



Understanding Facilitators and Barriers of Contraceptive Use in Young Women Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation

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BACKGROUND

- > 100,000 youth in the United States at-risk for commercial sexual exploitation
- Youth impacted by **commercial sexual exploitation (CSE)** have high reproductive health risks and high rates of STIs and unplanned pregnancy
- Literature on their reproductive health needs from their perspective is sparse

OBJECTIVE

- We sought to the attitudes and beliefs of youth impacted by CSE towards contraception and pregnancy

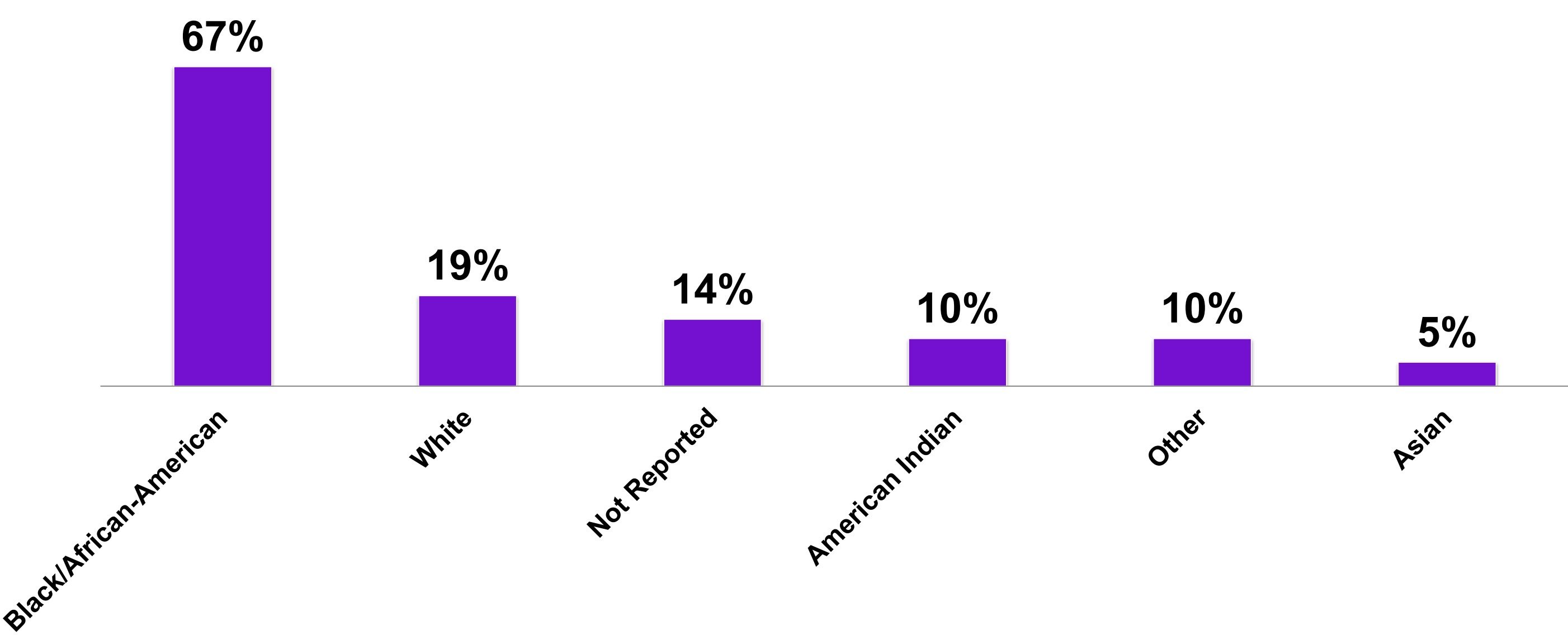
METHODS

- Design:** In-depth analysis of qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with 21 youth impacted by CSE
- Step 1:** Team built partnerships with programs servicing these youth and obtained IRB approval
- Step 2:** Conducted one-on-one interviews with study participants in residential group homes and a specialized juvenile delinquency court
 - Participants:** CSEY (n = 21)
 - Data Collection:** Surveys gathered sociodemographic information. Interviews explored youths' reproductive health needs and experiences with reproductive healthcare services
- Step 3:** Thematic content analysis of interviews utilizing DEDOOSE software

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 21 cisgender females participated in the study
- The majority (67%) identified as African-American, 19% as White, 10% as American Indian, 10% as Other, 5% as Asian, and 14% did not report their race
- 33% of participants identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latina
- Average age of participants was 17 years old (Range: 15-19)
- 71% of participants were homeless in the last 3 months
- 67% spoke only English, 33% spoke English and Spanish

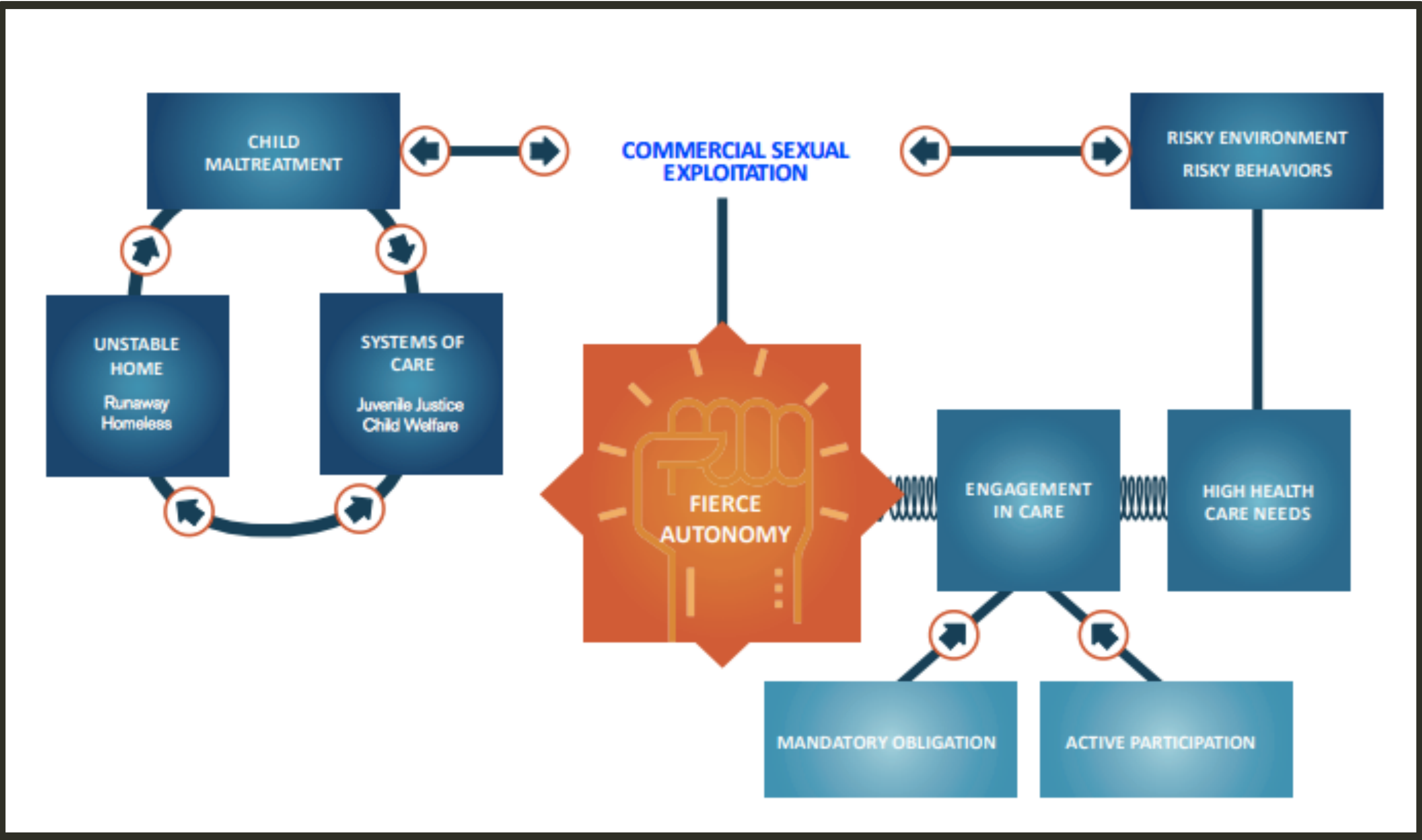
Racial Demographics



RESULTS

Themes and Representative Quotes	
Birth Control Utilization and Beliefs	
Preference for Condoms	"Use condoms-- that's the only way or to not do it at all."
Inconsistent Condom Use	"I had STDs in the past because of condoms popping or not noticing. When you're out there you don't really notice things."
Hormonal Birth Control Aversion	"I just don't like the way [birth control] makes my body feel. If I get pregnant, I get pregnant. If it happens, it happens."
Hormonal Birth Control	
Facilitators	
No Period	"I heard a lot of stories like sometimes [birth control] doesn't work for some people and sometimes it doesn't, but it's been really good to me. I don't get a period. It works, it's really helpful"
Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)	"The implant is 3 years, and I don't always like have to wake up at the same time and then take the pill at the same time. I won't have to worry about this."
Communal Support	"I started birth control when I was 14, 15. I started with my parents..." "I told my social worker and everybody and we all agreed that I go on birth control."
Barriers	
Birth Control is Unnatural	"I don't know what to get, because it all just seems so unnatural."
Concerns About Efficacy	"When I found out that there's still a chance of people getting pregnant with [birth control], I felt like there's no point— if you're going to use it, you're trying to prevent from having a baby."
Concerns About Fertility	"I don't like the thought of birth control. I think it's going to mess up when I want to have a kid, like it's going to mess up my count or something"
Side Effects	
Irregular Bleeding	"It stops your period and I think that's kind of weird. Like, taking the pill to stop your period, it's not normal to me"
Weight Gain	"The shot makes you fat. I don't want to gain weight. I have problems with my weight." "The pill, the shot, make you fat. I don't want to gain any more weight.. I'm always big, so I don't actually think about what birth control I want."
Peer Accounts	"I have friends that were on different types of birth control and they all had bad experiences with it. So I was just like, no [birth control]."
No Identified Need	"I don't feel the need to be on birth control right now because I don't see anybody."
Planned Parenthood	
Positive Experiences	"They would show you how things would go and tell you. They told me how, if I didn't know take the pill. They actually explained it to me and told me about other methods of birth control."
Easy Access	"If it has to do anything with the vagina or anything I always go to Planned Parenthood and that's really easy."

Conceptual Model: Fierce Autonomy



Summary

- Youth impacted by CSE intensely valued autonomy
- Reported easy access to contraception; strongly preferred condoms as primary form of contraception
- Aversion towards hormonal birth control was attributed to personal experiences and peer accounts of side effects
- Common belief that hormonal methods are "unnatural," cause infertility, and have low efficacy
- Youth reported frequent unprotected sex
- Had an attitude towards pregnancy of "if it happens, it happens"

CONCLUSIONS

- Emphasizing shared decision making in reproductive health care planning is critical
- Reinforcing consistent condom use and contraceptive education that dispels prevailing myths, sets clear expectations regarding side effects, and emphasizes autonomy is most likely to be effective

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