SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC WOMEN WORKING IN THE SEX INDUSTRY IN THE U.S.

Carolina Hernandez

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

August 2014

Committee:
Christine Englebrecht, Advisor
Michael Buerger
ABSTRACT

Christine Englebrecht, Advisor

Though human trafficking consists of many forms of exploitation, the sex industry comprises of the largest group of victims. While the topic of sex trafficking has received much attention internationally, this form of exploitation has recently gained attention in the United States. The United States is a transit nation to which sex trafficking victims are being brought to work. The United States is also being affected by the recruitment of victims into this underground market. Utilizing secondary data from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), this current study explores sex trafficking in the United States, using interviews with sex trafficking victims. Analyses focused on the characteristics of this victim population, recruitment, consequences of involvement, and coping. Results demonstrate that the majority of women became involved in the sex industry at a relatively young age and had been recruited by someone they knew or someone who they believed loved them. These women came from physically and sexually abusive backgrounds which contributed to the control their traffickers were able to have over them once involved in the industry. As a result of their exploitation, women suffered from significant mental health issues. The stories of trafficking victims help shed light on the importance of highlighting the voice of the victim. Finally, this research has implications for prevention programs and services for victims.
This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, Rafaela and Vicente Hernandez, whose struggles in life have made it possible for me to achieve my dreams. I want them to know that their efforts and unconditional love have never gone unnoticed. I would also like to thank my siblings (Rosalinda, Vicente, Angela, Lorena, and Jaqueline) who have always pushed me to new heights and have been a constant support in my life. A special thank you to my CRJU cohort for also motivating me and pushing me to complete this work. My thoughts go out to all the victims of sex trafficking. Thank you to the voices of the women who have made this thesis possible and help spread awareness one voice at a time.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Christine Englebrecht for not only being my advisor on this thesis committee, but for being a mentor throughout this process. Without her constant help and direction, this thesis would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Buerger for serving on my committee and for being such an enormous help, especially in strengthening my writing skills. Dr. Englebrecht and Dr. Buerger, thank you for encouraging me and guiding me in the right direction and helping me grow as a student and as a researcher. It has been an honor to work and learn alongside these two individuals.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws, Policies, and Responses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Sex Trafficking</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable populations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of involvement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting out, getting help</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. CURRENT STUDY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. RESULTS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable populations</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of involvement</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable populations</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of involvement</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, a significant amount of attention has been paid to the topic of sex trafficking in the United States and around the world. While variation exists in how this type of exploitation is defined, sex trafficking generally refers to the forced or coerced trade of individuals into the sex industry (Nawyn, Birdal, & Glogower, 2013). United States law defines sex trafficking as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (Trafficking Victims Act, 2000).

The U.S. Department of State estimates that nearly 27 million victims are trafficked throughout the world (U.S. Department of State, 2011). Though sex trafficking is only one form of human trafficking, which may include domestic bondage, sexual servitude, and forced labor (Bales & Lize, 2005; Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, Cook Heffron, & Mahapatra, 2013), it comprises the largest trafficking industry both domestically and internationally (Hodge, 2008; Macy & Johns, 2011; United Nations, 2002). For example, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, approximately 82 percent of individuals trafficked in the United States are forced to work in the sex industry (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011). The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimates that most of those trafficked into the commercial sex industry are women and children (Walker-Rodriguez & Hill, 2011).

Many countries are involved in the sex trafficking industry, either as transit or source countries. Transit countries include those that receive victims while source countries are those from which victims originate (Clawson, Dutch, Salomon, & Grace, 2009). According to research by Clawson and colleagues (2009), the most popular transit countries receiving victims of sex trafficking include Germany and the United States. Individuals are most likely to come from countries in Central America, primarily El Salvador and Mexico, as well as countries in
Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe (Clawson et al., 2009). The United Nations has identified the majority of sexual exploitation victims as being from North America, Europe, and Central Asia (United Nations, 2012).

The FBI considers human sex-trafficking a significant problem throughout towns and cities across the United States (Walker-Rodriguez & Hill, 2011). Research suggests that the United States is second only to Germany in the number of individuals who are trafficked for the purposes of sex within a country because of the high demand for paid sex in the U.S. (Mizus, Moody, Privado, & Douglas, 2003). The International Labour organization estimates that trafficking generates close to 32 billion U.S. dollars (International Labour Organization, 2005). This form of organized crime continues to increase in revenue because of the continued demand for trafficking in the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2006).

Attempting to measure the scope of sex trafficking in the United States, including the number of victims, has proven to be a difficult task. Because much of this industry is underground it is difficult to identify individuals as trafficked persons (Lange, 2011). Victims live in constant fear and are unlikely to report their victimization (Lange, 2011). Further, definitions vary in terms of what constitutes a victim of sex trafficking and how victims are identified (Nawyn, Birdal, & Glogower, 2013). Adding to this problem, no reliable measures or surveys exist that can provide an exact number of trafficked individuals. The U.S. Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report (2012) has been critiqued by scholars who argue the report generates estimates of trafficking with little empirical support (Zhang, 2009; Nawyn et al., 2013). Other attempts to measure the number of trafficking victims, including the use of national hotlines allowing for the self-reporting of victimization, remain lacking (Lange, 2011).
Despite these limitations, different sources highlight the sex trafficking problem in the United States. The United States Department of Justice has been involved in identifying cases of human trafficking in the U.S. and helps provide a picture of this problem. From 2008 to 2010, the Human Trafficking Reporting System (HTRS), a system that collects information about trafficking cases in the U.S., found a total of 2,515 open cases by various task forces across the country. The HTRS found that 8 out of every 10 trafficking cases under investigation were classified as sex trafficking cases. In this two year time period, a total of 144 arrests were recorded and information from 527 victims collected (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011). However, one major limitation of the HTRS is that the collection of these data relies solely on cases investigated under federally funded law enforcement task forces. These cases are only a very small percentage of the total number of victims and offenders involved in the sex trade in the U.S. (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011).

Research conducted by the Polaris Project, an organization dedicated to combating human trafficking, also adds to our understanding of sex trafficking in the U.S. This organization suggests that hundreds of thousands of adults and children are victims of human trafficking in the U.S. – with sex trafficking comprising the majority of those trafficked (Polaris Project, 2013). These findings highlight the importance of examining sex trafficking in the United States to better understand the effects of this industry, including the impact on sex trafficking victims.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Laws, Policies, and Responses

In the past decade, sex trafficking has received a significant amount of attention in the United States, highlighted by a number of laws passed to address trafficking. One initiative on behalf of the United States was the enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in the year 2000. The introduction of the TVPA was influenced by the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during which the United States signed the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2000 (Siskin & Wyler, 2012; United Nations, 2000). Commonly referred to as the Palermo Protocol, the U.N. protocol was a result of the United Nation’s effort to combat transnational organized crime. After the signing of the Palermo Protocol, Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (2000), which included the TVPA. This act was signed by President Clinton on October 28, 2000 (Dysart, 2013). This federal law was the first of its kind in the United States to specifically address the issue of trafficking. The TVPA focuses on trafficking outside of the United States, victims brought into the United States for the purpose of exploitation, and the sex trafficking of minors and U.S. citizens (Dysart, 2013).

This policy is considered a step forward in recognizing individuals exploited through trafficking as victims and not as criminals. Prior to the existence of the TVPA, trafficked individuals were not always considered victims of a crime, but were viewed as offenders, and, if brought to the U.S. through illegal means, individuals who would face automatic deportation. Now, this policy recognizes victims of sex trafficking who entered the country illegally as crime victims and not undocumented individuals, a distinction that formerly did not exist.
Under the TVPA, those who are in the United States illegally due to victimization as a trafficked person can receive services if the individual is categorized as "certified" (Bishop, 2003). This label signifies that the victim is cooperating with law enforcement and that his or her presence in this country is necessary to prosecute the defendant. This law is not without its own limitations. Though federal benefits are included when a trafficking victim is certified, the process of obtaining status as a certified victim of trafficking can be extremely slow and difficult. This difficulty is associated with the obstacles that are met when coordinating multiple government agencies such as law enforcement and immigration (Busch, Fong, Heffron, Faulkner, & Mahapatra, 2007). A victim may be unwilling to cooperate with law enforcement in the prosecution of their trafficker (i.e., individuals who prostitute, exploit, and control the victims), making them ineligible to receive certification status and unable to receive federal benefits such as Medicaid and food stamps (Busch et al., 2007).

Once a victim receives certification, they are then eligible to apply for a T-Visa which would allow for permanent residency in the United States. This not only paves the way for future citizenship, but also allows for potential family reunification by permitting the victim's children, spouse, parents, and any unmarried siblings under the age of 18 to be eligible for a T-Visa application (Busch-Armendariz, 2012). This type of legislation is considered a positive step in addressing human trafficking by protecting victims of human trafficking in the United States.

Another piece of legislation, The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (2000), addresses trafficking domestically and internationally. This act was the first of its kind created to actively fight sex trafficking as well as punish nations that do not adequately address the crime of sex trafficking (Holman, 2000). The VTVPA mandates an increase in the number
of law enforcement agencies in the United States dedicated to combating sex trafficking providing funding for these efforts. It also encourages changes in policy among international nations dedicated to punishing sex trafficking (Holman, 2008). Under the VTVPA, nations must have laws against sex trafficking, punish sex traffickers, and make efforts to end trafficking (Holman, 2008). Failure to meet these requirements is sufficient grounds to sever certain political benefits provided by the United States. Such benefits include non-humanitarian and non-trade related foreign assistance (Holman, 2008).

Though considered progressive legislation, an analysis by Holman (2008) highlights some of the flaws associated with this act. Holman concluded that the VTVPA does not take into account those countries that have legalized prostitution, an activity that has been linked to the sex trafficking industry. The legalized sex industry is seen as a contributor to the trafficking problem, with legalized prostitution serving as a motivating factor into the illegal global trade of sex trafficking (Holman, 2008). Holman criticizes the effects of the VTVPA, arguing that this policy cannot combat sex trafficking if it does not address the issue of legalized prostitution. Holman’s research suggests that countries with legal prostitution contribute to the international problem of sex trafficking, and both issues must be addressed if the U.S. wants to eliminate human trafficking. By ignoring the link between legalized prostitution and sex trafficking, policies continue to ignore the scope of the problem (Holman, 2008). In order to help victims of sex trafficking, it is important that legislation covers all aspects contributing to their recruitment in the sex industry, including prostitution.

Other researchers have also explored the link between human sex trafficking and prostitution. Similar to arguments made by Holman, research by O’Brien (2011) suggests that legalized or decriminalized forms of prostitution may help pave the way to an illegal sex
trafficking labor market (O’Brien, 2011). This research demonstrates that legalized prostitution can act as a pull factor encouraging the growth of sex trafficking (O’Brien, 2011). These findings suggest that changes in policy related to how prostitution is addressed may help to combat the sex trafficking battle.

Another area of importance when discussing sex trafficking is the categorization of minors involved in the sex trade. Historically in the U.S., sexually exploited children have been treated as juvenile delinquents engaged in criminal activity. A recent paradigm shift has begun and many states now recognize children as victims rather than offenders (Dysart, 2013). However, even with the passage of legislation identifying trafficked children as victims, there is still not agreement about how victims are viewed and aided by agencies and law enforcement. For example, although some agencies view these children as victims, others refuse to see them as such (Kotrla, 2010).

In order to move forward, the system must come to a consensus about the status of children involved in the sex trade, including whether they are considered victims or offenders (Kotrla, 2010). Organizations are beginning to raise awareness about this issue. For example, Shared Hope International, a non-profit organization which fights to eliminate sex trafficking and restore victims, announced the Protected Innocence Initiative in December of 2010 (Dysart, 2013). The goal of this initiative was to analyze domestic minor sex trafficking laws of all states and the District of Columbia. This analysis, conducted by the American Center for Law and Justice, focused on state laws that pertained to the following issues: sexual abuse of children, non-commercial child sexual abuse, child protective and delinquency provisions, and police training and investigative techniques (Dysart, 2013). In their study, they found that overall, state laws were weak in combating domestic minor sex trafficking, revealing a need to enhance state
laws in order to be effective in this area. This research also concluded that much work is needed with regard to how individuals who traffic minors are viewed. Although federal law is making a notable effort, not enough is being done at the state level to help victims and prosecute those who traffic minors. Since the prosecution of traffickers falls to the state under prostitution of children, it is particularly important for states to play an active role in the prosecution of offenders (Dysart, 2013).

This research also highlights the importance of understanding how law enforcement addresses the issues of sex trafficking in the United States. In order to better understand how police agencies deal with sex trafficking, Farrell (2009) conducted a national survey with local, state, and county law enforcement agencies to identify how often agencies dealt with cases of trafficking, and how these agencies were trained to respond. The study found that the identification of trafficking victims is uncommon among law enforcement agencies and that many agencies were inadequately prepared to identify and respond to victims of trafficking (Farrell, 2009). Those agencies that did have training measures and procedures in place to respond to trafficking were more likely to identify such cases and were better able to respond to this problem (Farrell, 2009).

Farrell (2009) concluded that as first responders, it is important that law enforcement officers be adequately trained to identify cases of human trafficking and be able to appropriately respond to these victims. Without proper training, trafficking may continue to go unnoticed. Farrell's study (2009) marked the first time local and state agencies in the U.S. were surveyed regarding their responses to human trafficking. This study highlights the importance of training law enforcement personnel to both identify and respond to victims of human trafficking.
While policies have been enacted and agencies attempt to combat sex trafficking in the United States, there are still thousands of individuals trafficked every year in the United States. Because this industry can have a significant impact on those involved, it is important to explore the research that highlights the effects of participation in the sex industry on victims.

**Victims of Sex Trafficking**

A number of organizations have begun to examine the impact of the sex trade industry on victims. This research attempts to provide a better picture of who is most likely to be involved in the sex trade as well as the effects of this involvement on crime victims. Though limited, this research highlights who is most vulnerable to becoming involved in the sex trade industry as well as the serious impact that this type of involvement can have on an individual.

One significant issue related to human trafficking, and particularly sex trafficking, is the coercive nature of participation. The Polaris Project (2013) identifies sex trafficking victims as involuntary participants in the commercial sex trade industry through force or coercion. The United Nations also has been involved in identifying and addressing problems related to sex trafficking, including a focus on victims. In 2012, the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crimes released the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. According to this report, three elements influence how a human trafficking victim is defined: the act, the means, and the purpose. The act refers to the actual recruitment, transportation, or receipt of a victim. The means refers to the abuse, threat of force, deception, or coercion utilized to trap the victim. The purpose identifies the reason for which the victim is being utilized, such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, or some variation of forced labor (United Nations, 2012). These findings highlight the forced and coercive elements involved in this type of exploitation.
**Vulnerable populations**

Any person can fall victim to trafficking, however there are several characteristics that increase a person’s likelihood of being trafficked (United Nations, 2012). Research has found that those most vulnerable to exploitation in the sex industry include undocumented immigrants, homeless and runaway youth, oppressed or impoverished groups, and individuals fleeing from abuse or trauma (Polaris Project, 2013). However, the two most prominent characteristics according to research studies are age and gender (Clark, 2003). Across all forms of trafficking, women and children make up the largest group of victims (Clark, 2003).

Victims of trafficking, especially child victims, often come from problem stricken homes and experience abusive upbringings (Jordan et al., 2013). Silbert and Pines (1983) examined the relationship between childhood sexual exploitation and street prostitution. The sample for this research included two hundred former prostitutes from the San Francisco Bay area. Respondents completed a questionnaire that included information about respondent’s background, childhood and adulthood sexual assault history, and future plans. The results found that 60 percent of respondents had experienced sexual exploitation as a juvenile, with the average age of victimization approximately ten years old (Silbert & Pines, 1983).

The vulnerability of these individuals makes them an easy population to manipulate into staying in the sex trade by utilizing tactics such as violence, lies, threats, false promises and debt bondage (Polaris Project, 2013). Once forced in the sex industry, victims are coerced to partake in various sexual practices. Victims of sex trafficking work in a number of locations including residential brothels, hostess clubs, online escort services, massage parlors and the street (Polaris Project, 2013).
Examining trafficking in the United States, the Human Trafficking Reporting System (HTRS) found similar statistics when looking at those most likely to be involved in sex trafficking. The HTRS found that female victims make up the majority of trafficking cases in the U.S. (94 percent). Half of the cases reported by the HTRS involved adults, while half of the cases involved the trafficking of a child. Only 13 percent of victims identified by the HTRS were over the age of 25, highlighting the young age of many victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. Finally, the majority of the victims were citizens of the United States and a small portion, 17 percent, involved instances of international trafficking victims (Banks & Kyckelhahn, 2011).

While the number of male victims is small compared to that of females, men do comprise a growing number of individuals involved in the sex trafficking industry, although they are less likely to be discussed. For example, Dennis (2008) examined 166 articles on trafficking to explore the visibility of male victims involved in the global sex trade. His research found that very few studies acknowledged male sex workers (Dennis, 2008). While it is less common for males to be victims of sex trafficking according to estimates provided by the United Nations (2012), this study highlights the lack of attention on male victims in the sex trafficking (Dennis, 2008).

Other research highlights the particularly troubling nature of the trafficking of minors, specifically those under the age of 18. Children make up a significant percentage of victims in the sex industry. According to the United Nations (2012), 17 percent of individuals trafficked were under the age of 18. The term domestic minor sex trafficking, or DMST, refers to American minor children being utilized in the sex trafficking business within the borders of the United States (Kotrla, 2010). DMST is considered a form of modern-day slavery and encompasses the group of people who are at the highest risk of falling victim to sex trafficking,
children under the age of 18 (Kotrla, 2010). For example, a prominent case in the United States, *U.S. v. Pipkins* (2005) exposed a prostitution ring in Atlanta, Georgia, and found that the youngest victim was 12 years old. According to research, the average age of recruitment for prostitution in the U.S. is 12 to 14 years of age (Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, 2013). The Ohio Trafficking in Persons Study (2010), a commission comprised of several officials dedicated to raising awareness about human trafficking, has estimated that roughly 2,879 children between the ages of 12 to 17 years of age are considered at risk for victimization in trafficking in Ohio. Of these estimated youth, 1,078 U.S. children were forced into sex trafficking in (Ohio Trafficking in Persons Study, 2010).

In a study conducted by Estes and Weiner (2001), the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico was explored. Researchers partnered alongside leading governmental and nongovernmental organizations, three universities, and two international child advocacy organizations in three countries. The study ran from 1999 to 2001 and included interviews with law enforcement, human service decision makers, and sexually exploited children (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Findings revealed that children who were sexually exploited were exposed to social, emotional, and health risks (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Roughly 20 percent of respondents stated having been trafficked within their home country by well-established prostitution tracks. Approximately 10 percent of the respondents were trafficked internationally (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Juvenile prostitution that was pimp-controlled existed alongside that of adult prostitution. Children in servitude reported having to pay their debt to the trafficker through participation in commercial pornography or prostitution and were mainly from countries located in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and Central and Eastern Europe (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Because the prostitution of these minors worked in conjunction with
adult prostitution, it is important to understand the relationship between child sexual exploitation and the sex industry. This study reveals the significance of protecting this vulnerable population in order to avoid the continuance of trafficking into adulthood for these underage victims.

Recruitment

Recruitment of individuals into the sex industry has also received attention in the literature. Raymond and Hughes (2001) interviewed 40 women involved in the sex industry in the United States utilizing a questionnaire that consisted of both open and closed ended questions. Due to the difficulty of the nature involved with attaining a sample of women involved in the sex trafficking field, partnership with four agencies was crucial in the recruitment for this research. This research gathered information from law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, and other service providing agencies that had contact with or provided services to sex trafficking victims. Of the 40 interviewed women, 26 met criteria to be considered sex trafficking victims. Of these 26 women, 15 women were trafficked from other nations outside the U.S. and 11 of the women had been trafficked domestically (Raymond & Hughes, 2001).

The majority of sex trafficking victims interviewed were recruited by some sort of organized business or criminal network (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). These organizations included bars, brothels, clubs, escort services, mafias, and biker gangs (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Most of the women recruited into the sex trade were economically disadvantaged individuals who lacked a form of sustainable income and lived in poverty (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Due to their monetary disadvantages, the recruiter’s promise of money was identified as a main factor in these respondents’ participation in the sex industry.

The recruitment of minors can occur either behind the scenes or in public. Online recruitment usually takes place on chat rooms, social networking cites, and classified ads.
Traffickers also recruit their victims by approaching them in public places such as shopping malls, near school grounds, and child care centers (Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, 2013). Traffickers typically approach their victims with promises in order to avoid detection and limit the opportunity of the child to return home, the trafficker usually transports the victim as far away from home as possible upon recruitment (Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, 2013).

Once recruited, victims are often then transported to cities with high sexual tourist demand in order to commence business. A common area for this sort of demand is during the annual National Football League Super Bowl which attracts several tourists (Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, 2013). According to the FBI National Press Office, a total of 16 juvenile victims aged 13 to 17 were recovered from prostitution during the 2014 NFL Super Bowl (FBI National Press Office, 2014). These child victims included high school students and children whose families had reported missing (FBI National Press Office, 2014).

Children over the age of 12 years old are major targets for recruitment in sexual trafficking (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Research has found that many youth are recruited by organizations with access to drugs which traffickers utilize to increase the dependency of the victim (Estes & Weiner, 2001; U.S. Department of State, 2008). Children under the age of 9, in particular foreign born youth, are primarily recruited by organized criminal units as subjects for the purpose of pornography (Estes & Weiner, 2001). These young children are generally not utilized in prostitution simply because traffickers believe they are too difficult to handle in comparison to older children. Finally, recruitment can also occur through peers of the same sex. Individuals often receive drug related incentives for every child recruited into the group (Estes & Weiner, 2001).
Consequences of involvement

Other scholarship, as well as prominent court cases, examines the impact of the sex trade on victims themselves, including their experiences in the trade and the consequences of this type of involvement. This research documents the significant toll of working in the sex industry on individuals including physical and sexual abuse, negative emotional and psychological outcomes, and significant health implications for those involved in the sex industry (Faulkner, Mahapatra, Heffron, Nsonwu, & Busch-Armendariz, 2013; Raymond et al., 2001). These consequences can have long term consequences for victims of sex trafficking. For example, the mental abuse and isolation experienced by victims can lead to psychological problems such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), disorientation, confusion, phobia, and panic attacks (U.S. Department of State, 2008). The following research examines the impact on victims of sex trafficking.

The case of U.S. v. Pipkins (2005) highlights some of the experiences of victims of sex trafficking. This trial revealed that victims were lured into the prostitution ring with the promises of a lavish lifestyle including clothes, jewelry, and money. The pimps demanded women charge between thirty to eighty dollars for a sexual services and forced many women to meet nightly quotas, often as high as one thousand dollars a night. The women were coerced into submission by beating with belts, baseball bats, and wrapped coat hangers referred to as “pimp sticks” (United States, 2005). Research suggests this type of abuse may not be unique to sex trafficking cases. For example, even in cases where victims were recruited for the purpose of forced labor, the majority of victims reported having either witnessed or been victims of forced sexual assault (Bales & Lize, 2005).
Jackson, Bennett, and Sowinski (2007) conducted a study with female sex trade workers in Canada. Their research consisted of interviews with 68 women and girls working in various settings within the sex industry. The interviews were aimed at gaining information regarding the stressors in women’s lives and how these stressors affect their home and working lives (Jackson et al., 2007). Findings suggest that female sex workers experienced a significant amount of stress and emotional chaos as a result of their working conditions. The women experienced high levels of stress due to the uncertainty of servicing clients who may be potentially dangerous. Many women carried weapons to protect themselves from a possible attack. Many women reported physical abuse. Even in the absence of abuse, women said they were emotionally stressed as a result of having to negotiate with potentially unpleasant clients, including meeting these individuals’ sexual requests (Jackson et al., 2007).

Research by Miller, Decker, Silverman, and Raj (2007) highlights the significant physical and emotional impact of involvement in the sex trafficking industry on individual victims. This research tells the story of one victim of sex trafficking referred to these researchers by a health care professional. Upon arriving at a hospital for help, this 27-year old victim was admitted for psychiatric evaluation after expressing suicidal thoughts upon learning she was pregnant. The woman later admitted to having become pregnant by a man who forced her to sell her body for sex, repayment for being brought into the United States from Latin America. The man, later identified as her pimp, forced the woman to prostitute herself in order to pay off her debt. The victim expressed living in constant fear of her pimp and also said her family lived under constant threats and fear of retaliation by this man and his followers (Miller et al., 2007). Although this research only examined one victim's perspective, it demonstrates the significant impact of sex trafficking on individuals.
Along with these physical and emotional consequences, victims are at risk of experiencing negative health outcomes associated with their work in the sex industry. Victims are at higher risk of contracting various sexual transmitted infections due to their sexual exposure. The World Health Organization (WHO) believes that sex trafficking has contributed to the increased spread of HIV/AIDS across the globe (World Health Organization, 2000). Other health issues that many victims of sex trafficking face include weight loss, anorexia, unintended pregnancies, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts or attempts (Miller et al., 2007; Raymond et al., 2001). Research by Raymond and colleagues (2001) found that women in the sex industry lacked adequate healthcare which only serves to exacerbate these health outcomes.

Coping

In order to understand coping mechanisms, it is important to explore the varied ways individuals cope, including how individuals cope with traumatic life events. Research suggests that trauma can have a significant impact on a person’s ability to cope (Van der Kolk, 1995). For example, research by Bloom (1999) examined various coping mechanisms people implement in response to trauma. The first response analyzed by Bloom (1999) was learned helplessness. When humans learn that there is nothing they can do to change the outcome of their situation, they may simply stop trying, a behavior which is known as learned helplessness (Bloom, 1999). Dissociation is another way that individuals cope with trauma. Disassociation is "a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity, or perception of the environment," (Bloom, 1999). There are two ways in which disassociation occurs. The first is through physical fainting and the second, more common, is through emotional numbing (Bloom, 1999). Emotional numbing is a way that humans disassociate by learning to separate one’s feelings from the specific experience. This happens in instances of severe trauma which a person
learns to remove their feelings and emotional responses to that event in order to protect oneself and continue to function.

Bloom (1999) found that trauma victims often engage in relationships that are not based on healthy standards. These dangerous relationships usually develop out of trauma-bonding. Trauma-bonding is an attachment behavior in which a trauma victim sees their abuser as a source of abuse and harm and also a source of comfort and hope (Bloom, 1999). Usually trauma victims have histories of torture, domestic violence, or childhood abuse. These relationships are often based on terror and the misuse of power, but seem completely normal to the victim. Those coping with trauma may experience irritability, anger, an inability to manage aggression, impulsivity, and anxiety (Bloom, 1999). Other coping mechanisms include drugs, alcohol, sex, and disruptive eating patterns (Bloom, 1999).

Limited research has begun to explore the ways in which victims of the sex industry cope with this type of work. Research conducted by the U.S. State Department (2008) found that drugs and alcohol were common substances used by individuals to cope with their work. As a way to deal with their victimization, victims of sex trafficking reported drinking heavy amounts of alcohol or engaging in drug use. In a study conducted on 61 sex trafficking women and girls in India, results demonstrated that substance use was found to be a common method of coping utilized by victims (Gupta, Raj, Decker, Reed, & Silverman, 2009). This finding reveals similar results regarding coping mechanisms utilized by sex trafficking victims mentioned in related literature.

Getting out, getting help

Studies examining the impact of working in the sex trade suggest a significant need, including mental health services as well as social services, for this population of victims
(Faulkner et al., 2013; Johnson, 2012). Research documents the significant abuse individuals often experience in the sex trade industry as well as during childhood (Silbert & Pines, 1983). These findings demonstrate the need for services to sexually exploited minors and a need to intervene in the lives of these victims. In research conducted with social workers, these service providers agree that the abusive backgrounds from which many victims come from makes treatment and the provision of services difficult. This difficulty stems from the fact that the abuse experienced by this population goes beyond the abuse which they endured during their span of sexual exploitation (Jordan et al., 2013). Dynamics such as prior abuse makes it difficult for social service providers, especially when there is already a lack of knowledge surrounding this vulnerable population (Jordan et al., 2013).

Often, victims are not willing to come forward and seek help for a number of reasons. For example, international sex trafficking victims may be undocumented and fear reaching out to social or health services (Miller et al., 2007). Victims may lack trust in service providers or fear retaliation from their traffickers. Florida State University Center for the Advancement of Human Rights examined the impact of trafficking on victims. The research utilized in-depth interviews with 11 women involved in trafficking. The results of this study demonstrated that upon release, all victims indicated physical safety as their primary concern. Although many victims encountered physical abuse during captivity, fear and isolation kept many victims from fleeing their trafficker. Lack of trust with law enforcement in their native countries contributed to negative perceptions of local law enforcement in the United States. This research demonstrates the obstacles law enforcement and social services may face when attempting to help victims (Conan, 2004).
Research by Miller et al. (2007) sheds light on the importance of health care providers to create a safe environment for patients. Along with law enforcement, health care workers may be the first to interact with victims of sex trafficking. It is critical to understand the needs of these victims involved in the sex trafficking industry to be able to better aid in recovery. It is important that victims from other countries, including those undocumented feel comfortable confiding in health care providers. Hospital staff can also help to connect these victims to other services agencies such as community outreach workers, legal representatives, domestic violence and child protection advocates, and resettlement agencies (Miller et al., 2007).

While research in the area of victims of sex trafficking is growing, there are still very few studies that examine the sex industry from the perspective of the victim (Faulkner et al., 2013). According to Faulkner et al. (2013), data that demonstrates the victims’ experiences in the realm of sex trafficking are virtually absent from the literature. Very little is known about how individuals are recruited or coerced into sex trafficking, an area of concern recently raised Karmen (2013). Much of the existing literature on trafficking gathers information from social service agencies and law enforcement. However, the data continues to ignore the most essential source, the voice of the victim (Faulkner et al., 2013).
CHAPTER III. CURRENT STUDY

The current research project uses data from surveys with women – both those who were living in the U.S. and foreign nationals brought to the U.S. – who were involved in the sex industry in the United States. The study helps shed light on the unique problems that these victims face and examine the ways in which victims cope with this type of exploitation. Data for the current study were collected by Raymond and Hughes (2002) and were obtained from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Data consist of semi-structured telephone and in-person qualitative interviews collected between 1999-2000 with international and domestic trafficked victims and prostituted women, law enforcement and social service agency employees, and health care workers.

Researchers used target sampling to identify this sample of individuals knowledgeable with the sex industry. More specifically, sample participants were recruited by partnering with three regional and one international organization that proved contacts for the research. Regional partners were SAGE in San Francisco, Breaking Free in Minneapolis/St. Paul, and the Center for Battered Women’s Legal Services at Sanctuary for Families in New York City (Raymond & Hughes, 2002). International women working in the United States were recruited utilizing the help of researchers from the Institute of Sociology at the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, Russia, who referred participants (Raymond & Hughes, 2002).

Preliminary analyses by Raymond and Hughes (2001) explored women’s background information, methods of recruitment, movement, initiation, control, coping and resistance, as well as health effects and information on individuals who traffic victims. Findings highlight the impact of sex trafficking on individuals as well as differences between domestic and international victims.
Thirteen of the 15 international women interviewed in this study were from the former Soviet Union. Of these women, 73 percent reported speaking very little or no English at all. Thirteen of the 25 domestic women were African American. Eighty percent of international women and 83 percent of domestic women began working as sex workers before the age of 25. Fifty-three percent of international victims entered the United States through legal means, such as a tourist visa (Raymond & Hughes, 2002). Entry points into the United States reported by these women included Canada, Mexico, and international airports.

The majority of international victims and about one-third of domestic victims stated that traffickers recruited them into the sex industry with promises of money, yet these promises were never fulfilled. Mainly domestic women were recruited at malls and clubs while other respondents mentioned stripping as the gateway into trafficking (Raymond & Hughes, 2002). Predominantly domestic women reported having been introduced to drugs and alcohol by their pimps who used this method as a control mechanism. Other methods of control included limiting women’s movement, isolating victims, controlling a person’s money, threats, intimidation, and physical and sexual violence (Raymond & Hughes, 2002).

Women also reported experiencing violence and coercion. In order to coerce women into prostitution, recruiters used emotional and physical abuse. Eighty-six percent of domestic women and 53 percent of international women reported being abused physically by their pimps. Twenty-eight percent of international women and 86 percent of domestic women reported having been subjected to physical abuse by their buyers, individuals who solicited them for sexual services. Verbal abuse was reported by 90 percent of domestic women and 47 percent of international women. Seventy percent of domestic women and 40 percent of international women reported having been sexually abused by their pimps or traffickers during prostitution.
Due to their sexual exposure, most women reported having contracted sexually transmitted infections during their participation in the sex industry. Other health related problems included depression, feelings of hopelessness, anger and rage, thoughts of suicide, and self-injury (Raymond & Hughes, 2002).

As a result of their victimization in the sex industry, women reported drug and alcohol as a common coping mechanism. Such methods of coping was reported by 87 percent of international and 92 percent of domestic. Half of the women began using drugs and alcohol after they entered in the sex industry in order to cope with the trauma that came with the participation in unwanted sex (Raymond & Hughes, 2002).

Analyses by Raymond and Hughes (2002) also provide a picture of the men who solicited sex from victims of trafficking. These men ranged in age from 15 to 90, were often married, and came from a variety of socioeconomic statuses. Eighty-two percent of international women and 58 percent of domestic women reported that men expected them to comply with all their requests. Nearly half of international and domestic women reported that men expected sex without the use of condoms.

Research using these data includes a quantitative study by Muftić and Finn (2013), who reported on significant demographic characteristics and compared health outcomes for three groups of women: international trafficking victims, domestic trafficking victims, and non-trafficked sex workers. Muftić and Finn (2013) found a number of significant differences between international and domestic trafficking victims. In particular, domestic victims were involved in trafficking almost three times as long as international victims. Roughly 87 percent of domestic women also reported experiencing physical and sexual abuse as children compared to 40 percent of international victims (Muftić and Finn, 2013).
Both domestic trafficking victims and international trafficking victims reported exposure to physical violence (88.9 percent and 81.8 percent), sexual violence (83.3 percent and 63.6 percent), and psychological violence (100 percent and 81.8 percent) while involved in the sex trade. Close to 65 percent of domestic victims and 25 percent of international victims reported levels of physical health problems. Sexually transmitted infections were reported by 58.8 percent of domestic women and 50.5 percent of international victims. The majority of domestic and international victims reported having at least one mental health problem as a result of their trafficking. Eighty percent of domestic women reported having contemplated suicide while a significant lower percentage of international women, 16.7 percent, reported considering ending their lives. Another difference also existed in the reported amounts of drug and alcohol use between victims. Nearly 95 percent of domestic victims reported using drugs and alcohol in comparison to 33.3 percent of international victims (Muftić & Finn, 2013).

The original sample size consisted of 41 trafficked victims and prostituted women, including 16 international and 25 domestic women who had either been involved in or were currently involved in the sex industry in the United States (Muftić & Finn, 2013). The experiences of these women are recorded through a series of interviews. Upon closer examination of the sample interviews, not all respondents met the definition for sex trafficking victims. In their interviewers, some women described being voluntary participants in the sex industry. For the purpose of this study, only women who entered the sex industry through force, fraud, or coercion, as well as those who had entered before the age of 18, are included in the study. Using this criterion, the sample size for the current analysis includes 25 women (8 international victims and 17 domestic victims).
The current study focuses on four areas and answers the following research questions: (1) What are the general characteristics of this population of victims?; (2) How were these women recruited into the sex industry?; (3) What were these women’s experiences once they became involved in the sex trade. Specifically, how were these women controlled or forced to participate in the sex industry and what were the consequences they experienced due to their work; and finally (4) How did these women attempt to cope with this type of work?

In order to answer the first research question and provide a picture of this population of victims, including if they are considered vulnerable as identified by previous literature, the following questions are analyzed from the questionnaire: (A) Wages earned before leaving home country; (B) Household income before leaving home country; (C) Did you work anywhere else in the U.S. before entering the sex industry? If yes, what did you do?; (D) At what age did you begin in the sex industry?; (E) Residency/immigration status in the U.S.; (F) Were you ever abused/assaulted in your life (physical, sexual, psychological)? If yes, by whom? For how long?; (G) Prior history of drug or alcohol use. All of these factors have been identified as placing individuals at higher risk for involvement in the sex trade industry.

Recruitment is important in understanding the initiation of these women into the sex industry. The following questions are analyzed to help better understand how individuals are recruited: (A) How did you get involved in the sex industry?; (B) Describe your expectations or understanding of what you would be doing; (C) Where were you recruited by someone or was three a person(s) that was involved in getting you to come to the U.S.?; (D) How much money were you promised?; (E) Were you/your family/anyone else paid any money ahead of time? If so, how much?; (F) Did you sign a contract? If yes, for how long?; (G) Did the agreement remain the same once you arrived in the U.S.? If no, please explain; (H) Describe the establishment(s)
where you were prostituted in the U.S.? Where?; (I) Was there any violence inflicted on you when you first started (physical violence, sexual assault, verbal threats, death threats, use of weapons, usage of drugs/alcohol, other)?; (J) Were you forced to do things you were uncomfortable with? These questions help provide a better understanding as to how these women became involved in sex trafficking.

Next, this research examines the experiences of the women once they are involved in the sex industry, focusing on the consequences of their participation including how victims are dominated, intimidated, and controlled. Abuse they experienced as a consequence of their involvement will also be examined. Since trafficking is different from prostitution, it is important to understand the aspects that define these women as victims. The questions analyzed in understanding initiation include the following: (A) In your opinion, did you have freedom? Were you free to leave or return home or find employment elsewhere?; (B) If you did not have freedom, please describe who controlled you and how you were kept from having personal freedom/ rights (physical violence, sexual assault, psychological abuse, verbal threats, death threats to you/family, use of weapons, usage of drugs/alcohol, isolation/confinement/restraints, other); (C) Did you have access to your travel documents?; (D) Did you have access to any financial resources?; (E) Were you allowed contact with family or friends?; (F) Once in the U.S., were you free to move about as you pleased? If no please describe; (G) How would you describe your own emotional wellbeing (depressed, unable to feel, hopeless, difficulty sleeping, nightmares, easily startled/always on guard, rage, self-blame/guilt, other); Are you currently suicidal? Have you felt suicidal while in the sex industry?

Finally, methods of coping are analyzed. In particular, the current study explores how women deal, both emotionally and physically, with this type of work, if drugs and alcohol were
utilized to cope, and if women tried to escape during their trafficking experience. The questions analyzed include the following: (A) Describe your daily schedule; (B) How did you get by emotionally and physically on a daily basis?; (C) Describe how you dealt with working in the sex industry; (D) Did you ever use drugs or alcohol or take medication? If yes, please explain? (E) Did you ever try to escape or leave this industry? If yes please describe; (F) Did you ever try to kill yourself while in the sex industry? If so, how many times?

Data were analyzed using content analysis. This method is appropriate when there is little theory or research on the topic to be explored. Further, this type of analysis allows for themes to emerge from the data (Clark & Adler, 2011; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Maxfield & Babbie, 2012). Focusing on the four areas of inquiry, interviews were analyzed and dominant themes around each topic were identified. Any differences between international and domestic victims were noted. Though the trafficking of all women in the current study occurred in the United States, the experiences of women may be unique depending on whether the victim was born in the United States or brought to the U.S. for the purposes of sex trafficking. This research adds to the scholarship on victims of sex trafficking, using victims’ voices to highlight the experiences of women in the sex trade in the U.S.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Results from the current study focus on four major themes which include: characteristics of the victim population, individuals’ recruitment into the sex trade industry, consequences of women’s involvement as a sex worker, and finally, coping mechanisms implemented by women involved in sex trafficking. Overall patterns among victims are described and notable differences between international and domestic women are also discussed.

Vulnerable populations

Characteristics of this victim population reveal women who entered the sex trade industry at a relatively young age. The average age women in the current study began working in the sex industry was 19. Comparing international and domestic women, data reveal that international women entered the sex trade industry at slightly older age compared to domestic women. International women began working in the sex industry at the age of 21 compared to 17 years old for women from the United States. Most of the international workers were in their late teens or early twenties when beginning this type of work. Domestic women were more likely to be in their mid-teens.

Most of the women in the current sample worked in legitimate industries before becoming involved in sex work, and the majority of international women entered the United States legally through work visas or other legal means. Such legal means included guest, spousal, and tourist visas. Two international victims reported having entered the United States illegally without lawful documentation. One United States citizen reported having entered Canada illegally which later resulted in her deportation. Examples of jobs women had before becoming involved in the sex trade include a music teacher, a nurse's assistant, and work in restaurants. One international woman, when asked about prior work experience, said, "I was a
knitter for two years at a factory and a salesperson for one and a half years.” A woman from the U.S. said she had a variety of jobs including "a bartender, an administrative assistant, a horticulturalist, and an advocate in other women's programs." Another woman from the U.S., when describing her prior work experience said, "My first job was at Bank of America as a clerk...I was also a cocktail waitress at night. The best job I had I was getting ten dollars an hour." These findings suggest that prior to their involvement in the sex industry, women held a variety of positions in legitimate fields. Finally, while wages and household income prior to leaving home country were examined, missing data did not allow for any significant discussion of socio-economic status.

Results also highlight significant abuse histories, including sexual abuse and drug use by women. Women in the current sample reported experiencing physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse as well as experiencing violence in the home. One U.S. woman stated, "I was molested by 6 different people starting at age 3." Another woman from the U.S. spoke about the response from her mother upon revealing the abuse she was withstanding, "She used to accuse us of making stuff up, and blamed us for wanting the abuse to happen anyway...like some kind of secret desire...she accused us of fabricating lies about my father."

Both international and U.S. women noted that the abuse they experienced growing up had occurred by a close relative including a parent, grandparent, or an aunt or uncle. One woman from the United States, when describing being molested, said, “Yes…dad, grandfathers, uncles, men...until the last seven years when I started therapy at age 21.” Similarly, another United States woman reported having been a victim of incest. She stated that she experienced “child sexual abuse by father and uncle...from very young to 35 years old...dad blackmailed me by threatening to expose me to the family.” Unlike women from the United States, the bulk of
international women answered “no” in regards to questions of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

The majority of victims expressed having had histories of drug and alcohol use at some point either before their sexual exploitation, during their sexual exploitation, or in some cases both. Although a small percentage, international women primarily reported having had a history of drug or alcohol use prior to being sexually exploited while the majority of domestic women expressed having been drug users both before and during their exploitation. The drugs women reported using included crack heroin, and cocaine. One United States woman reported using crack, cocaine, pot, and alcohol. She stated, “I’ve been using since 1993. I was introduced to drugs by my cousin. If I didn't have drugs in my system, I wouldn't be on the street.” Another United States woman explained the reason for her drug use by stating “I take pain killers…I drink, take crack to forget the abusive men in my life…I need it to numb the pain.” Unlike international women, women from the United States reported having been introduced to drugs at a fairly young age, one victim as young as 12 years old.

Recruitment

The following analysis reveals the pathways into the sex industry for women. These results highlight how women were recruited and show that many women were involved in sex work before becoming trafficked. Further, analyses show that for many women, prostitution was the first step that led into the sex trade. Others described being deceived or exploited at a very early age. Places that victims were trafficked are also discussed, including the type of establishment and the city in which the exploitation took place. Finally, violence and drug use, which were both used as methods of recruitment and control, are described.
Respondents in the current study were asked how they became involved in the sex industry. Almost all of the victims described being recruited by someone known to them, often a male, including relatives or boyfriends. Several U.S. women and international women described having begun working in the sex industry only after being emotionally involved with a man who recruited them into the trade. For example, a U.S. woman described her recruitment into the sex industry by a man she loved. She said, "He said he loved me and wanted to have a family with me. He asked me to do favors for his friends and prostitute and I thought that was my way of giving him love. I was the only one who he prostituted. I was with him for 3 years." Other recruiters mentioned by both international and U.S. women included friends and strangers who had some experience in the sex industry either as a pimp or prostitute. A U.S. woman described her recruitment. She said, "I started prostituting at 13. I had a friend who introduced me to the ho-stroll here in [city]."

As noted earlier, while women in the current study worked in legitimate jobs before their involvement in the sex trade, many respondents were involved in prostitution before becoming victims of sex trafficking. The distinction between prostitution and sex trafficking was noted in the responses provided by women. The women involved in prostitution, at least initially, chose to enter into this type of work. International women discussed their involvement in prostitution in several countries including Russia, Germany, Mexico, Finland, and the United Arab Emirates. These experiences preceded their travel to the United States.

Many of these women saw prostitution as a way to improve their lives. One international woman described the reason she fled her home, a decision that led to her working as a prostitute. She said, "I was 17 when I gave birth. It was an infamy to my family...I left my child there and fled to [city]." Many women were motivated by the potential financial benefits of this type of
work. For example, one domestic victim said, “I met up with some friends of mine who were pimps and they suggested that I could make some money prostituting…so I started doing that for the extra money.” Another U.S. woman talked about the struggle of trying to attain enough money, leading her to the sex industry out of financial need. She stated, "I needed $2000 to get the family landed." An international woman describes the financial difficulties in her country which led to her involvement in the sex industry. She said, "Here, where I live it's impossible to find a job, everyone is unemployed, that's why we used to go out to the highway to do mostly blow jobs...that was how we earned money to buy cigarettes, clothes, food."

Others described getting involved in prostitution to please men in their lives. A woman from the U.S. described her experience. She recalled that her boyfriend "said he loved me and wanted to have a family with me. He asked me to do favors for his friends and prostitute. And I thought that was my way of giving him love." Another domestic woman said, "I thought it was my way of showing love for him...I wanted to start a family with him." Finally, one domestic woman said that she became involved in prostitution after being promised marriage by her pimp.

For many respondents, their involvement in prostitution led to their exploitation into trafficking. Women described being controlled, brainwashed, and forced into sex work after becoming involved in prostitution.

Other women were recruited directly into the sex trade. These victims described histories of abuse, drug use, manipulation and exploitation. Five women from the United States described being sexually exploited as minors. One domestic victim discussed her exploitation, which occurred at three years old. This woman said, "I remember as early as age 3, I was used in pornography. I have no memory of what may have happened earlier than that. My dad brokered me. When I was 12, he prostituted me in urban areas. I was contracted out to other pimps, who
would negotiate my price like merchandise." Another U.S. woman stated, "I was born into prostitution. It's the life I've known from the beginning. My father, grandfather, uncles were all involved in prostituting the women in the family. All my friends were prostituted." An international victim recalls being taken captive at the age of 19 and being held as a sex slave. She stated, "I was held captive, as a sex slave, in Abu Dhabi along with several other women from all over the world by [my trafficker]."

Others described histories of drug use that made them more vulnerable to exploitation. One U.S. woman described being referred to a pimp while at a halfway house. She stated, "I was really into my addiction and not working a regular job...I thought about his offer. I called him and he introduced me to his friend and that's how I got started." Some women described the industry itself as addictive. For example a U.S. woman explained, "It became addictive after a while--the men, the drugs."

One significant difference noted in the experiences of domestic and international women involved the use of deception to recruit women into the sex trade. International victims were more likely to be deceived about their work in the sex trade and reported being brought to the United States under false pretenses. Part of this deception involved their physical travel to the United States, including the expectations they had about their reasons for travel. One international victim stated that a man she knew "said that he had an ailing mother and that he had a pregnant wife and child and he needed help taking care of his sick mother. That was what I thought I was going to be doing when my family and I accepted employment with him as a housekeeper." This victim was later exploited by this same man into the sex industry.

Although women from the United States were more likely to say they were aware of what was happening, a few remained uninformed. One U.S woman described being completely
unaware of her husband’s future exploitation. She described her situation, stating that, "After I married my second husband, I was prostituted by him for oral sex, group sex, and pornography in Mexico." She believed that he was marrying her because he loved her, but later learned this man married her with the intention of trafficking her for profit.

Respondents were also asked about any financial incentives they may have initially received prior to being trafficking, including money promised to them or their families. None of the women described having signed a contract or any formal agreement. However, a few women were provided with financial incentives. Two international women were promised one hundred dollars a week while another woman was to be paid three thousand dollars, all for their involvement in pornography. One international woman's family was sent money in exchange for their daughter's involvement in the sex trade. One international woman explained the financial push that led to her exploitation. She stated, "My parents thought that this would be a good opportunity for me to make some money and it would relieve them of their financial burden."

For those women that were given money for their participation, most never saw any of it. Any money promised was taken by their trafficker.

Other women were provided with non-financial incentives, including promises of a better life and love. For example, some women believed they would become married to their trafficker, or their trafficker would provide them with a better life. For example, one international woman stated, "The marriage deteriorated when he became abusive and slavish. We got married after several weeks of intense correspondence. We met for a 10 day holiday and he proposed. I accepted and proceeded to make arrangements to move to the US with my girls. We lived together for two months…it was downhill from then on." Other U.S. women described similar accounts and described being abused by men they believed would be their partners.
Women were also asked about the places that they were exploited once they became involved in the sex industry. The establishments where these women were exploited were similar for both international and U.S. women. Women worked in the streets of major cities in order to attract clients. Other establishments mentioned included discos, bars, hotels, strip clubs, massage parlors, and apartments. One international woman was too afraid to disclose any identifying factors about the establishment where she was trafficked. She stated, "I cannot tell...if you will analyze everything and find the studio I will end up killed.” It was common for sex trafficking victims to be moved from place to place. Some of the locations that women discussed being trafficked to were Chicago, New York City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Memphis, and near army bases in Georgia.

Women described the ways that they were manipulated, forced and coerced into a life of sex trafficking. Abuse was a common mechanism used by traffickers to force women into the sex trade. And while most women in the current study described experiencing abuse as a form of control, one notable difference did exist when analyzing the responses of international and domestic women. While some international women reported experiencing significant abuse, others reported no abuse at the beginning of their involvement in the sex trade. All of the U.S. women described being abused and mistreated.

Much of the abuse described by international victims included psychological abuse such as name calling, isolation, and deprivation about citizenship information. Other abuse described by the women included violent physical mistreatment. For example an international woman described, "I was tied up, locked, beaten...I was raped all the time...I had to hold down women as he raped them. We were held in slave like conditions. We were locked up. Our children taken away from us and placed in other locked rooms. The locks sometimes were completely taken off
the doors, so we never had any privacy. We could not leave the compound." It was common for
women to be isolated from others as a way of keeping them involved in the sex trade.

Women also described horrific beatings, money deprivation, and even sadistic sexual
encounters. Some of the abuse these women experienced required medical attention due to the
severity of the injury. Women also described being tied up such as this U.S. woman who said of
her trafficker, "He beat me in front of my daughter I was tied up and he beat me while I was butt
naked." Women also explain the beatings they would endure if they did not produce enough
money for the pimp. Another U.S. woman recalled, "He would strip search me time for money
all the time to make sure I had given him everything."

Finally, both international and U.S. women described being forced to do things that they
were uncomfortable with. Much of what the women described included performing sexual acts
of bondage, sadomasochism, performing sex acts with other woman, and bestiality. The women
described performing perversions which made them feel extremely uncomfortable. One
international woman, when asked about her experiences of initial abuse, refused to describe the
horrific acts which she was asked to perform.

Consequences of involvement

Although the trafficking experience of each individual victim can be unique, there were
common themes and events that occurred during these victims involvement in the sex industry.
While many of the women described experiencing abuse, confinement, and isolation during the
initial stages of their recruitment into the sex trade, they also described having these experiences
throughout the entirety of their involvement in the sex trade. This distinction is important in
differentiating abuse as a coercion mechanism for recruitment and the abuse experienced during
their involvement in the sex industry.
Both international and U.S. women withstood confinement and isolation by their trafficker. This experience of long-term confinement and isolation from the outside world highlights the coercive and forced nature of the sex trade. Many women in the current study described being physically confined by their trafficker. One woman from the United States said, "Me, my mother, and others who were used were sometimes confined, locked in closets, and caged on weekends." Other women described living in rural and isolated places and not being allowed to leave their house. These women were completely dependent on their trafficker to have their basic needs met.

For international women who did not speak English, the experience of coming to the United States was also extremely isolating and traffickers used this to their advantage. One woman described her experience, stating, "I was confined in a sense, ‘cause I could speak to no one. I didn't understand the language, he told me all kinds of lies about America and people in America...he wouldn't let me and my girls speak to each other in Russian.” Another international woman described her experiences. She stated:

I was confined in the house, along with several other women who were in the same position as I was. We were confined in the house, locked in rooms, and we didn't understand or speak the language of each other. So we couldn't really communicate with one another since we were all from different countries. We had no access to resources. We were beaten and raped if we didn't comply. We were locked in the compound of the house. There were walls around the compound. He takes the telephone with him when he goes out. We weren't allowed to write letters.

With little knowledge of the English language and no access to resources, these women were completely dependent on their trafficker.
Other ways in which victims were controlled included the deprivation of finances, limited or no contact with family and friends, and withholding travel documents. Limiting access to travel documents plays an important role in a person's freedom. An analysis of the data show that several international women did not have access to their travel documents, which had been taken by their trafficker. One international woman stated, "After marriage, he had control over information regarding my status."

Traffickers restricted victims’ access to financial resources as a way to control them. Although traffickers made money by exploiting these women, most women were not allowed to keep any of their earned income. These women were forced to turn over their money, relying on their traffickers or pimps for financial resources. One international woman described how her husband and trafficker "only gave money for food, when he felt like it and would monitor the bank statements to make sure I wasn't using more than he gave me." Similarly a U.S. woman stated, "I never got to keep any of the money I made." Another woman from the U.S. described how she was given only specific amount of money to survive. She said, "We only got 'mercy money' $10 - $15 for petty expenses. Everything else went to him."

Both international and U.S. women were limited or forbidden from speaking to family or friends. This was another mechanism used by traffickers to control victims. An international Russian speaking victim stated, "While I was with him I wasn't allowed to talk with my friends or family back home. He withheld letters for me from my family and also kept messages and telephone calls from me." U.S. women also expressed having been turned away from their family by their trafficker. One U.S. woman also described how her trafficker used her family for financial gain. She stated, “He/she used to make me call my family and have them wire money to me (him).” These phone calls were done only under the pimps control as well.
Results demonstrate that abuse was a very common form of control which both international and U.S. women experienced. Sexual abuse was very common among women in the current study. Several women stated being raped by men such as their traffickers, pimps, or various men on the street. An international woman stated, "I was tied up, locked, beaten. I was raped all the time. I had to hold down women as he raped them. I saw 5 women being raped." Another international woman said that her trafficker “pressured me to have anal sex, forced me all the time, made loud noises so my kids could hear.”

Several women described being physically beaten by their traffickers, abuse that resulted in significant injury. For example, a U.S. woman, speaking about the man who trafficked her, said, "He terrorized me daily and made me go out on the street. I tried to leave so many times, but he always stalked me and tracked me down, even when I was in shelter. Pushed me out in front of car, knocked teeth out, bruises, fist, leg fractured, and had stitches above the eye." Another woman from the U.S similarly outlined the physical abuse she withstood. She stated that her pimp "knocked my teeth out. He split my head and face open…stuck a broom stick up my anus." A woman from the U.S. described how she was hit with hanger, cut, and even had her knuckles tied with yarn. Finally, a victim from the U.S., describing the physical abuse she endured, stated that she experienced "daily black eyes, stuffed in trunk of car, choked till blue, broken nose, mouth injuries."

Psychological abuse was another way in which these victims were controlled. A woman from the U.S. stated, "He calls us 'ho-s'. Doesn't call us by name or 'women'." Women also experienced verbal threats. A U.S. woman recalled that both she and her family were constantly threatened with death by her traffickers. Weapons were also used to scare and control women in
the current study. Women reported that many of their traffickers carried weapons or threatened their use. One woman recalled having a gun put inside of her as a sexual act.

Drug use was also a very common for women involved in the sex trade. Although some women stated being addicted to drugs, and began using drugs before becoming involved in the sex trade, others were introduced to drugs by their trafficker. Many of these women were given drugs as a way to control them. For example, one international woman stated, "The guards and the pimp threatened me (verbal). They had a specially designated person who gave stimulating medicines for easier control. The guards didn't let us go anywhere, only under convoy." A U.S. woman recalled being introduced to drugs by her husband who forced her into prostitution. She said, "He turned me onto heroin. I had to show him all the money I had. He was very jealous. He made me have sex with other men and sold me into pornography." Women also reported received hallucinogens and sedatives from their traffickers.

Finally, many women were deprived of their basic needs, including access to food and healthcare. One international woman said, "We were held in slave like conditions. We were locked up. Our children taken away from us and placed in other locked rooms…fed kids bread and cheese. Kids didn't get formula. We were sometimes just given a can food of corn to eat." Similarly another international woman stated, "We ate potatoes and bread. He also kept from taking [my daughter] to the hospital when she had a fever of over 103." While working, women were often deprived of food.

As a result of these experiences, many women in the current study experienced significant mental health issues. Both international and U.S. women described feeling depressed, sad, and hopeless. They discussed experiencing self-blame, having difficulty sleeping, feeling anger and rage, and also being emotionally numb. A woman from the U.S. described, "I'd lay in
the dark for long periods of time depressed...feel bad for the people I left behind." An international woman described, "Emotionally I felt awful. I was very scared and thought that they will kill me at the end." One U.S. woman stated suffering from nightmares and shared that she "feels like killing other people" and would “have weird dreams.”

Feelings of guilt and fear were also common among the women. An international woman stated that she felt "scared all the time” and that she was “anxious about [her] children's welfare.” Victims were also asked if they ever had suicidal thoughts. Many of the women involved in trafficking described having suicidal thoughts as a result of the trauma they experienced. One international woman stated, "If I wasn't as scared to die, I would have committed suicide, but I couldn't.” All these feelings affected the victims’ mental health state as a result of being exploited in the sex industry in which they were involved.

**Coping**

Women coped and dealt with their experiences in the sex trade in a number of ways. Although not considered a coping mechanism, it was common for women to attempt to escape from their trafficker in order to break free from their state of servitude. For those that did attempt to escape, these women described multiple escape attempts before finally being successful. For example, one woman from the U.S. tried to escape fifteen times before being successful. She stated, "I got beaten severely by [my boyfriend and] pimp every time I left. He always managed to track me down, even if I moved residences.” Another international woman discussed her final escape attempt. She stated:

I had no resources or skills of my own to make it on my own. The time I finally got out was when I took my son to the hospital in [city] and I met a hospital medical assistant. I told her my story for the first time, and she and the hospital immediately took me to
safety by linking me with the battered women's shelter and services. Without them I'd still be a slave.

Another international woman, describing her attempts to escape, said, "I was terrified of him and also for the safety of my girls. The first time I decided to leave, I was fortunately successful. I had asked him many times before though, to let me return to Russia, but he would threaten me and just ignore my requests."

Some women also reported never having attempted any escapes. In instances where women did not seek to run away, certain reasons such as fear and drug addiction. A woman from the U.S. stated, "I tried to leave less than a month, but the drugs kept me in." One woman from the U.S. described having both been controlled and being addicted to drugs. She said, "I was being beaten by him and controlled. I was also heavily into drugs. He finally got deported after being convicted for domestic violence offenses." Constant threats and control methods kept many of these women from even making an effort to leave their trafficker.

Women also reported using drugs and alcohol as a way to cope with their involvement in the sex trade. In order to differentiate between pre-existing drug and alcohol use, drug and alcohol dependency inflicted by the trafficker, and voluntary drug use as a way to cope, victims were asked to specify when the drug and alcohol abuse began. Though the majority of both international and domestic women used drugs before their involvement in the sex industry, many women described being introduced to drugs, or using drugs more heavily, once becoming involved in the sex trade. Some of the drugs commonly used among these women included cocaine, heroin, and crack. Other substances mentioned were LSD, marijuana, pain killers, and alcohol. A woman from the U.S. said, "I take pain killers. I drink…take crack to forget the abusive men in my life. I need it to numb the pain." Another woman from the U.S. stated that
she used drugs “only experimentally” before being sexually exploited and that once she became involved in the sex trade she “became addicted.” Unfortunately, due to the nature of the questionnaire, a further analysis of drug and alcohol use was unable to be conducted.

In addition to drug use, women described other ways they coped with their involvement in the sex trade. For example, women discussed disassociating, using food to cope, and self-abuse as other methods of coping with this type of experience. For example, one U.S. woman simply stated, "I disassociated" when describing how she coped as a victims of sex trafficking. Another woman from the U.S. described, "I smoked pot and drank. I had an eating disorder, anorexia and bulimia...spent all my money on clothes and perfume...made fun of the situation I was in." Another woman from the U.S. said, "I was self-abusive. I hated myself and my life." An international woman described her method of coping which she stated, "I cried a lot, wrote letters that probably went nowhere."

Finally, women in the current study were asked if they ever attempted suicide. Results indicate that 10 out of the 25 victims surveyed said they had attempted to commit suicide at some point during their involvement in the sex industry. Women from the U.S. were more likely to report a suicide attempt compared to international women. Those who did attempt to end their lives reported multiple suicide attempts. For example, one woman from the U.S. said, "I cut my wrist a couple of times." The most common form of suicide attempt reported among these women was a drug overdose. One U.S woman stated that she "went into seizures," after attempting to overdose several times.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The current analysis focused on characteristics of women who were sex trafficked, how these women were recruited or trafficked, the experiences of women once involved, and finally, how women coped with this type of work. Results suggest that women trafficked for sex can be considered vulnerable due to certain characteristics and background experiences. Many of these women were recruited by someone known to them and prostitution became a pathway that led many of these women to be trafficked. Once involved in the sex trade, these women experienced significant violence and isolation. Finally, women utilized a number of negative outlets to cope with their experience in the sex industry.

Vulnerable populations

Looking at the characteristics of women in the current study, findings support the prior literature in regards to vulnerable populations of sex trafficked individuals. According to Clark (2003), the two most prominent factors making individuals vulnerable to sex trafficking include age and gender. Respondents for the current study were all female victims, illustrating the overrepresentation of females exploited in the sex industry. Studies also demonstrate that minors are at a much higher risk for victimization in the sex industry (Clark, 2013). The average age that victims began in the sex industry was 17 for U.S. victims and 21 for international victims. For women from the United States, their experiences in the sex industry began while they were still minors, highlighting the vulnerability of minor-aged girls. Though the average age of international victims was higher compared to women from the U.S., many women in the current study engaged in prostitution before being trafficked, suggesting that this experience happened while victims were underage. A very small percentage of women in the study stated that they
became involved in the sex industry as an adult of 25 years of age or older, and those who did typically became exploited by a husband during the span of their marriage.

Research demonstrates that trafficked individuals often come from lower socio-economic statuses (Clark, 2003). This research suggests that individuals who live in poverty may be attracted to the potential financial benefits of sex work, making it easier to lure them into this form of exploitation. Women in the current study reported maintaining legitimate employment prior to being involved in the sex industry, including holding jobs as teachers, bank tellers, and nurse's assistants. This was a surprising finding because these women held occupations in society just like any citizen might hold and still managed to become victims of sex trafficking, suggesting that victimization can occur to anyone.

However, many women talked about entering prostitution as a way to make money and have a better life. Though the socio-economic status of victims was not measured, results suggest that women did not view themselves as financially stable. While initially working in legitimate fields, these women needed to find other ways to make money. For many of these women, the step to prostitution ultimately led to their victimization as trafficked persons.

Another prominent characteristic of trafficking victims was histories of abuse. According to Jordan et al. (2013), many trafficking victims come from violent homes. Experiencing sexual exploitation as a child is another factor which is commonly seen in women involved in street prostitution (Silbert & Pines, 1983). Results in the current study support this literature. Sex trafficking victims reported having significant histories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Respondents spoke of sexual abuse they endured growing up and being raised in violent households with frequent physical and verbal abuse. The majority of the abuse women experienced in their childhood were inflicted by a family member or someone close to them, and
much of this abuse began at very early ages. Results add strength to previous literature conducted by Silbert and Pines (1983) that demonstrates a relationship between child sexual abuse and street prostitution, which is how a majority of the victims in the current study were exploited.

Many women in the current study were exploited by men in their lives who also abused them. This experience mirrored what women saw and experienced growing up. Some women explained how these abusive histories contributed to their acceptance of the abuse by their traffickers or pimps. Literature describes these distorted views of relationships and attachment as trauma-bonding. This attachment behavior occurs on behalf of the victim, usually victims who have had histories of violence, which creates distorted view of relationships (Bloom, 1999). Though abused and harmed in a relationship, the victims see their victimizer as their comfort which inhibits their ability to leave the relationship. Trauma-bonding is vital to understanding the relationships between the victims and their exploiters as well as understanding the control that comes as a result of this attachment behavior.

Recruitment

Based on research by Raymond & Hughes (2001), recruitment of victims into the sex industry typically occurs through some sort of organized business or criminal network. In this study, the women reported having been recruited through bars, brothels, clubs, escort services, mafias, and biker gangs (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Results from the current study show that women were trafficked through organized businesses such as bars, clubs, and escort services. Further, the current study adds to our understanding of recruitment, showing that while women were trafficked within larger establishments, they were often recruited by someone they knew.
Recruiters included boyfriends, spouses, or relatives, suggesting that women were trafficked by someone they believed they could trust, or someone close to them.

It was surprising to find that many of these women were exploited by men who they loved and often this bond added to feelings of entrapment. Women whose spouses or boyfriends were the sole traffickers believed that the sexual exploitation would benefit them in some emotional way with that individual. Other women who were also exploited by their significant other did not know that this abuse would occur. Typically these sexual expectations were forced upon the victims after having been married or after having begun a relationship with the trafficker.

The current study did reveal that there were some financial incentives for some international women who were promised money in exchange for specific services. Raymond & Hughes (2001) found that economically disadvantaged individuals tend to be recruited for sex trafficking because of the promise of money that is typically involved in the sex industry. Although results did demonstrate that some women began in the industry to better their financial situation, it was unclear as to whether these victims came from disadvantaged backgrounds. In most instances, regardless of financial promises, these victims were taken advantage of and deprived of any monetary gain.

Aside from monetary incentives, there were women whose drug dependency contributed to their recruitment. Based on the results, some women stated having been referred to their pimp or trafficker and accepted their initial participation in the sex industry because they believed that this would help feed their drug addiction. In some instances women reported having become addicted to the lifestyle in the sex industry and all its components such as the men and the drugs. This type of dependency often facilitated the control the trafficker of pimp had on the victim.
Upon being recruited, women in the study reported having been manipulated by their trafficker either through psychological and/or physically abusive tactics. These tactics included name calling, physical abuse, physical restraints, and sexual assault. It was alarming to see the methods utilized to control these victims. The slave-like conditions mentioned by some women demonstrate a problem that exists in today’s society that often goes undetected. Literature has found that because much of the sex industry occurs underground, it is difficult to identify victims, especially because of constant fear in which they live making it unlikely that these victims will report their victimization (Lange, 2011).

Consequences of involvement

Results from the current study highlight the violent and abusive lifestyles that victims of the sex trafficking industry endured. Common control mechanisms utilized by traffickers or pimps included physical confinement such as the utilization of restraints and isolation. These methods allowed traffickers and pimps to isolate their victims and to exercise control over them. Monetary deprivation was also common in this study. By depriving women of money, traffickers and pimps created reason for the victims to rely on them. In some instances, every aspect of their life was controlled by these men. Victims were exploited sexually, having to work and hand over all monetary gains to their trafficker.

Victims were also prevented from speaking to family members, which their traffickers used as a control mechanism. International victims who spoke a different language were not allowed to speak in their native tongue which the trafficker could not understand. In one instance, several trafficking victims were kept locked and isolated in one room. All these women spoke different languages and were unable to communicate with one another. By
isolating victims from friends and family, traffickers continued to detach the victim from society, making her more dependent on him.

Not only did traffickers enforce their control over the victims by physically isolating them, but they also used physical violence, sexual assault, psychological abuse and drug use. Upon being recruited into the sex industry, these women withstood constant abuse and threats which were very similar to the abuse that many of them had experienced growing up. Women were often beat and severely injured by their trafficker which was seen in other cases of sexual exploitation (U.S. v. Pipkins, 2005). Literature suggests that these vulnerable individuals are an easy population to manipulate through the use of violence and threats (Polaris Project, 2013). It is likely that because these women had experienced similar upbringings, having endured abuse and violence in the home, the control exercised by their trafficker exemplified behavior that they had become accustomed to as a result of their family history. In essence, these histories of abuse may have contributed to their ability to be controlled by these men during their trafficking experience.

Results also found that these women were emotionally broken down and abused. Victims reported having been called names and degraded by their traffickers. Some women stated that they began to believe these lies and began to think less of themselves as a result of the mistreatment. Psychological abuse was also experienced by these women as a result of living in constant fear. Victims were also subject to traumatic experiences which impacted them negatively. It is important to understand that although these women were victims of trafficking, the traffickers were often times someone who they believed loved them. Rather than receive love, protection, and companionship as some of these women believed they would, they were tormented physically and psychologically.
Sexual assault was a common form of abuse experienced by these sex trafficking victims. Results suggest that many of the women, both international and domestic, reported having been victims of rape either by traffickers, pimps, spouses or boyfriends, and other men. Because of the nature of the industry, women also reported having been submitted to perform numerous unwanted sexual practices including bestiality, sex with persons of the same gender, and sadomasochist sex. These practices contributed to the psychological maltreatment of the victims in the study.

Drug use was a topic of interest in analyzing the data. It was vital to attempt to differentiate between women who had prior histories of drug use, women who were given drugs as a control mechanism, and women who used drugs as a coping mechanism. Unfortunately the nature of the question did not allow for such an analysis to be conducted. However, women did disclose whether they had used drugs or alcohol before or during their exploitation. Based on the findings four out of eight international women used drugs or alcohol before being sexually exploited and two women stated being introduced to drugs or alcohol during their exploitation. Two international women responded that they had never used drugs or alcohol at any point in their life. The majority of domestic women stated using drugs or alcohol both before and during their sexual exploitation. The drugs discussed by domestic women were primarily hard drugs which include powder cocaine, crack cocaine, and heroin. Victim accounts indicate that stimulating medicines were given to the women by the traffickers in order to better control and manipulate them into engaging in sexual acts with clients.

Coping

Findings in the study demonstrate the horrific experiences of sex trafficking victims and the control which they were subjected to by their trafficker. Due to this control, many victims
felt that they could not escape the sex industry because they feared harm from their trafficker. Further, some of these victims were physically restrained by their trafficker. Rather than deal with the abuse and continue being trafficked, many women did attempt to escape and flee from their traffickers. It was interesting to see that although these women lived in constant fear, many risked their lives and attempted multiple escape attempts as a way out of the industry. However, even after several attempts, women were almost always recaptured and faced repercussions. As a result, many women reported feeling hopeless because they could not escape their situation regardless of their many efforts. It is important to note that although escape is not considered a coping mechanism, it was a way in which these women attempted to find a way out of sexual servitude.

Drug and alcohol use was a coping mechanism commonly shared by numerous victims in the study. Women reported utilizing hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and crack in order to cope with their experiences during their sexual exploitation. Although drug use was not limited to only hard drugs, they were representative of the major findings in the study. The results represent a common coping mechanism utilized by victims involved in the sex industry. Similar findings were seen in a study conducted by the U.S. State Department (2008) which measured ways in which victimization in the sex industry dealt with that type of work. Although previous literature reports heavy drug and alcohol use as a coping mechanism, drug preference is not specified. As previously mentioned, the findings in the current study demonstrate that hard drugs were most common among victims. This finding is significant in that it highlights a problem which may have contributed to the entrapment of these women. Due to the addictive nature which such drugs possess, dependency on their traffickers existed.
Other coping mechanisms were also found through this study to help victims get by emotionally. Disassociation was mentioned by some women in the study. Literature shows that individuals with trauma often use disassociation as a way to cope and deal with distressing events. By disassociating, commonly through emotional numbing, the victim learns to detach his or her feelings from a certain experience so that upon coming across a similar experience, the individual protects his or herself by not triggering emotions. Results show that the women learn to disassociate during their involvement in the sex industry due to the traumatic experiences involved with the industry. These results were not surprising based on the fact that these victims not only faced new traumatic experiences while being trafficked, but in some instances had experienced trauma early in life which contributed to this coping mechanism.

Results show that women used a variety of negative coping strategies to deal with their life in the sex trade. One of the most alarming findings included the number of women that discussed having suicidal thoughts. Many of these women also described acting on these thoughts, including suicide attempts. Not only did some women attempt to end their lives, some reported having attempted multiple times. The results demonstrate the serious mental health effects associated with victim involvement in the sex industry and the detrimental physical and mental consequences to these sex trafficking victims.

Implications

The findings in the study help illustrate an underground industry that exists not only internationally, but in the United States. The current study uses the voices of victims to narrate the experiences that each woman lived during their sex trafficking victimization. Findings highlight a need for prevention programs aimed at at-risk populations. This ‘at-risk’ population includes young women who come from broken homes that experience violence and abuse. The
first step into sex trafficking occurs during the actual recruitment of these victims. Although anyone can fall victim to this industry, there are certain characteristics that increase this likelihood (United Nations, 2012). Literature indicates that women and children make up the largest victim population in the industry (Clark, 2003). Research demonstrates a large need to raise awareness among youth in order to help prevent such recruitment into this underground market of sexual exploitation. It is important to target those vulnerable populations that are at higher risk for victimization. It would be beneficial to implement workshops about sex trafficking at women's shelters, homeless shelters, and various youth programs to spread awareness about sex trafficking.

Prevention programs should also discuss relationships, including the attributes of healthy relationships. It was surprising to see the number of women who had fallen victim as a result of being coerced and forced into the sex industry by someone who they believed loved them. This recruitment method was common among the women, both international and domestic, in this study. With this finding, youth would benefit from prevention programs that would educate them on the reality of relationship violence as well as sex trafficking as a result of violent relationships.

While prevention programs can help reduce the number of individuals that are recruited into the sex industry, more programs and services are needed for victims of the sex trade when they exit the industry. Findings from the current study show the serious physical and mental health risks associated with this form of exploitation. The majority of women suffered from physical, psychological, and emotional harm as a result of their victimization. These women also experienced significant abuse before becoming involved in the sex trade. These results
highlight a need for various services including counseling, mental health services, and treatment for addictions.
CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

Though the United States is considered one of the most popular destination countries for sex trafficking, limited research actually focuses on trafficking in this country (Phinney, 2001). Further, a review of the current literature on sex trafficking highlights the limited research that continues to be lacking which examines experiences of sex trafficking victims through their respective voices (Faulkner et al., 2013). The current study attempts to fill this gap by exploring sex trafficking in the United States, using interviews with victims. These interviews allow victims to share, in their own words, stories about their experiences in this underground market which they lived and survived. While this research helps add to our understanding of sex trafficking, it is important to discuss the limitations of the current study.

One of the main limitations in this study is the sample, including how victims were recruited for this study and the limited number of interviews obtained. The original sample size consisted of 40 women who were considered victims of sex trafficking. The current study only focused on women who were forced into sex trafficking, and only 25 women (8 international and 17 domestic) in the original study met this criteria. Based on this small sample size, results from this study cannot be generalized and responses from respondents are not representative of all sex trafficking victims.

Further, victims for the current study were recruited by agencies who interacted with victims of sex trafficking. The sample was obtained by partnering with three domestic and one international social service agency which aided in the recruitment of participants. Though the women were trafficked throughout the United States and various countries, the social service agencies from which the participants were referred were based in San Francisco, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York City, and St. Petersburg, Russia (Raymond & Hughes, 2002). This limited
sample is not representative of all domestic and international women, though it is an attempt to work with a very limited population of victims willing to participate. The women in the sample are unique in that they had left or escaped the sex industry and sought out help. This population is distinct from those victims who have not managed to escape the sex industry or who have not reached out to receive help, having to deal with the damage left after their sex trafficking victimization. We know from prior literature that victims are unlikely to report their victimization as a result of living in constant fear (Lange, 2011). Though this study does contribute to existing literature by representing victim voices, which are often absent, it is vital to understand that the experiences of each individual are unique and representative of their personal involvement in the sex industry.

Another limitation is related to the use of secondary data for the current analysis. Data for the current study were obtained from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) (Raymond & Hughes, 2002). The semi-structured interviews were based off of questionnaires which asked women about their involvement in the sex industry. A number of international women utilized an interpreter in order to understand the questions in their native language. Examining responses from both domestic and international women, at times the answers provided by international women were not as thorough as the answers provided by the domestic women. This discrepancy raises a potential concern, including whether interpreters shortened or paraphrased international women’s responses. Also, for those instances when an interpreter was present, it is possible that the respondent did not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with this third party.

Missing data was an issue for some questions, and international women were more likely to have unanswered questions. For those international women who did not use interpreters, it is
possible that they did not understand the questions being asked, or their English skills were not strong enough to report their own answers. All these concerns highlight a limitation in the study that represents potential differences in responses when comparing international and domestic women. And because secondary data were used, it is impossible to answer these questions about the data.

Another issue that came up when analyzing data for the current study includes the questions asked to both domestic and international women. Both groups were given the same questionnaire with identical questions. However, some of the questions pertained only to international women, and if changed slightly, could have also been asked of domestic women. As a result, there were a few questions where the majority of domestic women had missing data. The following question was asked of all women - What were your wages earned before leaving home country? This question was left unanswered by the majority of domestic women and no complementary question was asked of women from the U.S. It could have been useful to understand the wages of women from the U.S. prior to entering the sex industry and whether or not money was a pull factor that influenced recruitment.

Although this study has limitations, these limitations also highlight potential areas that need further development for future research. For example, though victim identification is a difficult task, future research would benefit from having a significantly larger sample size. A larger sample size would allow for a more accurate representation of the population of sex trafficking victims. Also, researchers should attempt to agree on definitions of what constitutes a ‘sex trafficking victim.’ Then, recruitment for studies on sex trafficking would only include women who meet the definition of a trafficking person, specifically someone who was forced or
coerced into this industry. This would eliminate the need for other researchers to make determinations about who constitutes a victim of sex trafficking when using secondary data.

Since participant recruitment was based on references made by four social service agencies, very little diversity existed among the women other than the one seen between international and domestic women. Future research would benefit from recruiting women from various backgrounds such as different ethnic/racial backgrounds and a variety of countries where sex trafficking were recruited. This would help to broaden the types of victims included in future analyses. Using a larger, more diverse sample size would allow future research to explore whether sex trafficking victims have universal experiences, or if their experiences are unique based on personal characteristics or the places they are trafficked. Participant recruitment should also vary to attempt to reach potential sex trafficking victims who may not be found through social service agencies. Future studies should attempt to find other avenues through which victims of sex trafficking may be found, utilizing other forms of recruitment. Also future studies should offer incentives for participation such as referral to an agency dedicated to helping such victims.

Research such as the one conducted by the Human Trafficking Reporting System (HTRS) has found that women comprise of the majority of victims in the sex industry, however male victimization does exist. Dennis (2008) found that acknowledgement of male sex workers is almost nonexistent in literature which references sex trafficking workers. Little is known about this unique group of victims exploited through the underground market. Future research would also benefit from conducting a study which focuses on the experiences of this underrepresented group of victims. Characteristics which may be beneficial to explore include victim histories, recruitment methods, victims’ experiences during exploitation, and consequences of
involvement. Such information can potentially demonstrate whether male participation differs from female participation in the sex industry.

Another important area which needs further development is the comparison between countries that have legal prostitution and those countries that do not. Holman (2008) argues that countries which have legalized prostitution contribute to the international human trafficking problem. Though policies such as the TVPA attempt to combat the trafficking of individuals, industries such as the ones generated by the legalization of prostitution stand in the way of combating the root of the problem. Future research should analyze the differences in the numbers of sex trafficking victims taking into account such countries where prostitution is legal, including the 11 Nevada counties in the United States (US Federal and State Prostitution Laws, 2014).

After studying the experiences of sex trafficking victims, it was interesting to learn that some women in the study were also experiencing domestic violence and were being exploited sexually by their loved one. Future research should look at similarities between victims of domestic violence and victims of sex trafficking in order to determine any shared characteristics and potential areas for future victim services. Such research would benefit social service agencies that help domestic violence victims and work closely with women who may potentially be sex trafficking victims as well.

Lastly, studies should explore law enforcement response to sex trafficking cases. Research should analyze how such agencies treat these individuals and whether they are categorized and treated as offenders or victims. Studies should also analyze policies put in place by law enforcement agencies and how they train officers to respond to cases which may involve a sex trafficking offense. It is important to determine how law enforcement agencies
differentiate between illegal acts of prostitution and victims of sex trafficking. Future law enforcement studies would help shed light on important areas that concern the growing problem of sex trafficking here in the United States.

The sex industry continues to grow specifically in the United States as a result of the high demand for paid sex in this country (Mizus et al., 2003). This high demand generates an underground market of sexual exploitation. Though sex trafficking research demonstrates the significant impact of sex trafficking on victims, the voice of the victim should be given more relevance. Survey responses from both international and U.S. women used for the current study provide an important voice in the literature that is not typically represented. Prior to implementation of future policies and social and health services, it is imperative to understand the experiences of the victims in this industry in order to understand what survivors need once they are out. Anyone is potentially at risk for victimization in this industry and it is vital to let the voices of victims be heard to help pave the way to end this form of modern-day slavery.
REFERENCES


Farrell, A. (2009). State and local law enforcement responses to human trafficking:

Explaining why so few trafficking cases are identified in the United States. Sociology of Crime, Law & Deviance 13, 243-259.


Polaris Project. Human trafficking. Website accessed on December 11, 2013 at

States. Coalition against Trafficking in Women.

Coalition against Trafficking Women, 2002. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium
for Political and Social Research.


Retrieved from http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-

United Nations (2000). Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons,
Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against
Transnational Organized Crime. Retrieved from
https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=ind&mtdsg_no=xviii-12-
a&chapter=18&lang=en.

United States v. Pipkins, 412 F.3d 1251, 1251 (11th Cir. 2005).


