survivors who are now advocating for victims themselves in some capacity or who have formed new lives completely and have minimal risk of falling back into trafficking. This aligns well with Countryman-Roswurm and Patton's (2014) guidelines for interviewing survivors.

Intervention and initial victim treatment. Exodus Cry's intervention tactics involve the strategic location of trafficked women and children through a number of methods and collaboration with law enforcement officials. They make contact with individuals and provide them with a number where they can reach the interventionists. They also provide them with a Hope Bag, which is filled with items based on what each individual needs, normally a variety of basic necessities. Exodus Cry's intervention team then waits until the woman or child is ready to leave to help her escape from her situation. These tactics align with what the research presents, specifically when it comes to the provision of basic needs which Countryman-Roswurm and Shaffer (2015) deems so crucial for a successful intervention.

Once the individual is rescued, Exodus Cry's aim is to empower them from the very beginning. Again, they are provided with basic necessities such as "housing, job skills training, social services, education, healthcare, and more." They will also be provided with restorative care: "addiction recovery, Exodus Cry's Restoration program, or other restorative programs that fit their individual needs." This aligns with Countryman-Roswurm and Shaffer (2015) once again on the level of building trust and consistency.

Inpatient treatment and aftercare services. In terms of continued restoration, Exodus Cry's programs align wonderfully with the presented research. As aforementioned, they have a multifaceted, holistic treatment approach in place that addresses ten specific needs of survivors,

including physical and mental health and encouragement towards future pursuits. Their services are trauma-informed: “We offer both outpatient and residential services: Outpatient care involves weekly trauma therapy and social services, while residing independently. Residential care involves a daily program schedule, trauma therapy, social services, and oversight from Exodus Cry staff.” Later on, they state, “We understand trauma-informed care and healthy bonding to be key factors in healing and growth.”

Differentiation from Research

Spiritual component to treatment. Exodus Cry’s approach is unique and differs from the research in that part of its specific treatment approach includes a very spiritual aspect. Exodus Cry is a Christian, faith-based organization that “[seeks] to provide a context for women to experience and know all these truths about themselves, while being part of a community of believers who are all growing in authentic relationship with God and others.” This doesn’t mean that Exodus Cry’s approach is completely different from the treatment in this way per se, but rather that they have added just one more facet to their holistic treatment approach. This is the only clear distinction between Exodus Cry’s approach and what the current research suggests.

Resilience Promoting Practices

Exodus Cry seems to use excellent practices and programs that promote resilience in the individuals it assists. For example, one of their goals is to “see each woman restored physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and to walk alongside her in the intricate process of rebuilding a life. This journey takes place within our Exodus Cry community and in cooperation with Safe Families and other partners.” Their use of community and aftercare services are empirically supported practices that have been shown to increase recovery from traumatic experiences. Exodus Cry’s approach seems to align with Macy and Johns’ (2011) research that

shows that long-term services should be available to the survivor to ensure continued growth and healing. Honestly, it is hard to find any holes in Exodus Cry's approach. Most of what was covered in the research I reviewed is covered in the organization's programs.

Effectiveness in Treating Traumatic Stress

According to Yakushko (2009), "...it is clear that [clinicians who may work with victims of trafficking] must have training in working with victims of trauma, especially sexual and interpersonal trauma" (p. 162). Exodus Cry states that they integrate trauma-specific counseling with trained professionals into their holistic approach to restoration. Yakushko (2009) then highlights the importance of "addressing [intrapersonal] difficulties" such as a lack of feeling safe, and he says that doing so "may assist these individuals in re-establishing awareness of personal boundaries and respect for their human dignity" (p. 162). Exodus Cry's intervention and restoration approach includes working to give survivors a sense of empowerment and agency over their own bodies and lives.

The author goes on to suggest that the next step for many survivors is to reconstruct the traumatic story. "Counseling relationships," he says, "could become a safe confidential container for horrific memories of abuse and trauma" (Yakushko, 2009, p. 162). This can be seen again in Exodus Cry's emphasis on mental health counseling, which is also heavily trauma-informed. Lastly, he emphasizes "the importance of restoring connection with clients' communities in their processes of healing and recovery" (p. 162). As aforementioned, Exodus Cry prioritizes the building of a community around each survivor, both during and following her assigned inpatient or outpatient length of care. Based on these criteria, Exodus Cry indeed uses approaches which have been shown to effectively treat traumatic stress.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Recommendations

According to their website, Exodus Cry primarily uses Emotion-Focused Therapy for Complex Trauma (EFTT), Person-Centered Therapy (PCT), and Attachment Theory. I don't believe that we discussed any of these models of therapy in class, and none of my research mentioned these specific modalities. I think that Exodus Cry could greatly benefit from some alternative treatment methods like ones we discussed in class.

For example, yoga and mindfulness has been proven to be widely effective and popular with trauma survivors. This would be a great program for them to implement. They could even train survivors who became comfortable with yoga as instructors, which would further enhance their healing process and would develop them as leaders and teachers and role models for other survivors to connect with and look up to.

Another treatment that could be wonderful in this context is Expressive Arts Therapy. This would give survivors a creative outlet to express themselves, and this modality has shown to be effective in some individuals. At the very least, having a variety of options would only enhance Exodus Cry's holistic treatment approach. Other alternative treatments such as float therapy, acupuncture, and even equine therapy could fit well with the model they are already using. Another program that came to mind was something involving theater and/or dance. These two modalities have been shown to be incredibly powerful in allowing survivors to actually process their traumatic experiences in a way that fosters growth and advancement on a very personal level.

While these modalities are important and could enhance Exodus Cry's program, I think that ultimately, the strongest and most resilient survivors are ones who are surrounded by strong

and supportive communities. According to Yakushko (2009), “counselors can keep in mind that such re-connections with community may result in empowering recovering individuals to make changes not only in their own lives but also to use their experiences for the healing of others” (p. 163). Exodus Cry could implement a way for survivors to remain part of their programs by becoming advocates, educators, instructors, and even mentors. Allowing survivors of human trafficking to share their experiences with younger survivors who are newer out of their old lives would be incredibly empowering for both parties.

Yakushko (2009) again emphasizes the “importance of restoring connection with clients’ communities in their processes of healing and recovery” (p. 163). It was not clear when looking at Exodus Cry’s website, but there was not much information on how survivors’ families can get involved in their healing process (assuming they are not the perpetrators of the former abuse). The website mentions several times that community is an important value to them, but there is not much information as to whether or not they implement family therapy or systems-based therapy into their treatment approaches. This is an important hole that needs to be filled. A survivor cannot be successful long-term unless her entire system is shifted for the better.

The other thing I would mention is that Exodus Cry’s website does not provide a lot of details about their inpatient facilities. My best guess is that this is for confidentiality and safety reasons, but it would be helpful to know exactly how they run those facilities and what a day in the life of a survivor would look like there. That is the one gap I found when evaluating this program. It is excellent on most fronts, but there was not enough information to appropriately and adequately assess their inpatient facilities against the current research and literature.

Conclusion

Overall, Exodus Cry seems to be an upstanding, ethical, strongly values-based, excellently executed organization. Its approach is comprehensive and holistic. It is trauma-informed and trauma-focused; the people behind and in Exodus Cry are clearly not afraid to encounter the trauma that these victims and survivors face firsthand and face it head-on in order to promote healing, prevention, and awareness. Programs like theirs serve to ease some of the overwhelming anxiety that comes when thinking about a social issue like human trafficking. They are truly making an impact to eradicate this devastating and destructive cycle of evil.

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