

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS OF VICE: A COMPARATIVE
PHENOMENOLOGY OF PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING

by

Sean Jeremy McKnight

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the topic of human trafficking with a focus on the perspectives of local law enforcement officers located in California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine officers' perceptions relating to the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. The problems addressed in this study are that the identification of victims of human trafficking has not been effective, under-identification has long been a problem, and victims are undercounted. The theory guiding this study is Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, as officers may experience cognitive dissonance during their routine law enforcement work. The study utilized an email survey instrument consisting of open-ended questions that were sent to officers who held the rank of police officer or sergeant (or the equivalent). The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey®. The survey responses were manually coded and analyzed; the results were then analyzed using QSR®NVivo 12 to ensure correlation with the manual coding analysis. The major findings of this study are as follows: officers believe the victim-centered approach to human trafficking is a compassionate tool for empowering individuals who are powerless and that mistrust in law enforcement remains a significant barrier to implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking and building relationships with victims. The officers' agreed almost unanimously that sex trafficking victims are under-identified and that more training on prostitution and human trafficking is needed.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, human trafficking, sex trafficking, under-identified victims, victim-centered approach

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my wife, Arianna C. McKnight, who has unconditionally supported me throughout this dissertation journey and in all aspects of our lives together. I want you to know that your unconditional love and support have never gone unnoticed. To my children, Brynn N. McKnight and Grady R. McKnight, I love you both so much, and I am so lucky to be your father. You both can do anything you set your hearts and minds to and are both amazingly talented. To my adoptive parents, Rima Forrest and Dave Sulzen, who have always pushed me to new heights and have been a constant support in my life. To my biological mother, Joyce D. McKnight, you inspired me to become the best person that I could be, and for that, I will be forever grateful. I wish you were still here to watch me accomplish this milestone in my life. I will always love you. To my grandfather, Albert N. McKnight, for being an inspiration to me throughout my childhood. To my grandmother, Elsie H. McKnight, for reminding me to always be kind to others and help those in need. To my uncle, Dwain N. McKnight, I can never thank you enough for the sacrifices you made for me; you are forever in my gratitude. To my sister Zoya Sulzen, you were such an inspiring and loving soul, you were taken too soon, and I miss you every day. To all the children in the foster care system, always remember that nothing is permanent, and always make good choices that will last you a lifetime. I am part of the 3% of foster care youth who graduated with a college degree, and you can be, too. To the victims of sex trafficking, my thoughts are with you; remember that you are brave and strong, and I will never stop fighting for you.

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List of Abbreviations

Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST)

Amnesty International (AI)

Anti-Slavery International (ASI)

Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)

Ending Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC)

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviews (FETI)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ)

Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE)

National Institute of Justice (NIJ)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

President’s Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking (PITF)

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)

Trafficking in Persons (TIP)

Trafficking of Human Beings for the Purpose of Organ Removal (THBOR)

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)

Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)

Victim-Centered Approach to Human Trafficking (VCATHT)

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Human trafficking is one of the largest and most profitable criminal enterprises worldwide, second only to drug trafficking. According to the United Nations, it is one of the fastest-growing forms of organized crime, despite being unlawful, cruel, and a clear violation of an individual's fundamental human rights (Crane, 2014; United Nations, 2001, 2014). Some researchers have suggested that human trafficking will continue to outpace both the drug and arms trade in terms of frequency and profitability within the next 10 years (Jordan et al., 2013). Human trafficking is estimated to generate approximately 150 billion dollars annually for traffickers (Fouladvand, 2018; Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020) and 99 billion dollars from commercial sexual exploitation alone (International Labour Organization, 2014). Globally, an estimated 71% of enslaved people are women and girls, while men and boys account for 29% (International Labour Organization, 2017a). Initial estimates cited in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 suggested that approximately 50,000 individuals are trafficked into the United States each year. This estimate was revised to 18,000–20,000 in the U.S. Department of State's June 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report. In its 2005 report, the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons estimated that approximately 14,500–17,500 individuals are trafficked annually (Clawson, Layne, & Small, 2006).

Background

Slavery has existed since the beginning of civilization. Western slavery dates back approximately 10,000 years to Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), where a "male slave was

worth an orchard of date palms and female slaves were called on for sexual services, gaining freedom only when their masters died” (Brazier, 2008, p. 161). During this period, slave sales often involved both the woman and her children, children being viewed as offspring and therefore the property of the woman’s enslaver; they could be bought and sold similar to livestock (Reid, 2017). Slavery has continued to exist throughout written history, including events such as the Trans-Saharan slave trade, which most notably involved tribal wars in North Africa in which defeated tribes would be captured and enslaved by conquering tribes. While the Trans-Saharan slave trade predated the Atlantic Slave Trade by several centuries, it has often been cited as fueling the Atlantic Slave Trade movement in which millions of enslaved people were forcibly transported from Western and Central Africa to the Americas (Muhammad, 2003). The practice of slavery continued and eventually culminated into the Civil War in the United States, and while slavery was abolished at the end of the Civil War, the practice of slavery continues and is now known as human trafficking, or modern day slavery.

The crime of human trafficking has become increasingly widespread. It affects almost every country globally, whether in the recruitment, transit of the victim, or intended destination (Belser, 2005; Europol, 2005; Miko & Park, 2001). The estimated scale of human trafficking is between 30-40 million people globally (International Labor Organization, 2017b; K. T. Smith & Betts, 2015), while the U.S. Department of State estimates 24.9 million victims globally (U.S. Department of State, 2019b). The Global Slavery Index 2018 developed by the Minderoo Foundation (2018) estimates that in 2016, 403,000 people were victims of modern slavery in the United States. Estimates from the U.S. Department of Justice suggest that a more precise global number may fall

between 600,000 and 800,000 victims and between 14,500 to 17,500 in the United States (Roby et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Justice, 2004).

Human trafficking is generally a hidden crime that has only recently drawn the attention of law enforcement, policymakers, and human rights advocates (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2019; Oldham, 2018). The research in human trafficking continues to evolve and has focused almost solely on its victims. Despite little to no follow-up testing, several studies have attempted to provide recommendations regarding diverse partnerships that may improve victim identification; however, with little testing, determining their relative success is difficult (Feasley, 2013; McDonald, 2014). Reliable data are needed, particularly about the characteristics of both victims and perpetrators, operations mechanism, and the assessment of trends.

Human trafficking can also be referred to as trafficking in persons and modern-day slavery; however, these terms are considered virtually synonymous by researchers of human trafficking. Modern-day slavery is a crime that includes bonded and forced labor, migrant labor debt bondage, sex or human trafficking, involuntary domestic servitude, and child soldiering. Human trafficking, or the trafficking of persons, occurs when someone obtains or holds a person in compulsory service. While there are several more nuanced definitions of human trafficking, all definitions cover the same essential characteristics. The United Nations Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as follows:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threats or the use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of

the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014, p. 2)

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 defines human trafficking as follows:

- (a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- (b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (§7101)

Forms of Human Trafficking

Sex Trafficking

“The United States is the only modern democratic country where the majority of trafficking victims are its own citizens” (Patel, 2015, p. 395), and it is one of the largest sex trafficking markets in the world (Songs & Joseph, 2020). In the United States and across the globe, the sexual exploitation of men, women, and children is increasing at a concerning pace (Litam, 2017) and is more widespread than many people understand (Luttrell, 2020). While the awareness of modern day slavery is growing, the act of human trafficking is not a new phenomenon and has existed since the beginning of written

history. The term sex trafficking is broad and can also include commercial sex work, such as prostitution, and other acts such as exotic dancing, stripping, pornography, mail-order brides, live sex shows, sexual tourism, and military prostitution (Luzwick, 2017). In the United States, the legal definition of sex trafficking is “the recruitment harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (TVPA of 2000, 22 U.S. Code, §7101). The act of smuggling—consensual migration with third-party assistance—in which an adult who sells sex willingly is not considered a trafficking victim under U.S. law (Weitzer, 2011). Human trafficking and human smuggling are often misunderstood and grouped together. However, these crimes are significantly different. The significant difference between the two is that human smuggling is transportation-based and involves providing a service to gain illegal entry to a foreign country. Human trafficking is exploitation-based for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation. In some cases, the crime can begin as human smuggling, but quickly becomes human trafficking (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2017).

Sex trafficking is not limited to prostitution, and it has become a growing problem in both the United States and globally (Deshpande & Nour, 2013; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2017). Additionally, sex trafficking and prostitution are not synonymous; it is essential to note that prostitution is only one type of work that victims of sex trafficking may perform. Musto et al. (2015) described the difference between prostitution and sex work:

Prostitution is a gendered, sexualized, and racialized labor system, one that typically involves the exchange of sexual services for money, goods, or other

benefits, and sex work encompasses different types of intimate arrangements that blur the boundaries between erotic, emotional, and economic labor. (p. 279)

Sex workers and prostitutes are often combined into the same group. Sex work, broadly defined, is the exchange of sexual services for goods or money, such as housing, drugs, basic necessities, or money, that can involve working independently or in a group, involving all genders, races, and ages. Additionally, some forms of sex work are prohibited by prostitution laws throughout the United States. In contrast, other acts such as erotic dancing are regulated by alcohol or zoning laws or ordinances and are not criminal acts (Weitzer, 2014b). Sex work is not necessarily criminalized in all countries. For example, through Bill C-36, Canada legislated the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act and provided a new legal framework regarding sex workers.

According to Benoit et al. (2019) and the Department of Justice Canada (2017):

Sex workers may provide sexual services at fixed indoor locations; communicate with others for the purpose of offering or providing sexual services for consideration so long as this communication does not occur in a public place that is next to a school ground, playground, or day-care center; advertise their own sexual services; and pay for services with profits from the sale of their own sexual services when that compensation is proportionate to the service offered. (Benoit et al., 2019, pp. 330–331)

Sex workers, while also including prostitutes, also include adult video performers, phone sex operators, webcam models, strip club dancers, and other individuals that provide sexual-related services. There are notable shifts toward further decriminalization of sex work. Albright and D'Adamo (2017) pointed out that to decrease human trafficking, full

decriminalization of prostitution will allow for punitive laws that restrict the reporting of exploitation and abuse to be removed and allow sex workers to work more safely and reduce their vulnerability.

Within the literature, there are differing interpretations of this viewpoint. Outshoorn (2005) pointed out that legal prostitution can drive human trafficking cases and that laws to combat trafficking would effectively reduce this crime, while Freeman (2019) recommended that legalization of prostitution is imperative in the United States. Cho et al. (2013) conducted a study that analyzes cross-sectional data of 116 countries and found that countries where prostitution is decriminalized have higher reported human trafficking inflows compared to countries where prostitution is criminalized. In contrast, another study conducted by Lee and Persson (2018) found that “criminalizing (the sale or purchase of) prostitution can increase or decrease trafficking depending on the prevalence of voluntary prostitution” (p. 27), and that “criminalization is more likely to increase trafficking (and conversely, decriminalization is more likely to reduce trafficking) when a decriminalized market exhibits a larger level of voluntary prostitution” (p. 41). The differing viewpoints relating to sex work and prostitution only drive the conversation further away from eliminating sex trafficking and ultimately eliminating human trafficking. The efforts focused on these differing viewpoints take resources and time away from rescuing human trafficking victims and prosecuting offenders. Human trafficking can happen to anyone regardless of whether sex work or prostitution is criminalized or decriminalized in their country. The victims of sex trafficking can be any age or sex, though in most cases they are women and adolescent girls, and, while significant amounts of attention are typically focused on sex trafficking of women and

girls, male victims and other trafficking types are often overlooked and ignored (Cockbain & Bowers, 2019). Some other trafficking types commonly overlooked include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) sex trafficking and the trafficking of gay men. These populations are often ignored due to the fact that same-sex prostitution is mostly hidden to the outside world, many societies view sexual violence against men as taboo, and there are often minimal services available for trafficked men (Martinez & Kelle, 2013). Regardless of these societal pressures against reporting it, despite being outlawed in numerous countries worldwide, this type of human trafficking is still widely prevalent (Deshpande & Nour, 2013).

Domestic Minor/ Child Sex Trafficking

Domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), also known as the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child sex trafficking, has become better understood and recognized in the United States (Goldberg & Moore, 2018). DMST affects children and adolescents on both domestic and international levels and is considered a form of oppression and child sexual abuse (Choi, 2015; Hardy et al., 2013). Hartinger-Saunders et al. (2017) called it “a transactional form of child sexual abuse” (p. 195). It is defined as the commercial sexual abuse of individuals under the age of 18 (children) through the purchase, sale, and trade of sexual services (Horner, 2015; Kotrla, 2010). Worldwide, 80% of trafficking victims are female, and 50% of those victims are minors (Deshpande & Nour, 2013). On a global scale, approximately one million children are estimated to be victims of DMST (International Labour Organization, 2017b) In the United States, estimates show that approximately 150,000–300,000 children are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation each year (Songs & Joseph, 2020). In 2018, over half (51.6%) of all

active criminal human trafficking cases relating to sex trafficking involved only child victims (Currier & Feehs, 2019).

DMST can also involve engaging a U.S. citizen or legal resident younger than 18 years in prostitution, pornography, stripping, escort services, or other sexual services (Horner, 2015). Victims of DMST are frequently recognized as having several psychosocial risk factors, including histories of abuse or neglect, running away, maltreatment, unstable living conditions, family dysfunction, parental substance use or abuse, and involvement with child protective services (Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Hornor, 2011). DMST victims are often involved within the child welfare system (Kennedy A., 2017). Victims of DMST may suffer various physical and mental health consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and suicidality (Goldberg & Moore, 2018; Wells et al., 2012). A study conducted by Zimmerman et al. (2008) found that nearly two-thirds (63%) of trafficked women reported at least 10 physical health symptoms upon entering post-trafficking programs. These symptoms included headaches, back pain, exhaustion, dizziness, memory difficulty, stomach pain, pelvic pain, and gynecological infections. Zimmerman et al. (2008) also noted that more than half of the women and adolescent girls (57%) were found to have PTSD.

Victim identification of DMST is significantly underreported due to its nature: behind closed doors and beyond the boundaries of society (Swartz, 2014). Some barriers to more comprehensive data collection about the prevalence of sex trafficking of minors are due to victims not identifying themselves, due partly to the victims not considering themselves as victims (Parsons et al., 2014), and due to the fact that they often refuse law enforcement assistance altogether (Kennedy et al., 2019). A review by Franchino-Olsen

et al. (2020) on the extent of minor sex trafficking in the United States was conducted by summarizing estimates, methodologies, and the strengths and limitations of six empirical studies published between 1999 and 2017. This review found that little research has estimated the prevalence of minor sex trafficking in the United States, and that these studies often examine different populations and locations using different categories to estimate the problem. These findings show that studies often are not estimating the population using a standard scale of measurement, which leads to vast differences in estimates of the prevalence of DMST, including some other populations of DMST victims that are not accounted for, such as the LGBTQ population. Some studies have suggested that LGBTQ populations are a particularly at-risk group for DMST due to their sexuality or identity establishing added vulnerability (Choi, 2015; Fedina et al., 2016; Walls & Bell, 2011; Warf et al., 2013).

DMST victims are often reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement due to being treated as criminals instead of victims (Siskin & Wyler, 2010). Many victims are discovered through prostitution charges since they are often criminalized instead of being offered services and treatment to aid in their escape. This situation often facilitates the continuation of their life in trafficking instead of stopping it (Lister, 2017). The services and treatment needed to remove victims from sex trafficking situations are crucial. One potential solution proposed to help promote this was creating Safe Harbor Laws, with New York being the first to pass legislation in 2008 (Hickle, 2013). Safe Harbor Laws were created to address the inconsistencies at the state level in the treatment of children exploited for commercial sex by providing victims legal protection from prosecution for offenses, such as prostitution, based on the fact that the victim was coerced or forced to

commit an offense (Shields & Letourneau, 2015). The legislation highlights a victim-centered, trauma-informed, and youth-centered approach (Barnert et al., 2016). States with Safe Harbor laws in some form include Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington (Barnert et al., 2016; Hickle, 2013). Out of all states, 40 states have enacted laws regarding the diversion, legal protection, or funding of anti-trafficking efforts and services for victims (Cole & Sprang, 2020; Williams, 2017). However, across the United States, these variations in Safe Harbor Laws continue to pose a problem in addressing the treatment and interventions of DMST victims, often leading to inconsistent supportive service for victims and insufficient protection (Sanchez & Pacquiao, 2018).

A victim-centered approach is needed for victims. Advocates of a victim-centered approach to the DMST population are primarily focused on the decriminalization of victims (Barnert et al., 2016; Bergquist, 2015; V. J. Greenbaum, 2014; Leary, 2014). The criminalization of DSMT victims can hinder and prevent their escape from sex work by eroding trust between victims and law enforcement. As a result, investigations against traffickers are often severely limited due to this breakdown of trust (Karaz, 2016). The inability to implement a victim-centered approach for child sex trafficking cases when interviewing DMST victims has further divided the DMST victim–law enforcement relationship. While some law enforcement agencies embrace a victim-centered approach during this process, it is still severely lacking, and the unique needs of DMST victims are not often compatible with the current protocols (Bernat, 2013).

Labor Trafficking

In the United States, the prevalence of labor trafficking is difficult to estimate for many reasons, most notably due to the crime's hidden nature (Bracy, 2021). Labor trafficking is "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery" (TVPA of 2000, 22 U.S.C. § 7101). There are several subsets of this practice, including bonded labor, forced labor, and child labor (HHS, 2015). One of the least understood types of labor trafficking is most likely bonded labor, also known as debt bondage, even though it is the most widely used method of enslaving people. This type of labor trafficking involves the victim's labor to repay a loan or service. The terms and conditions of the binding debt are not well defined nor value determined to be adequately applied to the debt liquidation (HHS, 2015). Forced labor victims are forced to work against their will, generally under the threat of violence or other forms of punishment. In turn, these victims have their freedom restricted, creating a degree of "ownership" over the victim. There are several forms of forced labor, such as domestic servitude, sweatshop factory labor, agricultural labor, begging, janitorial or food service, or other service industry labor (HHS, 2015).

There is a lengthy history of children, boys and girls, being exploited for these kinds of labor in the United States (Walts, 2017). Child labor is usually hazardous to the victim's health and can have adverse physical, mental, moral, spiritual, or social development effects on children and usually interfere with the victim's education. The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 246 million exploited children between the ages of 5 and 17 who are involved in various forms of child labor on a global

scale. These forms include debt bondage, forced recruitment for armed conflict, illegal drug trade, illegal arms trade, pornography, child soldiers/forced recruitment for armed conflict, or other illicit activities (HHS, 2015). Despite evidence of child labor trafficking occurring in the United States, efforts to identify and prevent this crime continue to be met with obstacles, including the lack of research and data collection on the child labor trafficking victim population, legislation and policies that are more focused on sex trafficking, and a lack of training for both first responders and child-serving organizations, the combination of these obstacles leading to an ineffective response to identifying these cases (Walts, 2017).

Despite the passage of legislation in the United States establishing federal law against human trafficking, labor trafficking continues to lack systematic information and uniform procedures for investigation by law enforcement (NIJ, 2016). A 2014 study conducted by the NIJ implemented by the Urban Institute examined why so few identified labor trafficking cases are investigated and prosecuted; the study concluded:

By and large, labor trafficking investigations were not prioritized by local or federal law enforcement. Survivors mostly escaped on their own and lived for several months or years before being connected to a specialized service provider. Local and federal law enforcement agencies had difficulty defining labor trafficking and separating it from other forms of labor exploitation and workplace violations. (NIJ, 2016, para. 12)

Research has shown that labor trafficking cases remain hidden because law enforcement often do not understand the laws that govern this crime or confuse labor trafficking with

other crimes. Further, these crimes are often not a high priority in their agencies (Barrick et al., 2014; Farrell et al., 2008; Shoop, 2020).

Organ Trafficking

Organ trafficking is likely one of the most clandestine forms of human trafficking (Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019). Organ trafficking occurs in two general categories: cases in which traffickers force or deceive the victims into giving up an organ, and cases in which victims formally or informally agree to sell an organ and are deceived by not being paid for the organ or are being paid less than the agreed price (Glaser, 2005). Organ trafficking is defined by article 3(a) in the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (known as the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, or simply, Trafficking Protocol) as the:

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons through the threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person in control of the victim for the purpose of exploitation and removal of organs. (United Nations, 2000)

The terms organ trafficking, trafficking in organs, and trafficking of human beings for the purpose of organ removal (THBOR) are often used interchangeably (United Nations, 2015). Trafficking in persons for organ removal is explicitly defined in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol; however, it does not incorporate the terms trafficking in organs or organ trafficking (United Nations, 2015). THBOR and the human organ trade are condemned globally (Caulfield et al., 2016). Despite the efforts to curb this practice, it

continues worldwide, and it has been estimated that approximately 10% of all transplants may occur illegally (Caulfield et al., 2016; Delmonico, 2009; Shimazono, 2007).

Reliable data on organ trafficking are minimal and difficult to estimate (Kelly, 2013; Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019) Yousaf and Purkayastha (2016) explained that estimating how many people are victims or recipients of illegally harvested organs is difficult because the complex nature of organ trafficking leads to unreliable statistics and underreporting. THBOR is commonly not included in policy debates, due primarily to the fact that this crime is hardly detected and reported, and there is minimal research on the subject (Gonzalez et al., 2020). THBOR is not a new crime; however, globalization, economic inequality, and the shortage of organs have amplified the problem to the point that governments have begun to and need to continue developing and implementing comprehensive punitive measures for this crime (Gawronska, 2019). One of the most vulnerable populations for THBOR is migrants, due to the poor political and socioeconomic conditions that they face in their own countries (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Victims of organ trafficking are commonly recruited through brokers, who act as intermediaries, connecting organ suppliers with organ recipients (Kelly, 2013; Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019; United Nations, 2011, 2015). Organ recipients, often referred to as participating in transplant tourism, are generally from the United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Taiwan, Panama, Costa Rica, while organ sellers are often from India, Pakistan, China, Bolivia, Iraq, Israel, Colombia (Bos, 2015; Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019; Shimazono, 2007).

China is well-known for participating in organ trafficking, with details of penitentiaries executing detainees to illegally harvest their organs when identified as a

potential match for a recipient (Paul et al., 2017). The magnitude of organ-trafficking-related activities in China is unclear, and official policies and procedures are described in a variety of ways. In 2015, the Chinese government ended the harvesting of organs from executed prisoners in lieu of a voluntary transplant program. In January 2021, China's first civil code went into effect prohibiting forced or coerced human organ sales or donations (O'Regan, 2021).

The United States is a top recipient of trafficked organs (Bos, 2015; Shimazono, 2007) even though the sale of organs was banned under the National Organ Transplant Act of 1984. This legislation also established a nationwide computer registry operated by the United Network for Organ Sharing (Jafar, 2009). While this activity may be illegal, the United States has done very little to stop organ trafficking under current laws and regulations (Wagner, 2014) and has only prosecuted one individual under organ trafficking laws (Glovin et al., 2011). There have been limited studies conducted that examine convictions related to organ trafficking. The Case Law Database of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) documented only 14 convictions related to payment for organs and one THBOR conviction that had been reported to the database (Ambagtsheer, 2021; UNODC, 2021a). Organ trafficking is an increasingly widespread phenomenon globally, becoming more important and pressing than ever (Francis & Francis, 2010; Rahman, 2019; Vilks, 2019).

Global Epidemic

Human trafficking is considered a global epidemic, global health concern, and a global plague, and the United States is not immune to its death and destruction (Gallo et al., 2020; Helton, 2016; Swanson, 2015). Human trafficking has also been described as a

“mushrooming human catastrophe” (Weiss, 2015, p. 286). The development of a global definition of human trafficking, establishing human trafficking as a criminal offense, and the United States’ passage of the TVPA in 2000 have allowed human trafficking to be acknowledged as a domestic and global epidemic (Helton, 2016). Since TVPA was enacted, several U.S. government departments have collected statistics related to various aspects of the United States’ human trafficking epidemic. Several factors have led to the rise of human trafficking to epidemic proportions, including the environment for this criminal enterprise to prosper and continue developing, both in the United States and other countries around the world and the significant number of human victims trafficked. These reasons have led to increased federal, state, and local law enforcement efforts to combat human trafficking (Helton, 2016).

Global Health Concern

There are increasing indications that wide-ranging health complications result from human trafficking. All victims of trafficking, regardless of whether the trafficking involves sex work, are exposed to the risk of medical problems (McReynolds, 2009). Health complications and problems that have been observed from victims of trafficking are based on a combination of several factors, including extreme stress, starvation, deprivation of sleep, inherent hazards with travel, violence (both physical and sexual), and the hazardous nature of the work overall (Dovydaitis, 2011). Victims are often physically abused and tortured, resulting in broken bones, contusions, dental issues, and burns. In most cases, victims do not have adequate, timely, and quality access to healthcare and by the time health professionals evaluate the victim, the health problems that the victims suffer from are sometimes well advanced (Barrows & Finger, 2008). In

most cases, women are at a significantly higher risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases or infections, which may be contracted by unprotected sex, repeated and forced abortions, or both as victims of sex trafficking (Cwikel et al., 2004). The commercial sexual exploitation of males is well known worldwide (J. D. Davis et al., 2017; Hounmenou, 2017), and the problem is not limited to only females (J. Greenbaum, 2020). Males are often left out of the discussion regarding health concerns relating to sex trafficking; the research conducted on adult male trafficking is comparatively lacking compared to the empirical attention given to female and youth sex trafficking (Trounson & Pfeifer, 2020). Males and transgender women sex workers should not be left out of the equation regarding sexually transmitted diseases or infections. Males and transgender women sex workers are considered a high-risk population for sexually transmitted infections and human immunodeficiency virus due to high-risk sexual behavior (Drückler et al., 2020). One methodical review of health and human trafficking found that survivors experienced multiple forms of abuse, numerous occupational hazards, dangerous living conditions, and suffered a range of poor health consequences (Ottisova et al., 2016; Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). A public health approach has been applied to this problem, focusing efforts on trafficked persons, their families, and the overall population at large. It promotes strategies to build a solid scientific evidence base that allows development, implementation, and evaluation of prevention and intervention efforts, informs policy and program development, and guides international efforts at eradication (J. Greenbaum, 2020).

Situation to Self

The purpose of conducting this study was to assess law enforcement's perspective relating to the under-identification of sex trafficking victims. Line-level law enforcement officers are the most likely to encounter a victim of sex trafficking while on routine patrol (Mapp et al., 2016), yet the problem of under-identification remains an issue. Perceptions of law enforcement relating to this matter have not been widely explored, and officers' input is vital to eradicating this problem. In the United States, anti-trafficking efforts are centered on three main aspects: prevention, protection, and prosecution, commonly referred to as the "3Ps," codified in the TVPA (Schwarz et al., 2016). Research has emphasized the importance of the victim-centered approach in the prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts identified in the TVPA, and the ability to integrate the voices of human trafficking survivors into each of the "3Ps" improves victims' well-being, decreases future trafficking, and facilitates more effective prosecution procedures (Steiner et al., 2018). The victim-centered approach to human trafficking, primarily developed by federal law enforcement agencies to prioritize the victim's wishes, safety, and well-being over procedure and other matters, has not been meaningfully explored from the perspective of the line-level law enforcement officer on the local and state level, specifically during an encounter with a victim of sex trafficking. Moreover, while not the focus of this study, an understanding from the victims' viewpoint could be helpful in establishing the effectiveness of this approach. The problem of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims has significantly increased in the last several years. Many victims are not identified, and for the victims who are, the likelihood that the victim is willing to testify against their trafficker or cooperate with law enforcement, in general, is slim.

The philosophical assumption presented within this study is ontology, and the paradigm that guided the study is constructivism. A constructivist approach assumes that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world by experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Adom et al., 2016; Honebein, 1996). Ontology concerns the philosophy of existence and assumptions and beliefs about the nature of being and existence (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The use of ontology is best suited for this study because the research conducted explores perceptions and opinions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Therefore, gathering law enforcement officers' perspectives allowed me to analyze themes that provide evidence of perceptions and opinions associated with the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach.

The unit of analysis within this phenomenological study involved line-level law enforcement officers in seven states: California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. This decision was based on a few reasons. First, the ability to gather data from several law enforcement officials from these states, both in highly populated and rural areas, allowed for differing perceptions of the problem and allowed a larger population sample to be collected. Second, line-level law enforcement officers are the most likely to come into contact with a potential victim of sex trafficking. Third, research has suggested that these states have some of the most concentrated human trafficking victims. While assessing the perceptions of law enforcement officers at a supervisor rank, such as a lieutenant and above would be beneficial, the focus of this study was to understand the problem from the perception of the individuals who have the

highest likelihood of an encounter with a victim of sex trafficking, which is line-level law enforcement officers.

Problem Statement

Law enforcement professionals are fundamentally the first line of professionals that come into contact with victims of human trafficking and can be considered the primary tool in identifying victims of human trafficking. However, law enforcement officers in the United States are significantly hampered in adequately identifying, assisting, classifying, recovering, and providing the necessary resources for victims of human trafficking, specifically sex trafficking (Mace, 2013). The identification of the victims of human trafficking has not been effective, and under-identification has long been a problem. Previous research has indicated that, as a result, victims have been undercounted (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Copley, 2014; Ernewein & Nieves, 2015; Farrell et al., 2010). The inherent policies and procedures in law enforcement continue to lack the necessary practices for proper human trafficking victim identification, classification, and protection, despite the time and resources spent on anti-trafficking initiatives throughout the United States (Aghazarm & Laczko, 2008).

There have been numerous challenges to successful victim identification. Central to these challenges is the fact that victims of trafficking are often threatened or coerced (Weiss, 2015). Threats and coercion are some of the most common barriers to law enforcement's ability to identify a victim of sex trafficking. Threats and coercion not only encompass direct threats to the victim but also can include threats that are directed at the victim's family or other loved ones that often increase the trafficker's hold on the victim.

As a result, identifying victims of human trafficking has not often been successful. While the traditional law enforcement approach, vice enforcement of the street-level sex trade, generates large numbers of arrests for prostitution, it is typically unsuccessful in identifying whether the offender is a prostitute or also a victim of sex trafficking. The perception of law enforcement officers and their discretion can be a significant factor in determining whether victims are provided the resources to break the cycle of control. However, since prostitutes are viewed as nuisance offenders to the criminal justice system and are typically returned to the streets, the cycle continues (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand law enforcement officers' perceptions relating to the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking in general. Under-identification of sex trafficking victims can be loosely defined as individuals participating in the commercial sex trade, where it is unclear whether the individual is being coerced into committing these acts against their will. The theory guiding this study is Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, as law enforcement officers who come into contact with potential victims of sex trafficking can experience cognitive dissonance during the interaction. One critical aspect of cognitive dissonance is that individuals experience mental discomfort after taking actions that appear to conflict with their starting preferences, and to minimize or avoid this discomfort, the individuals change their preferences to align more closely with their actions (Acharya et al., 2016). The law enforcement officer can experience cognitive

dissonance due to his or her views of prostitution, previous training, knowledge, and beliefs. Seeing a prostitute as a victim can be difficult; the law enforcement officer may thus need to recategorize his or her understanding of a victim of sex trafficking. This internal conflict is known as cognitive dissonance. Ultimately, how a law enforcement officer handles interactions with this individual and the law enforcement officer's cognitive dissonance regarding a potential victim of sex trafficking can affect how that officer utilizes the victim-centered approach to human trafficking.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the field of human trafficking, in the context of sex trafficking, by performing research that has been minimally conducted: collecting and analyzing the perceptions of local law enforcement officers as they relate to the identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach (Farrell et al., 2008). This topic is of particular importance based on two factors. First, law enforcement officers can misidentify victims of sex trafficking (Farrell & Reichert, 2017). Second, law enforcement officers often rely on stereotypes in an attempt to identify victims of sex trafficking, which can ultimately lead to misidentification (Barrick et al., 2020). Local law enforcement officers are on the front lines and are uniquely situated to impact the human trafficking epidemic in the United States directly (Parker, 2020). In the absence of this study, the field of human trafficking would lack a qualitative analytical study about law enforcement officers' perceptions on the front lines of the anti-human trafficking effort. Numerous stakeholders have concluded that further assessment of human trafficking efforts is needed (Duger, 2015; Pati, 2014). Law enforcement officers who come into contact with victims of sex trafficking provide the ability to fill a research gap

in a vital area that has been identified for further study: the topic of victim identification (Dhaliwal et al., 2015; Lux & Mosley, 2014). By identifying methods that are successful through analyzing law enforcement officers' perceptions relating to victim identification, this study provides insights and recommendations that may lead to improvements in sex trafficking legislation (Balgamwalla, 2016) and propel a change to the approach that law enforcement takes in regard to identifying victims of sex trafficking. The current approach of strict legislation and reactive police work is not adequately combating the human trafficking problem (Helton, 2016) and victim identification efforts (Dottridge, 2014). While legislation criminalizing human trafficking can be found at the federal, state, and local levels, if human trafficking victims are not properly identified, this legislation cannot properly be implemented to charge and convict traffickers (Helton, 2016). The failure to effectively utilize the statutes outlined with human trafficking legislation essentially undermines the approach of strict legislation and victim identification efforts.

Research Question

This dissertation was written to better understand the law enforcement officer's perspectives of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach when the law enforcement officer encounters a potential victim of sex trafficking. This study also seeks to better understand the successes and challenges associated with identifying sex trafficking victims.

RQ1: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?

RQ2: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?

Definitions

1. *Coercion* – The TVPA defines coercion as “(a) threats of serious harm or physical restraint; (b) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or (c) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process” (Muhib, 2013, “Coercion”).
2. *Child Trafficking* – Child trafficking can take on various forms, which include trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, labor trafficking, trafficking for early marriage, recruitment as child soldiers, use in begging, removal of organs, illicit international adoption, and recruitment of athletes (Muhib, 2013, “Child Trafficking”).
3. *Commercial Sex Act* – Under the TVPA, a commercial sex act means any sex act in which anything of value is given to or received by any person (Muhib, 2013, “Commercial Sex Act”).
4. *Domestic Trafficking* – Refers to the trafficking of U.S. citizens within the United States. It is most often seen in the sex trafficking of persons by a pimp (Muhib, 2013, “Domestic Trafficking”).
5. *Involuntary Servitude* – Involuntary servitude encompasses an environment in which victims are forced to live in the same place they work (Griffin & Wilson, 2012). Victims are involuntarily used as sex slaves and servants and work to pay

for their living arrangements, which is considered a form of debt bondage (Griffin & Wilson, 2012).

6. *John* – An individual who purchases sex (Jeffs, 2013).
7. *Law Enforcement Personnel or Officers* – The individuals responsible for enforcing laws and maintaining public safety and order. Law enforcement duties include the prevention, detection, and investigation of crime and the apprehension and detention of individuals suspected of violating the law (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012).
8. *Minor* – Under the TVPA, a minor is any person under 18 years of age (Muhib, 2013, “Minor”).
9. *National Human Trafficking Resource Center* – Now referred to as the Human Trafficking Hotline. The Center is a national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls from anywhere in the United States 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The hotline is operated by Polaris Project, a non-governmental organization working to combat human trafficking. Individuals can report tips and receive information on human trafficking by calling the hotline at 1-888-373-7888. The hotline also provides data on where suspected human trafficking cases occur in the United States (Muhib, 2013, “National Human Trafficking Resource Center”).
10. *Pimp* – An individual who controls and financially benefits from the commercial sexual exploitation of another individual. The relationship among these individuals can be abusive and possessive, with the pimp using techniques such as psychological intimidation, confinement, starvation, manipulation, rape or gang

rape, forced drug use, beating, threats of violence toward the victim's family, and humiliation from these acts to keep the sexually exploited person under control (Muhib, 2013, "Pimp").

11. *Sex Industry* – The sex industry consists of businesses that directly or indirectly provide adult entertainment or sex-related products and services (Muhib, 2013, "Sex Industry").
12. *Sex Trafficking* – Under the TVPA, sex trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (Muhib, 2013, "Sex Trafficking").
13. *The Federal Mann Act* – This act, enacted in 1910, makes it a felony to knowingly transport any person in interstate or foreign commerce for prostitution or for any sexual activity for which a person can be charged with a criminal offense. A person also violates the act if the person persuades, induces, entices, or coerces an individual to travel across state lines to participate in prostitution or other immoral purposes or attempts to do so (Muhib, 2013, "The Mann Act").
14. *Trafficking Protocol* – Adopted by the United Nations in 2000, the Trafficking Protocol is an international legal agreement attached to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The Protocol provides an agreed-upon definition of trafficking in persons. The purpose of the Protocol is to enable national cooperation in both the investigation and prosecution of

trafficking in persons and protect and assist the victims (Muhib, 2013, “The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking”).

15. *Trafficker* – A person who trades illegal goods or buys and sells people or makes money from the work that individuals are forced to do, such as sex work (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Additionally, the term, most commonly referred to in the sex trafficking industry, is often used to refer to all the various actors involved in the business of global sex work. A trafficker can be described as the individual who recruits women in the source countries, those who transport victims internationally, and those who manage and exploit the women in commercial sex acts within the destination countries (Larche, 2014).
16. *Victim-Centered Approach* – This approach places equivalent value on identifying and stabilizing victims, providing immigration relief, and investigating and prosecuting traffickers. When members of law enforcement encounter a potential victim of trafficking in the course of their duties, they must begin to develop rapport and establish trust (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017). Victims need to receive the support and understanding needed to help make the case investigation, and subsequent prosecution of the perpetrator, a success.
17. *Vulnerable/At-Risk Populations* – A population at elevated risk of becoming vulnerable to human trafficking due to economic conditions (such as extreme poverty), lack of familiarity with situational alternatives, isolation from other individuals. Such populations also include any other factors that pose a higher risk to the individual to be trafficked than the general population (Sousou Coppola & Cantwell, 2016).

Summary

Human trafficking has gained public attention throughout the world, has received significant media attention, and has observed a noticeable increase in anti-trafficking activism. However, because there is minimal high-quality research on this topic, evidence to support law enforcement's efforts is lacking (Weitzer, 2011, 2014a; Zhang, 2012). Writing about human trafficking has mainly been anecdotal or sensationalistic, while scholarly research has, for the most part, provided general overviews of the problem in the form of critiques of existing literature (Weitzer, 2014a). If the field of human trafficking analysis is to evolve and maintain credibility, more high-quality empirical research is needed (Cockbain & Kleemans, 2019). Further evaluation is also needed to identify the victims of sex trafficking while shedding light on overcoming the problem of the under-identification of victims of sex trafficking (Hodge, 2014).

The research focused upon law enforcement officers' perspectives on the under-identification of sex trafficking victims by determining what line-level law enforcement officers suggest would improve current victim identification efforts and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. By collecting and analyzing their recommendations and perspectives, this study outlines strategies and best practices that can increase the odds of successfully identifying sex trafficking victims, gaining their cooperation in identifying their traffickers, and improving the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. A review of existing relevant literature follows to set a basis for the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This dissertation sought to better understand and assess law enforcement officers' perceptions when they encounter a potential victim of sex trafficking. This study also attempted to better understand the successes and challenges associated with identifying sex trafficking victims in terms of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the use of a victim-centered approach. By analyzing the perceptions of law enforcement officers relating to the under-identification of sex trafficking victims, I sought to contribute to the conversation concerning human trafficking and perhaps provide a basis for implementing strategies and recommendations focused on reducing or eliminating the under-identification of sex trafficking victims. To do so, this study analyzed the perceptions of law enforcement officers about the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and how the victim-centered approach might create a context for increasing the identification of these victims. The literature summarized in this chapter describes the history of human trafficking, the current human trafficking context, an overview of essential law enforcement functions related to human trafficking cases, an overview of the victims of human trafficking, problems associated with victim identification, and the prevailing landscape of victim cooperation.

Methodology

Identifying research related to victim identification in sex trafficking, the under-reporting of sex trafficking incidents, and the perceptions of law enforcement related to sex trafficking is by no means limited, and there is significant scholarly research available on this subject. This research identifies these significant themes: law

enforcement is limited in its ability to identify human trafficking, sex trafficking is under-identified, sex trafficking incidents are undercounted, and threats to and coercion of the sex trafficking victim dampen law enforcement efforts. This research consists primarily of databases from the Liberty University Jerry Falwell Library of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and previous dissertations/thesis research. Specific databases include the following: Google Scholar, Homeland Security Library, LexisNexis Academic, ProQuest Criminal Justice Periodicals Index, Sage Journals Online, ScienceDirect, and Sage References Online. Other research includes identifying various studies conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Shared Hope International, Amnesty International, and government statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of State, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Theoretical Framework

In *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Leon Festinger (1957) introduced cognitive dissonance theory, an essential social psychology theory that has generated hundreds of studies. These studies outline the determinants of attitudes and beliefs, the consequences of decisions, value internalization, the effect of disagreement among individuals, and other important psychological factors in cognition (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019; E. Jones, 1985). Festinger maintained that the influential factors that affect a person's life are dynamic. People are inspired, propelled, and driven by forces at work in their social world and their own personalities (Cooper, 2019). In his theory of social comparison processes, Festinger (1954) emphasized that, to the extent that people are uncertain of the correctness of their own opinions and abilities, they are driven to compare their opinions and abilities with those of others (Cooper, 2019). Cognitive dissonance arises in law

enforcement officers when the attitudes and perceptions supported by the peer environment do not accord with the code of ethics taught in training nor the morality of the law enforcement officer, which creates contradictory or dissonant situations (Giacopassi & Sparger, 1991; C. Johnson & Copus, 1981). A 1991 study conducted by Giacopassi and Sparger discussed a vice squad that made arrests for prostitution and soliciting, gambling, obscenity, alcohol ordinance violations, and miscellaneous offenses. This study found numerous dissonance mechanisms observed by vice officers who were moralistic or felt uncomfortable with the role-playing required to elicit offers from prostitutes, which is a crucial component of vice squad activity. Some forms of observed dissonance included religious and moralistic officers removing themselves from the vice squad, while others depersonalized their contact with offenders. Officers altered their beliefs by understanding that vice enforcement is essential, and so these officers depended on their professionalism to validate their actions (Giacopassi & Sparger, 1991). Research has indicated that when a conclusion is made regarding guilt, individuals are prone to “confirmation bias,” in which, essentially, individuals may tend to seek evidence that will confirm their beliefs rather than be at odds with those beliefs (I. Johnson & Fugita, 2012; Klayman & Ha, 1987; Schrackman & Oswald, 2014). This situation is especially acute when evidence in a case is sentimental. For example, in some cases, trial judges exclude evidence precisely to avoid evoking jurors’ emotional responses, fearing that those emotions will “prejudice” jurors’ decisions (*Federal Rules of Evidence*, 2005; Feigenson & Park, 2006).

Additionally, research on law enforcement officers indicates confirmation bias when asking guilt-presumptive questions of an apprehended individual compared to a

non-apprehended individual (Lidén, 2018). Confirmation bias is the tendency to strengthen a hypothesis by looking for consistent evidence while ignoring inconsistent evidence (O'Brien & Ellsworth, 2006). A sequence of three studies conducted by Hill et al. (2010) methodically analyzed the effect of expectations of guilt on interviewer questioning style, confession, rate of denial, and verbal behavior of the suspects in relation to the role of confirmation bias in suspect interviews. Study 1 consisted of 61 participants who were asked a prepared set of questions aimed at determining whether or not the suspect cheated on a task. Before question preparation, participants were led to believe that the suspect was either guilty or innocent. Study 2 consisted of 45 participants who were labeled as either innocent or guilty and then accused of cheating on a task; the participants were then interviewed with either neutral or guilt-presumptive questions. Study 3 consisted of 58 participants who listened to a selection of audiotaped interviews that were conducted in Study 2. Study 1 found that even when participants were free to generate their own questions, the question generation process resulted in preparing more guilt-presumptive questions. In Study 2, a significant association was found between suspect guilt/innocence and whether the suspect confessed or denied, while no association was found between confession or denial rates and questioning style. In Study 3, the interview ratings completed by the independent observers of the suspect interviews conducted in Study 2 found that suspects' verbal behavior influenced questioning style. The researchers' findings of these studies indicated that presumption of guilt can affect the questioning style, leading to the potential of self-fulfilling prophecies effect. Merton (1948) explained that a self-fulfilling prophecy emerges when individuals reason their initially inaccurate perceptions into truth.

The theory of cognitive dissonance grounded the research in this dissertation; law enforcement officers who come into contact with potential victims of sex trafficking can have moments of cognitive dissonance related to that officer's views of prostitution. An officer seeing a person being solicited by someone for sex may automatically categorize that individual as a prostitute. In contrast, another officer may categorize this individual as a potential victim of sex trafficking. The internal conflict of seeing a prostitute as a perpetrator, due to previous training, knowledge, or beliefs, and then recategorizing the understanding of the prostitute as a victim is known as cognitive dissonance. How a law enforcement officer handles a situation and his or her cognitive dissonance regarding a potential victim of sex trafficking can affect how that officer employs a victim-centered approach to human trafficking.

Related Literature

The Beginning of Slavery

Slavery dates back to the first civilizations of the ancient world. The earliest known recorded evidence of slavery dates back to *The Code of Hammurabi* in Babylon in the 18th century (1800–1701 B.C.; Rammel, 2013). The first-known complex civilization of Sumer or Sumeria, located in Mesopotamia (which now consists of Iraq, Kuwait, Turkey, and Syria), developed the earliest ancient writing system known as cuneiform, which includes a symbol for an enslaved person (Vandorpe, 2010). This ancient system began as clay tokens representing a unit of goods for accounting, developing into three-dimensional tokens that transformed into two-dimensional pictographic signs, and eventually came to function both phonetically, as a sound, and semantically, representing an object or concept, as opposed to just a picture (Kleiner, 2020; Schmandt-Besserat,

2015). In Sumer, kings would send groups of men to neighboring city-states to acquire enslaved people. The justification for this practice was that the kings would claim that their gods had given them victory over inferior people (Moorey, 1986). Slavery during this time was a large part of this civilization and was a way of life for the individuals living in this period (Moorey, 1986). There were no attempts to abolish slavery by any ancient government or religious body restricting its members or believers from the right to enslave people (Westermann, 2004).

In many cases, debt played a significant role in the enslavement of individuals during this period. Debtors commonly ended up as involuntary servants either by land forfeiture or sold into slavery/debt bondage. Land forfeiture resulted in the creditor retaining the family's land rights while requiring the family to remain on the land, cultivating and farming, while the creditor took a substantial portion to cover the family's debts (Kilborn, 2012). Aside from people who were enslaved due to debt, other enslaved people included prisoners of war, foreign individuals, and their descendants, with these individuals making up a large portion of the slave population in Mesopotamia (King, 1923).

History of Slavery in the United States

The Atlantic Slave Trade, during the years 1526 to 1867, shipped approximately 12.5 million enslaved people from Africa, with about 10.7 million of those arriving in the Americas; the Atlantic Slave Trade has been considered the most costly in terms of human life of all long-distance migrations (Mintz, n.d.). Of the 12.5 million enslaved people arriving in the Americas, vessels sailing under the American flag only carried 305,000 or less than 3% of the total number of enslaved people; larger carriers included

the Portuguese, British, and French (Draper, 2018; Radburn, 2019). While the United States formally abolished the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, America participated in transatlantic slaving voyages throughout the 19th century (Draper, 2018). The practice of slavery existed where this system made the most sense and was worthwhile to those in power from an economic perspective (Bourne, 2008), and slave labor was vital to all aspects of the New World economies (Bravo, 2011; D. B. Davis, 2006). In the first 250 years of American history, White landowners, mainly from the South, enslaved millions of African descendants (Acharya et al., 2016). Africans were not the only ones who were enslaved in the United States during the Atlantic Slave Trade era, but it was deep-rooted in American legal philosophy that being African meant being an enslaved person (Swanson, 2015).

Recent research suggests that the slave trade and modern human trafficking are related (Tønnessen, 2016) and that slavery has a greater prevalence in America now than at any time since the Civil War ended (Berlin, 2004). Reflecting on the slave trade, Frederick Douglass said in 1871 that the goal of slaveholders in the Atlantic Slave Trade "was to make the most money they could in the shortest possible time" (Bales & Soodalter, 2009, p. 3). Ngwe and Elechi (2012) stated that "human trafficking appears to have replaced this abhorrent activity as the modern-day slavery of the 21st century" (p. 103). Therefore, in some respects, human nature is the same now as it was then.

History of Human Trafficking

The earliest known forms of human trafficking can be traced to slavery in Sumer and the earliest cities and civilizations throughout the earliest records of written history. The driving force behind slavery was the economic demand created by the need for cheap

labor for farming and manufacturing operations (Martin & Smith, 2015). Most of these enslaved people were captured during warfare, purchased from pirates, or individuals that could not pay their debts. According to Martin and Smith (2015), "slavery has persisted from ancient times up to the present day" (p. 224). Throughout history, the rationalization for slavery and the demographics of the enslaved have shifted (Swanson, 2015).

A more present-day historical presentation of the roots of human trafficking and slavery can be traced to the smuggling and "white slavery" of women for sexual exploitation in 1885 (Bonilla & Mo, 2019; Morcom & Schloenhardt, 2011). The term "white slavery," also described as the white slave trade, emerged from the British abolitionist movement, though there is speculation as to the origin of the term "white slavery" and that it may have been derived from an abbreviation of the French term "Traites des Blanches" (trade in whites) in 1905 (Chacon, 2006). This abolitionist movement condemned the systems of regulating prostitution. The term "white slavery" was used in order to create a "vision of women held in bondage against their will, of mysterious drugging and abductions of helpless young girls, and unexplained disappearances of innocent and naive immigrants forced into lives of prostitution and vice" (Beckman, 1984, p. 85; see also Morcom & Schloenhardt, 2011). The campaigns against white slavery provided the momentum and basis for the Criminal Law Amendment Act (CLAA) of 1885 to be adopted, which was substantial as this legislation created the definition of a trafficked girl—the involuntary prostitute (Lammasniemi, 2017).

Human trafficking is a more recent term, emerging initially from the International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic in 1904 and the 1910 Convention

on White Slave Traffic. With the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, the term grew to include the trafficking of all women and children (League of Nations, 1922). The International Agreement for the Suppression of Trafficking in Women and Children in 1904, the Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Women of Full Age in 1921, and the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others in 1949 all helped to create the groundwork for anti-trafficking policy; however, most of these agreements were signed by European countries (Brandon, 2018).

Prior to the 1990s, human trafficking was a topic that received little attention. However, during the 1990s human trafficking became a topic of public concern in the United States. This was due in part to the fall of the former Soviet Union resulting in migration flows while another factor was the increasing concern about the growth of transnational organized crime and intelligence reports pointing to sex trafficking and forms of forced labor as some of these organizations' most lucrative operations (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The modern prohibition of human trafficking in the United States is rooted in the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which in 1865 barred slavery and involuntary servitude. However, it was not until the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) that the United States had legislation specifically for anti-trafficking policy. Before the TVPA, human trafficking was not viewed as a distinct crime, nor was there specific legislation against human trafficking around the world nor any apparent international collaboration among law enforcement entities (Makei, 2013). As a result, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and other agencies often prosecuted human trafficking cases under federal statutes and criminal

laws relating to slavery and involuntary servitude, but they were often slim and pieced together (DOJ, 2017a).

The Current State of Human Trafficking in the United States

While the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution formally abolished slavery and involuntary servitude over 150 years ago, the practice of enslavement of men, women, and children continues to exist and flourish in the United States. This modern-day slavery is known as human trafficking (Bonilla & Mo, 2019). The global human trafficking problem has attracted significant attention from numerous political and social stakeholders. Awareness-raising initiatives such as the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign encourage involvement to fight human trafficking on a global scale (McGough, 2013). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign enhances collaboration among anti-human trafficking programs, including offering resources for both law enforcement and the public to help raise awareness and provide training. Despite the growing awareness of this problem, however, the field is still hampered by its inability to effectively measure the scope of human trafficking (McGough, 2013). President Barack Obama, in his remarks at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting on September 25, 2012, asserted:

[Human trafficking] ought to concern every person because it is a debasement of our common humanity. It ought to concern every community because it tears at our social fabric. It ought to concern every business because it distorts markets. It ought to concern every nation because it endangers public health and fuels violence and organized crime. (White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2012)

Human trafficking cases have continued to rise in all 50 states. In the fiscal year 2018, the DOJ had over 500 human trafficking convictions, including one of the most significant sex-trafficking prosecutions in U.S. history with the conviction of 36 defendants.

Additionally, the DOJ filed a record number of new cases in the fiscal year 2018 (DOJ, 2019).

The 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has increased and highlighted the inequalities inherent to human trafficking (UNODC, 2021b). The pandemic has amplified the prevalence of human trafficking within the United States in part due to strategies meant to control the COVID-19 pandemic, namely closures of many vital institutions and social distancing, which isolates potential victims from their peers and supportive adults; the combination of these factors has intensified occurrences of human trafficking throughout the United States (Gainey & Hill, 2021; Sadulski, 2020). COVID-19 has created circumstances that may increase the risk of trafficking, including significantly undermining identification due to the reduction or depletion of law enforcement capabilities during this time, as well as making it more challenging to provide services to victims (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Sadulski, 2020; Stein, 2020; Todres & Diaz, 2021). For the current victims of human trafficking, the pandemic has made the situation worse. Avoiding exposure to the virus can be difficult, and social distancing is almost impossible in situations such as forced labor and sex trafficking (Todres & Diaz, 2021).

Human trafficking victims do not have a single profile (DOJ, 2020c). They come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, have varying education levels, and can be foreign citizens or from the United States (Hughart, 2020). One critical resource for victims of human trafficking is the National Human Trafficking Hotline, a Polaris Project

program, a 24-hour hotline that victims can call for help or citizens can call to report human trafficking. This hotline has played a critical role in the fight against human trafficking. According to the Polaris Project 2019 Data Report, there were 11,500 cases of human trafficking in the United States, which involved 22,326 survivors (sex trafficking: 14,597, labor trafficking: 4,934, sex and labor: 1,048, and not specified: 1,747), and 4,384 traffickers were identified (Polaris Project, 2019a). Individual contacts to the hotline have risen steadily; between 2015 to 2019, there was a 167% increase in contact rates, from 1,612 in 2015 to 4,312 in 2019 (Polaris Project, 2019a). The reason behind the increase in contacts to the hotline is unclear, though it could indicate that the hotline is gaining attention and is better known to the public or that victims of trafficking are becoming braver. The forms of contact to the National Human Trafficking Hotline include phone calls, texts, webchats, online reports, and emails. In 2019, the hotline had 48,326 individual trafficking-related contacts (Polaris Project, 2019a).

In the United States, numerous government agencies play a critical role in the eradication of human trafficking. In the fiscal year 2019, Homeland Security Investigations initiated 1,024 investigations linked to human trafficking and recorded 2,197 arrests, 1,113 indictments, and 691 convictions, while 428 victims were identified and assisted (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020). According to the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report:

DOJ initiated a total of 220 federal human trafficking prosecutions in FY 2019, a decrease from 230 in FY 2018, and charged 343 defendants, a decrease from 386 in FY 2018. Of these FY 2019 prosecutions, 208 involved sex trafficking and 12 involved labor trafficking predominantly, compared to 213 and 17 respectively in

FY 2018. During FY 2019, DOJ secured convictions against 475 traffickers, a decrease from 526 convictions in FY 2018. Of these, 454 involved sex trafficking and 21 involved labor trafficking predominantly, compared to 501 and 25 respectively in FY 2018. (U.S. Department of State, 2019b)

Most of the cases prosecuted by the DOJ have been identified by line-level law enforcement officers who encounter sex traffickers or their victims during routine police operations (Moossy, 2009). More than in any other profession, law enforcement officers are likely to encounter victims and traffickers in their routine work through traffic stops and calls for service. Neighborhood patrols also put law enforcement officers in a unique position to identify, intervene, and rescue trafficking victims (Police Executive Research Forum, 2020).

Human Trafficking Hotspots

Human trafficking hotspots can be airports and airplanes, airport motels, hotels, parking lots, rest and truck stops, shopping malls, mall parking lots, nail salons, spas, and massage parlors. These locations have common characteristics such as being locations that facilitate the transportation of individuals, typically within close proximity to interstates and major highways, can accommodate large volumes of people, allow offenders and victims to blend into the surroundings of routine daily activities, and are policed on an infrequent basis by law enforcement. There are various factors that should be considered when determining which locations in the United States are deemed to be human trafficking hotspots. It should be noted that Fry (2008) advised that much work is needed in the data collection relating to trafficking hotspot designations. Some factors that could be considered include reviewing previous data regarding human trafficking

prosecution statistics, police reports, data collected through the national human trafficking hotline, victim identification efforts of social service and other agencies, and studies that address the locations in which human trafficking occurs. Hotspot designation is typically best analyzed through data visualization, which can help visualize the results (Ghali et al., 2012). The patterns observed in these visualizations can help identify trafficking patterns or repetitive trafficking-related activities (Konrad et al., 2016).

Hospitals also remain a common location of human trafficking as many victims utilize the healthcare system during their abuse (Sutherland, 2019). It has been noted by the NGO Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) that while hospital staff is among the first to encounter human trafficking victims, they are unaware of and poorly trained in recognizing and identifying victims (Katsanis et al., 2019; Tucker, 2018). Holistically, it is crucial that all stakeholders who have the potential to encounter a victim of human trafficking, including hospital staff, law enforcement, and social service agencies, receive specialized training and are aware of the identifying signs of a potential victim.

There are two types of human trafficking hotspots: the location of the victim's delivery and the location where the forced sexual labor happens. Sex trafficking can take place in a variety of settings, including both outdoor and indoor settings. A study conducted by Ahn et al. (2010) found that respondents advised that trafficking happens in urban neighborhood hotspots, also known as "tracks," as well as suburbs throughout southern California, including Compton, Hollywood, and Pico-Union. According to the Department of State, the states with the most human trafficking activity are California, New York, and Texas (American Bar Association, 2019), while the states particularly

vulnerable to sex trafficking are California, Texas, Florida, Ohio, and New York (Godoy et al., 2016). According to the Polaris Project's National Human Trafficking Hotline statistics for 2019, California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Ohio had the highest amount of reported human trafficking cases (Polaris Project, 2019b). On the West Coast, the term “circuit” is a series of cities where prostituted people are moved. The West Coast circuit, for example, comprises the cities of San Diego, Las Vegas, and Portland primarily but also can include the cities in between. The term can also refer to a chain of states such as the “Minnesota pipeline,” by which victims are transported through various locations from Minnesota to markets in New York (L. Smith & Coloma, 2013). Keeping victims unfamiliar with their surroundings increases their vulnerability and facilitates the trafficker's control over the individual (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020). The combination of a readily accessible transportation route and a disoriented victim can provide lucrative payouts for pimps. A study conducted by the Urban Institute’s Justice Policy Center estimated the underground commercial sex economy in eight major cities. Of these cities, some of the highest average weekly earnings per pimp are in Atlanta with \$32,833; pimps in Dallas earn an average weekly gross cash intake of \$12,025; the lowest average weekly earnings are in San Diego with \$11,129 (Dank et al., 2014).

Money laundering is inherent in human trafficking due to the large volumes of cash exchanged during this crime. Money laundering is the process by which criminals conceal the source of their unlawful income by making it appear lawful (Dale, 2019; Driggers, 2011). “Simply put, money laundering means ‘washing’ dirty money so that it appears clean” (Ferguson, 2018, p. 306). Money laundering consists of three steps: placement, layering, and integration. Placement occurs when the illicit funds are used to

make a transaction in the legitimate economy, layering occurs through the process of repetitive transactions concealing the source of the funds, and integration is when the funds are fully integrated and untraceable into the economy (Ferguson, 2018). Bravo (2008) explained that “money laundering increases the existing incentives to commit crimes and makes it more difficult for law enforcement to apprehend and the legal system to punish perpetrators of the underlying criminal act(s)” (p. 146).

The role of private-sector financial institutions in combating money laundering in human trafficking is paramount to help prevent this heinous crime. The ability for financial institutions to investigate financial patterns can play a crucial role in detecting individuals suspected of human trafficking or indicate that the account holder is a victim of human trafficking (Gurstelle, 2018). The Financial Flow from Human Trafficking report published by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering identified several indicators that can be beneficial to alerting a financial institution to a potential victim of human trafficking. Some of these include lack of living expenses, accounts funded through cash deposits, mobile payment software such as Cash App, Apple Cash, or other peer-to-peer options, email transfer technology such as Interac e-transfers, and patterns of deposits immediately followed by withdrawals or transfers to another account. Additionally, other scenarios include customers who are accompanied by a third-party individual acting as an escort or translator when the client is conducting transactions in the branch, such as deposits and withdrawals, and instances in which more than one or numerous individuals are depositing funds into the account (FATF-APG, 2018). The FATF report also mentioned money laundering indicators in commercial accounts, including cash-intensive businesses without an apparent source of

funds (cash), commercial capital consisting of no-term deposits, large cash deposits followed by bank drafts, electronic funds transfers, or check issuances (FATF-APG, 2018).

Additionally, with the popularity of email transfer and mobile payment technology and the convenience that this technology offers, including Interac e-Transfer, Cash App, Apple Cash, PayPal, and Venmo, these platforms should be incorporated into financial institutions' risk-appetite and account transaction monitoring and reporting programs. These platforms often allow the remitter to provide a short note or reference relating to what the transactions may be related to or the purpose of the funds. Financial institutions should pay close attention to these references; in some cases, these references contain vital shorthand or slang terminology relating to human trafficking such as “john,” “trick,” “knock,” “304,” “#PGO,” “#Gamerelated,” “lot lizard,” “quota,” “stable,” “turn out,” or “xo.” Furthermore, an account holder receiving numerous incoming email transfers primarily from male counterparties with no clear relationship to the client is another indication that the client may be a victim of human trafficking. This scenario, coupled with the funds received from the incoming counterparties being remitted to a singular or a few male individuals indicates that the account holder is transferring the proceeds from their “quota” to their trafficker. Additional transactions that indicate a potential victim of human trafficking include a large volume of transactions to hotels, restaurants, and ride-hailing technology companies such as Uber and Lyft. Anti-money laundering transaction monitoring protocols should also incorporate screening mechanisms designed to search the client’s name, phone number, and email address on file with the financial institution against known escort websites such as

www.harlothub.com, www.escortdirectory.com, www.ericmonkey.com, to name a few.

There are several AML (anti-money laundering) software programs available to financial institutions that provide this type of screening mechanism. If a match is found, the software program creates a human trafficking alert to be reviewed by the transaction monitoring team of that financial institution.

Without question, the methods used to control victims and make large amounts of money have created a problem for the enforcement of human trafficking violations, including sex trafficking. This problem takes a significant amount of time and resources to adequately police from the federal, state, and local levels, and federal government agencies in the United States play a critical role in eradicating human trafficking. Additionally, several NGOs also prioritize their mission to end human trafficking in all forms, as acknowledged by the United Nations (2007) General Assembly: “Non-governmental organizations play an important role in the national, regional and international levels in the promotion and protection of human rights through education and learning” (p. 1). Furthermore, acknowledgment is growing that NGOs at the forefront of combating human trafficking are central to trafficking prevention and victim-survivors’ protection.

Raising awareness and early education surrounding human trafficking hotspots, the causes of human trafficking, and the identification signs of a victim of human trafficking are critical to detecting and preventing this atrocity (Schloenhardt et al., 2012). In the United States, there are numerous public awareness campaigns such as the National Human Trafficking Hotline and the Department of Homeland Security’s Blue Campaign that help to spread awareness across the general public as well as targeted

advertising techniques to vulnerable groups through information sheets, pamphlets, cards, posters, flyers, infographics, and toolkits. The primary goal of these campaigns is to educate and inform. One of the most effective methods to do this is to get a large quantity of literature and education materials strategically distributed in locations and hotspots that are most likely to have human trafficking activity. This approach can provide a solid foundation to have the greatest impact on awareness and provide an opportunity to help educate the public and provide crucial information for victims. These resources can be accessed through websites such as <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/library> and <https://humantraffickinghotline.org>.

The Role of Government Law Enforcement Agencies

In the United States, there are several federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies tasked with eliminating human trafficking. These organizations are tasked with achieving human trafficking objectives within the United States, but also significantly impact other countries' law enforcement response to human trafficking. The DOJ, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, and Department of Defense are the principal investigating agencies for federal human trafficking as well as other related offenses. The DOJ is the primary prosecuting authority for federal human trafficking cases. These agencies also support victims by incorporating victim assistance specialists in the course of trafficking investigations and prosecutions; this includes connecting identified victims to victim service providers (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The DOJ also promotes public outreach awareness and training around human trafficking. One standard educational method is on the red flags of human trafficking. Red flags are a method of creating public awareness around potential victims of human trafficking, and

both governmental and non-governmental organizations have identified red flags to discover whether an individual is being trafficked. There are 10 red flags to human trafficking, including living with an employer, inadequate living conditions, multiple people in cramped space, inability to speak to individuals alone, answers that appear to be scripted and rehearsed, an employer holding identity documents, signs of physical abuse, a submissive or fearful person, a person unpaid or paid very little, or a person under 18 and in prostitution (U.S. Department of State). The Department of State has identified that the root causes of trafficking include greed, moral turpitude, economics, political instability, transition, and social factors (U.S. Department of State, 2001). Additionally, the U.S. Department of State (n.d.) has developed a set of targeted questions that can help to determine if an individual is a victim of trafficking:

1. Can you leave your job if you want to?
2. Can you come and go as you please?
3. Have you been hurt or threatened if you tried to leave?
4. Has your family been threatened?
5. Do you live with your employer?
6. Where do you sleep and eat?
7. Are you in debt to your employer?
8. Do you have your passport/identification? If no, who has it?

These questions have been recommended to be utilized when the victim is alone. The questions should be articulated in a way that does not jeopardize the victim's safety, especially if the trafficker may be present or have the ability to listen or overhear the conversation.

The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, an agency within the Department of State, creates and develops programs to combat human trafficking in both the United States and globally. The U.S. Department of State also funds anti-trafficking efforts worldwide and produces an annual report on global efforts to combat slavery. It is further responsible for compiling the TIP Report, a critical instrument for bringing governments together and encouraging the prioritization of human trafficking, which experts and stakeholders have utilized across the anti-human trafficking field (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The 2020 TIP Report marked a significant milestone, as this was the 20th anniversary of this report. The TVPA mandated this report after passing the United States Congress in 2000.

President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat TIP

The President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (PITF) is a cabinet-level task force created by the TVPA consisting of 20 agencies across the federal government that are responsible for coordinating government-wide efforts to combat trafficking in persons. The Secretary of State chairs the PITF (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The collaborative effort among PITF agencies allows them to leverage resources more effectively and to develop robust whole-of-agency responses to combat trafficking (White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2016). PITF agencies hold frequent and routine meetings to advance and coordinate federal policies and work with a range of stakeholders to achieve goals collaboratively. These agencies focus on various aspects, including the enforcement of criminal and labor laws to end impunity for traffickers. PITF agencies also gather data and research innovations, cultivate public awareness and educational outreach, provide victim-centered

identification and trauma-informed assistance, and synchronize strategically linked foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement (PITF, 2019).

Department of Justice

The DOJ's role is to prosecute human trafficking criminals (S. V. Jones, 2012). Acting Attorney General Matthew G. Whitaker stated, "Human trafficking is a horrific crime against the human dignity of the victims, and it can have no place in our society" (DOJ, 2019, para. 2). Human trafficking is a complex and devastating crime, and a response to this crime is neither simple nor straightforward. The anti-trafficking efforts of the DOJ comprise several components, including investigations, prosecutions, services for victims, enforcement initiatives to strengthen anti-trafficking partnerships, advancing survivor-centered anti-trafficking strategies through capacity-building programs, pioneering prevention efforts, and granting funding to state, local, and tribal authorities and NGOs (DOJ, 2017b). Between FY 2009 and FY 2016, the DOJ increased the number of human trafficking cases filed by 79% compared to the previous 8 years. The DOJ also increased the number of defendants charged by 71% and the number of defendants convicted by 68%, in addition to increased successful outcomes in cases involving child sex trafficking (DOJ, 2017b).

The DOJ has placed Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams as part of the Anti-Trafficking Coordination Initiative in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Labor. This initiative and the subsequent teams that were formed have helped to increase prosecutions across the organization, including five members of the Rendon-Reyes Sex Trafficking Organization. The Rendon-Reyes Sex Trafficking Organization forced young women and girls from Mexico and Central

America into prostitution for over a decade but was eventually dismantled in 2019 due to the efforts of the Anti-Trafficking Coordination Teams and the DOJ (2019). In 2007, the Civil Rights Division created the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit in an effort to combine the expertise of the nation's top human trafficking prosecutors. These prosecutors work in close collaboration with Assistant United States Attorneys and other law enforcement agencies in an effort to streamline human trafficking investigations, ensure the consistent application of trafficking statutes, and identify trafficking networks that span multiple jurisdictions (DOJ, 2020a).

In September of 2020, the DOJ awarded approximately \$101 million in funding through the Office of Justice Programs to combat human trafficking and to provide critical services to trafficking victims in the United States (DOJ, 2020b). The grants awarded in FY 2020 aimed to enhance the quality and availability of services available to human trafficking survivors. The grants include programs such as the Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking to develop and strengthen programs for victims of human trafficking and improve the capability of law enforcement to identify victims and provide justice for victims through the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers. Another crucial program awarded funding is the Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Human Trafficking, which provides from 6 to 24 months of transitional or short-term housing assistance while also helping victims locate permanent housing, secure employment, occupational training, and counseling (DOJ, 2020b). These services are crucial to victims of trafficking because traffickers typically exploit individuals with limited shelter, family support, educational and work opportunities (Carpenter & Gates, 2016), and barriers to stable employment can hinder

trafficking victims' long-term well-being and personal financial security (Bocinski, 2017).

Department of Homeland Security

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for preventing citizens from becoming victims of human trafficking crimes. To this end, DHS investigates human trafficking, arrests traffickers, and protects victims. DHS conducts hundreds of investigations and makes numerous arrests every year, all through the victim-centered approach. DHS is also responsible for providing immigration relief to victims of human trafficking, which includes Continued Presence T visas and U visas (DHS, n.d.-b). U and T visas not only help protect victims of crime but are also vital tools for law enforcement. To foster victim cooperation, the U visa allows an eligible victim of certain crimes to temporarily remain and work in the United States, generally for 4 years, and requires the person to cooperate with law enforcement during that time (DHS, 2019). The T visa allows eligible victims of human trafficking to remain temporarily and work in the United States, generally for 4 years, and the victim has an ongoing duty to cooperate with law enforcement's reasonable requests for assistance in the investigation or prosecution of human trafficking (DHS, 2016). These routes allow the victim to apply for legal resident status after the initial temporary period has expired. These tools give law enforcement another option when securing victim cooperation in human trafficking cases.

Educational campaigns can also be another tool for law enforcement when spreading the word about human trafficking in their communities. The Blue Campaign, launched in 2010 by DHS located within the Office of Partnership and Engagement, is a

public awareness campaign that is designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking and appropriately respond to possible human trafficking cases (DHS, n.d.-a; DOJ, 2018). The campaign also offers sex trafficking awareness videos to educate the public on risks that traffickers pose to places such as malls, sporting venues, schools, coffee shops, among other places (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020). The Blue Campaign also coordinates and creates partnerships among private organizations, non-government and government agencies, and law enforcement (M. Stevens & Berishaj, 2016).

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the largest federal law enforcement agency within the DHS and is responsible for securing the United States' borders. In the early summer months of 2014, significant numbers of Central American unaccompanied children and families began to arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border seeking asylum, protection, and safety (Musalo & Lee, 2018). In FY 2014, U.S. Border Patrol apprehended 68,831 unaccompanied children (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2016a) and 68,684 families (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2016b). These individuals mostly came from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala—some of the most dangerous countries in the world (Musalo & Lee, 2018). Due to the influx of individuals during this time, the U.S. government declared a border crisis that same year. According to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (2021), “seven years later, this continues to be a crisis” (para. 1). A statement released by DHS Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas in March 2021 regarding the situation at the southwest border stated: “We are on pace to encounter more individuals on the southwest border than we have in the last 20 years” (para. 4). The statement also noted that “the prior

administration completely dismantled the asylum system” (para. 14), and due to facility closures and the asylum system effectively being shattered, this created an environment that “cruelly expelled young children into the hands of traffickers” (para. 14). It has been estimated that 75%–80% of unaccompanied children are victims of human trafficking who are sold into forced labor or prostitution, with the majority being between 13 and 17 years of age (Kandel et al., 2014). Border crossings are frequently sighted as places where migrants are increasingly vulnerable to exploitative situations (David et al., 2019).

The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008 provides legal provisions for unaccompanied children; however, the current policies and procedures meant to guide bureaucracy as well as the numerous government agencies involved in this process are broken, and there is no solitary source of responsibility or accountability for the difficulties these children face (Ataiants et al., 2018). The TVPRA of 2008 establishes that a home study must be conducted for a child who is a victim of human trafficking, physically or mentally disabled, a victim of abuse (physical or sexual), or the proposed sponsor presents a risk of abuse, maltreatment, or trafficking (Center for Migration Studies, n.d.). The children who qualify for the home study are provided follow-up services, also known as “post-release” services, including school enrollment assistance, mental health care, legal counsel, and other services. The presence of unaccompanied children has been at the center of both public, political, and academic debates surrounding humanitarian protection, administrative concerns regarding the children’s well-being, and how to best manage the influx of children needing protection (Donato & Perez, 2017). Currently, the need to look closely at human trafficking victims is more important than ever, especially immigrants and unaccompanied minors.

Humankind must treat these individuals with dignity, respect, and protection when these victims are at their most vulnerable.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force operates in most FBI field offices around the United States. This task force collaborates with state and local law enforcement to combat human trafficking, recover victims, and investigate traffickers. The FBI's Civil Rights Unit and the Violent Crimes Against Children Section coordinate the FBI's efforts to investigate human trafficking. The Civil Rights Unit's primary responsibility is to investigate forced labor, sex trafficking by force, fraud, coercion, and the sexual exploitation of foreign minors. The Violent Crimes Against Children section is primarily focused on investigating the commercial sexual exploitation of domestic children under the age of 18 (FBI, 2013). In the seventh report, *Human Trafficking 2019*, from the National Uniform Crime Reporting Programs' Human Trafficking data collection, 48 states and Puerto Rico participated. The data in this report show that in 2019, a total of 1,883 incidents of human trafficking were reported, with 1,607 commercial sex acts and 274 instances of involuntary servitude. Of these incidents, 708 offenders were arrested: 684 adults and 24 juveniles (FBI, 2019). The FBI and other law enforcement agencies are operation-driven; these missions focus on combating human trafficking domestically and abroad. The operations, efforts, and missions that these law enforcement agencies carry out are often costly, and the reality is that significant amounts of money are spent on efforts to substantiate sex trafficking and find victims. These funds are spent by both federal agencies and other organizations that the federal government provides funding for, such as NGOs. Some of these efforts are

productive, while some are not (Vanwesenbeeck, 2019). Magnanti (2016) offered numerous examples of these unfruitful endeavors. For example, the FBI's "Operation Cross Country" contributed approximately \$40 million in 2015 and 2016 to fight the trafficking of minors, which resulted in two arrests of suspected traffickers, each with one victim, a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old (p. 60). In comparison, another example is the NGO Polaris Project, which operates the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's telephone hotline in the United States. In 2010, it obtained \$3.2 million in funding and received 471 calls, an average of approximately \$7,000 per call (Magnanti, 2016; Vanwesenbeeck, 2019). Regardless of the amount of money each mission costs or the success or failure rate, no price can be associated with eliminating human trafficking; any funding spent on human trafficking puts the United States and the rest of the world one step closer to eradicating this egregious crime.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs play a critical role in the fight against human trafficking. The term NGO can describe a wide variety of organizations. NGOs are independent, private actors that work to benefit society and the common good (Martens, 2002; Prangle, 2019). These organizations create public awareness, conduct cutting-edge research, and offer victim assistance. The number, size, and impact of international NGOs have expanded significantly in recent decades (Horton & Roche, 2010; Jenkins, 2012). A considerable number of NGOs offer support and assistance to help protect victims. A smaller number of NGOs support law enforcement agencies in investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases by providing information and evidence on suspected trafficking activities in the communities in which they are working. NGOs often provide legal assistance to victims

(UNODC, 2019). In some respect, NGOs have stepped in where the government fails to take the initiative and are well suited to work with trafficked persons who may fear and distrust state-based organizations for various reasons (Tzvetkova, 2002). NGOs ultimately provide a solution and closure to the gap in services for victims and vulnerable groups, from addressing recruitment through recovery and rehabilitation (Skillen, 2016). For an NGO to obtain U.S. Department of State funding and support, the organization is expected to not advocate for the legalization of prostitution and to sign an “anti-prostitution pledge.” The pledge states that funding cannot be used to support or advocate for the legalization or practice of prostitution or trafficking for sexual exploitation. In addition, NGOs that receive grant funding must have a policy in which the organization states that they are explicitly opposed to prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation (Hoff, 2014; Soderland, 2005).

NGOs often raise funding through activities such as foundation grants, corporate grants, donations from individuals, membership dues, and the government. An NGO whose core activity costs exceed the inflow of grants and donations must either reduce the quality or quantity of work that the organization provides or find funding to cover the difference (Viravaidya & Hayssen, 2001). Donations are the second most vital revenue source of NGOs after government funding (Mahmood & Gull, 2016). NGOs should always emphasize brainstorming new and inventive ways to reach out to individuals who have donated previously, and also those who are new to donating to the organization. NGO leaders need to keep donation strategies a priority due to the various factors that can lead to funding disparities throughout the operation of the NGO. The sporadic nature of donations cannot always be relied upon to cover expenses from month to month. The

organizations' donation strategy must align with their donors' interests and priorities due to an incredibly competitive funding environment (Banks et al., 2015).

Keeping the organization's donation strategy current and aligned with donors allows the organization to create a stable revenue source of donations from month to month. Government funding for NGOs can be obtained through the website www.grants.gov; this is an official federal government website that advertises information on cooperative projects, open calls, and funding that has been allocated for particular objectives. This website allows the organization to view the various funding resources and find the appropriate funding that aligns with the NGO's mission and goals. Recommendations on improving both government and donation funding for NGOs can include the organization placing emphasis on their overall organizational goals, diversifying the organization's donor base while maintaining the relationship with current donors, reviewing the organization's budget to ensure that sound financial decisions are being made with the funds available, ensuring that grant and proposal writers are utilizing simple and effective language in each proposal that is submitted, and ensuring that financial statements and audit reports are available for any party that wishes to review them.

Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International (ASI, n.d.) promotes itself as "the world's oldest international human rights organization" with the establishment of the first abolitionist society in England dating to 1787 (Kraeger, 2010). ASI's mission is to work with direct and indirect beneficiaries and stakeholders, from grassroots to international, to eradicate slavery and its causes globally (ASI, n.d.). The organization's ability to approach human

trafficking issues from both a local and global level allows it to support communities, facilitate educational access, and seek victims' compensation and justice. These activities have led directly to the success the organization has been able to achieve. As ASI (2019) demonstrates, "We have had an enormous amount of success over the years. We have managed to end some forms of slavery completely. Against other forms we've made major progress, even if practices haven't yet been completely eradicated" (p. 3).

Amnesty International

Amnesty International (AI) is another global movement consisting of millions of individuals who demand human rights for all individuals, no matter who they are or where they are. AI is the world's largest grassroots human rights organization, and it uses a unique three-aspect approach to protecting human rights: research, mobilization, and advocacy (AI, n.d.). The vision of AI is "for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international human rights standards" (AI, 2020). AI is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest, or religion funded mainly by AI membership and public donations (AI, 2020).

Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking

The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), based in Los Angeles, CA, is a non-profit organization that seeks to end modern slavery and human trafficking through "comprehensive, life-transforming services to survivors" (CAST, n.d.) and serves as a "platform to advocate for groundbreaking policies and legislation" (CAST, n.d.). The work conducted by CAST has transformed the lives of many of those who are impacted by human trafficking. It is an organization that pioneered the U.S. anti-trafficking movement and leads the charge to end the human trafficking epidemic (CAST, n.d.).

End Child Prostitution and Trafficking

End Child Prostitution and Trafficking International (ECPAT) is a worldwide network of organizations working to end the sexual exploitation of children, including the sexual exploitation of children in prostitution, sale, and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes (including forced and early marriage), and the online sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (ECPAT International, 2018). ECPAT is the only child rights organization solely focused on this problem and consists of over 110 civil society organizations across more than 100 countries, which also support shelters for victims, education, and training support for law enforcement, government influence, and research (ECPAT International, 2016).

Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) is a U.S.-based coalition that advocates to prevent and end all forms of human trafficking around the world. It was created by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar's foundation, Humanity United, in 2007 to bring together a group of prominent NGOs to share financial and administrative resources (Chuang, 2014) and was developed to address breakdowns in the anti-human trafficking field (Clark, 2018). ATEST seeks to prevent human trafficking in all forms by promoting lasting solutions in the prevention of this heinous crime as well as other goals such as holding traffickers accountable, empowering survivors with tools for recovery, and ensuring justice for victims. ATEST is equally focused on labor and sex trafficking and takes worker-experience, trauma-informed, and victim-centered approaches in the organization's work based on a human, civil, and worker rights framework (ATEST, n.d.).

Human Trafficking Legislation

In the Grassley (2018) press release following the Senate's passing of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017, Senator Diane Feinstein, one of the bill's sponsors, made the following statement: "Sex trafficking is one of the most reprehensible crimes, and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act builds on our bipartisan efforts to combat trafficking and help victims." The bill's other sponsor, Senator Chuck Grassley, stated:

We need a united approach to taking down human traffickers and bringing victims the justice they deserve. This bill takes meaningful steps to shed light on this terrible abuse of human rights by improving awareness and streamlining federal law enforcement's response.

The United States has enacted several laws focused on protecting society from traffickers, providing law enforcement the tools and resources needed to respond to trafficking, and assisting victims effectively. The TVPA of 2000 is likely the most significant anti-trafficking legislation in the United States. Before TVPA, cases that today are classified as "trafficking" were prosecuted under an array of federal laws. The U.S. approach to trafficking, in part, developed out of the knowledge gained through this practice. The enactment of the TVPA reflects the first extensive collective effort by Congress, presidential administrations, and NGOs to address human trafficking (McReynolds, 2009). The TVPA was created to "ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect their victims" (TVPA of 2000, 22 U.S.C. § 7101) and comprises three main components, also known as the three Ps: protection, prosecution, and prevention. Additionally, a fourth P has emerged for "partnership," which facilitates

progress across the other three Ps and helps unite all segments of society to fight against modern slavery (U.S. Department of State, 2019a). Despite the stated mission of the TVPA, there still exists an apparent disconnect between the three components of the TVPA, as policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and NGOs that provide services to victims try to prioritize goals and achieve their missions (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012).

Funding for the TVPA and its provisions was reauthorized for both the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2003 and 2005. The TVPRA of 2003 provided civil remedies for victims, a significant and welcome addition to the restitution to victims that the TVPA provided through criminal prosecutions (McReynolds, 2009). The TVPRA permitted victims to “bring a civil action against the perpetrator in an appropriate district court of the United States” and to “recover damages and reasonable attorney’s fees” (TVPRA of 2003, p. 4). The TVPRA of 2005 expanded the reporting requirements of the TVPRA of 2003. The TVPRA of 2005 also established a grant program for state and local law enforcement agencies to combat trafficking. It also instituted a grant program for states, local governments, Indian tribes, and NGOs to evolve, expand, and strengthen assistance for trafficking victims. It directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to create and implement a pilot program to provide benefits and services for juvenile trafficking victims (TVPRA of 2005). The William Wilberforce TVPRA of 2008 further expanded anti-trafficking prevention strategies and amended the Immigration and Nationality Act regarding the T Visa and the expansion of protections, requiring that unaccompanied alien children be screened as potential victims of human trafficking. The TVPRA of 2008 also directed the FBI to classify the offense of human trafficking as a Part I crime in the Uniform Crime Reports,

established subcategories for state sex crimes, and classified the offense of human trafficking in the National Incident-Based Reporting System as a Group A offense. The TVPRA of 2013 established provisions with the Department of State to respond during crises. This includes crises such as post-conflict situations or humanitarian emergencies and locations where individuals are susceptible to trafficking. The TVPRA 2013 also established a strategy for the prevention of child marriage and promoted the protection of girls in developing countries who are at risk of child marriage, and further promoted collaboration between public and private sectors (TVPRA, 2013). The TVPRA of 2013 also provided that a minor victim of sex trafficking is not required to collaborate with law enforcement to have access to any grant-funded shelter or services and that victims have immediate access to state-administered medical care upon certification as a victim (TVPRA, 2013).

Numerous stakeholders have analyzed the limitations of the TVPA, mainly concentrating on strengthening prosecution and access to victim assistance and services (Gallagher & Holmes, 2008), while other stakeholders have pointed out that there has been only nominal assessment of the effectiveness of collaboration between NGOs and law enforcement (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Others have advised that, although the TVPA and the subsequent reauthorizations include gender-neutral text, the implementation of the legislation is “unlikely to protect male victims of human trafficking because the TVPA is largely interpreted and enforced as a law primarily designed to protect women and girls from sexual exploitation” (S. V. Jones, 2010, p. 1146). They maintain that the TVPRA and the Violence Against Women Act continue to promote the belief that violence and trafficking are exclusive to women and girls (Tien, 2013).

Research by Noyori-Corbett and Moxley (2016) emphasized that there remains concern over the U.S. failure to enforce TVPA provisions and sanctions and that the legislation itself presents an obstacle for victims of human trafficking in regard to the process of victim certification. Throughout this process and due to the inherent structuring of the navigation of this process, law enforcement controls it entirely, which ultimately limits how other partnering agencies, such as health, human, and social services, are delayed in their response to aid the victim, as it can take weeks for the victim to achieve victim certification (Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2016). Due to this barrier, it has been proposed that there is a problem in the victim identification process and a structural limitation inherent to the TVPA that restricts victim identification, though it is essential to point out that the subsequent reauthorizations of the TVPA are trending in the positive direction of affirming trafficked victims' human rights (Noyori-Corbett & Moxley, 2016; Okech et al., 2011). On the other hand, Tucker (2018) stated that the "frequently-blurred line between criminal and victim" (p. 19) has prevented the TVPA, along with the Palermo Protocol, from achieving their pledge to eradicate human trafficking and have marginalized successful initiatives.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was initially enacted in 1994 and addressed concerns regarding violent crime, specifically against women. This legislation allowed for enhanced sentencing for repeat sex offenders, mandated restitution to victims, and granted authorization to state, local, and tribal law enforcement for the investigation of such crimes (Sacco, 2019). Since 1994, VAWA has been reauthorized three times: 2000, 2005, and 2013. The reauthorization of VAWA in 2000 was done through the TVPA. This reauthorization of VAWA provided additional protections and

programs for battered immigrants and victims of domestic violence, among other offenses, and it amended various laws surrounding interstate stalking and intimate partner/spousal violence (Sacco, 2019). The 2005 reauthorization of VAWA was done through the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act and added protections for trafficked or battered immigrants, provided support for public health response programs to domestic violence, amended the stalking provision of previous authorizations to include cyberstalking, emphasized collaboration amongst law enforcement, health and housing professionals, and community initiatives and alliances (Sacco, 2019). Lastly, in 2013 VAWA was reauthorized through the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013. This reauthorization focused on the consolidation of certain grant programs while authorizing new grant programs. The reauthorization enhanced measures to combat trafficking in persons, amended several grants to address sex trafficking, and further clarified that victim and legal assistance services include services and assistance of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other forms of violence who are also victims of trafficking in persons (Sacco, 2019).

VAWA has played a crucial role in violent crimes that are committed against women. While women are more likely to be victims than offenders, mitigating factors can shift the dynamic. Consistent and constant abuse, which often lasts for years, can have a significant impact on the psychological state, wellbeing, and mental health of a victim. In some cases, this repeated abuse to the victim escalates to the point in which the victim does what they deem as necessary to remove themselves from the situation; this typically involves the victim killing their abuser. Legislation has been enacted to protect and defend victims that have been abused over time and kill their abuser. The most

prominent example of this is in New York; legislation known as the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act allows the sentencing court to review and resentence a domestic violence survivor if certain criteria are met, and the victim suffered sexual, psychological, or physical abuse that contributed to his or her sentence (New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services, 2022).

In California and Texas, a past history of abuse is not a defense to a criminal act under state law. However, in California, intimate partner battering or domestic abuse can provide relevant context to a claim of self-defense (Linklaters LLP, 2016). In Texas, a woman charged with murdering her abuser is permitted to offer evidence pertaining to family violence. Under Florida state law, battered-spouse or battered woman syndrome is admissible into evidence when a self-defense claim is made in criminal cases. However, according to Rule 3.201 of the Florida Rules of Criminal Procedure, an advance notice prior to the trial is required to be provided to the prosecution. There have been several cases that resulted in an altered conviction or successful appeal; an example in which the battered-spouse syndrome testimony was successfully applied and resulted in a reversible error is *Bartlett v. the State of Florida* (Linklaters LLP, 2016). In Virginia, the legislation regarding self-defense and battered woman syndrome in domestic abuse situations is limited for the victim, as Hamilton (2014) pointed out that there is a gap between punishment and culpability, and that the law currently takes away the ability for the victim to defend herself. In South Carolina, H.3210, Protection from Domestic Abuse Act, currently in the House of Representatives, would provide additional legal protections for survivors of domestic abuse; however, it does not affect the right to relief to the petitioner (victim) against the respondent (abuser) through the use of physical force

against the respondent (Protection from Domestic Abuse Act, 2022). In Ohio, H.B. 3, also known as Aisha's Law, which was passed by the Ohio House on May 20, 2020, expanded the definition of domestic violence, specifically to include strangulation, with other notable aspects of the legislation including the issuance of a temporary emergency protection order outside court's normal business hours, and domestic violence screening by police agencies. The legislation does not appear to include any protections for victims who kill their abusers (Ohio House of Representatives, 2021).

Trafficker Profile

The ability to create a trafficker profile requires expert criminal profiling capability from all stakeholders, including federal, state, and local law enforcement. The 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons discusses in some detail the profile of the trafficker and his or her victim (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020). The method used to develop profiles, commonly known as criminal profiling but also referred to as criminal investigative analysis and criminal intelligence analysis, is "the application of psychological theory and behavioral analysis to the investigation and reconstruction of physical evidence that relates to a particular offender's crime scene characteristics, victimology, motivation, and behavior patterns" (Kocsis, 2007, p. 62). Traffickers can be men or women. The roles played by women in trafficking-related criminal groups can vary, with women playing either a substantial role in the trafficking process or a secondary role to men (UNODC, 2008b). Not every trafficker is a member of a criminal organization. A trafficker can be a person who operates alone so that all profits are in his or her control. For example, a pimp or a person who enslaves another person within a home to perform domestic duties can be defined as a trafficker. The 2016 TIP report

found that traffickers and their victims tend to originate from the same geographical location, speak the same language, and have the same ethnic background. Due to these commonalities, the level of trust and the strength of the relationship between the trafficker and the victim is enhanced, and this is why most traffickers focus on domestic recruitment and rarely travel (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020).

A study conducted by Roe-Sepowitz (2019) looked at people arrested and charged with sex trafficking of a minor (under the age of 18) in the United States and identified through a structured online search process from 2010 to 2015. Roe-Sepowitz found that the average age of the sex traffickers was 28.5, that 24.4% of the sex traffickers were female, and that they were younger than male sex traffickers, that 75% of the sex traffickers were African American, and nearly one out of five arrests for sex trafficking of a minor involved a person who was gang-involved. Another study by Veldhuizen-Ochodničanová et al. (2020) analyzed a sample of 114 criminally prosecuted cases found in the Case Law Database within the Human Trafficking Knowledge Portal provided by the UNODC. This sample contains 73 domestic cases of sex trafficking and 41 international cases in which the analysts found that the majority of sex traffickers were exclusively male ($n = 69$; 60.5%), and in 37 cases (32.5%), there were both male and female sex traffickers involved, while in only eight cases (7%) there were only female traffickers.

Law Enforcement Response

In the Federal Strategic Plan developed by the PITF (2014), local law enforcement officers are important figures in eliminating human trafficking in the United States (Mapp et al., 2016). Law enforcement is often the first point of contact with the

legal system for the victims, survivors, and perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, which puts officers in a strategic position to be the first to encounter a potential victim of human trafficking (National Research Council, 2013). Research has found that a substantial percentage of state and local law enforcement personnel in key cities with known human trafficking activity was not fully informed about the nature, prevalence, and patterns of human trafficking (Clawson, Dutch, & Cummings, 2006). Human trafficking often thrives in plain view of law enforcement and corrections officers simply because officers do not know enough to recognize the signs of human trafficking (Meekins, 2014). Previous research has shown that local police and sheriffs are often unaware of human trafficking in their jurisdictions and commonly lack the training necessary to investigate these crimes; the cases that the police do identify differ from the types that are reported by other sources, such as victim service providers (Farrell et al., 2010; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Gallagher & Holmes, 2008; Newton et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2006).

Law enforcement training on human trafficking is essential to combating human trafficking. However, while the passage of the TVPA set the foundation for law enforcement awareness around human trafficking, the legislation failed to create a nationwide training program, and while some states have created training programs, there is still a lack of training on all levels of federal, state, and local law enforcement (Banachowski-Fuller, 2017). Farrell and Pfeffer (2014) explained that if officers are not trained, they may ruin a chance at an investigation by using inappropriate methods. Although the field of law enforcement has fostered increased training to improve the response to victims, studies evaluating the success of these efforts have disregarded

questions about how well law enforcement responds to and meets the needs of victims (Kizielewicz, 2019). A study conducted by Jacobi (2018) found that when specialized training on the indicators of human trafficking and the victim-centered approach to investigating human trafficking cases is provided to local law enforcement officers, there are significant positive changes to the officers' behavior with human trafficking case indicators. Law enforcement officers who are keener on the indicators of human trafficking are better prepared to come into contact with potential victims of human trafficking.

Local law enforcement can help federal law enforcement in trafficking investigations. Trafficking scenarios are most often discovered by local law enforcement through investigations into other crimes as they are the most knowledgeable about their communities and can notice suspicious or abnormal activity. This means that state and local law enforcement are more likely to discover trafficking through routine investigation than federal officials (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). However, because anti-trafficking efforts have been primarily focused at the federal level, as opposed to the state and local level, the law enforcement officers who are most likely to discover trafficking are, in fact, least likely to be trained to recognize it. Federal, state, and local law enforcement have progressively been called upon to identify and investigate human trafficking offenses over the past decade (Farrell & Reichert, 2017). However, state and local law enforcement are likely to view the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases as a federal issue instead of a state or local issue (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Overall, the relationship among federal, state, and local law enforcement regarding human trafficking laws appears to be strained. An exploratory study by Stewart (2011) issued

self-administered surveys to 208 police chiefs of municipal, school district, and university police departments in Texas, using a 4-item index dependent variable of “very good,” “good,” “fair,” and “poor” in relation to the nature of collaboration among participant agencies and federal agencies. The results of this study indicated that federal-local relationships are strained, with most chiefs illustrating their relations as “poor” or “fair.” The law enforcement response and successful law enforcement, in general, requires more than just a willingness to work together; it also requires the ability for these agencies to share data, information, and intelligence in an effective manner (Sander, 2010). Information sharing is vital to combating human trafficking, including the intervention, prosecution, restitution, and rehabilitation of the victim. When information sharing is non-existent or minimal, inefficiencies in the process can result.

Intervention Methods

Law enforcement agencies do not uniformly make human trafficking a priority (Farrell et al., 2012), which can negatively affect both the intervention and investigative stages of law enforcement work. Effective law enforcement intervention requires a swift and sustained response. After initial interviews of victims, witnesses, and suspected offenders, the investigators should collect information and corroborate evidence presented to file charges and build the case (Bales & Lize, 2007). Sex trafficking victims who do come to the attention of the police are sometimes misclassified as street-walkers or prostitutes, and this is the beginning of the human trafficking investigation falling apart (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014). Even when law enforcement encounters potential human trafficking victims through vice investigations, the police often lack the know-how and the ability to build a human trafficking case. Farrell and Pfeffer (2014) found that despite

human trafficking training and participation in interagency human trafficking task force meetings, vice investigators did not know how to gather the evidence necessary to identify the elements of human trafficking.

Investigation/Interviews

The initial actions during an investigation are critical to the success of prosecution (Bales & Lize, 2007), but many agencies do not have the resources needed to train, staff, and investigate cases, especially for patrol officers and first responders that need it the most. Most agencies do not have officers who are sufficiently trained in appropriate interviewing techniques or who have the foreign language skills necessary to facilitate the identification of human trafficking victims (Farrell et al., 2012). Successful interviews by law enforcement include understanding the impact and effects of trauma, adopting a compassionate and non-judgmental attitude, conducting interviews individually and in private, providing victims the opportunity to tell their story in their own way, and not asking questions such as "Are you a slave?" or "Are you a trafficking victim?" During the investigation and interview phase, based on their prior experience and expertise, the police develop procedures, protocol, norms, and routines to help guide the expectations and actions required in differing criminal investigations. Detectives generally know what will happen during the course of an investigation and can anticipate the responses that will be needed in their investigation (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014).

Additionally, law enforcement officers who apply psychological principles to their interviewing techniques can benefit when interviewing these victims. The Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviews (FETI) developed by Russell Strand incorporates psychologist Dr. Rebecca Campbell's research on trauma's effect on the brain. The FETI

process can help law enforcement officers to identify victim behaviors that law enforcement may have previously viewed as suspicious (Campbell, 2012; Strand & Heitman, 2017). The FETI process focuses on establishing trust with the victim through acknowledging the pain that the individual has experienced. The officer is focused on asking the victim what he or she can remember instead of having them start at the beginning. Traumatic memories are often encoded and remembered differently from non-traumatic memories (Strand & Heitman, 2017). The FETI process has been credited with enhancing the quality and quantity of both psychophysiological evidence obtained and testimonies given from the victim, allowing law enforcement to collect significantly more information about what the victim experienced, enabling the victim to recall more information about his or her experience, reduce the collection of false information, and significantly reduce victim retraumatization (Strand & Heitman, 2017).

Prosecution

Law enforcement officials must overcome substantial legal, cultural, and organizational barriers to investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases. These barriers, and the strategies to overcome them, are still being identified (NIJ, 2019). As has been shown and reaffirmed through the research conducted by the NIJ, state prosecutors are wary about using new human trafficking laws and instead choose to charge offenders with offenses they are more familiar with, such as rape, kidnapping, or pandering (Farrell et al., 2012; Newton et al., 2008). Additional training in human trafficking for prosecutors could help to encourage them utilize human trafficking laws during their human trafficking cases. For example, the Bureau of Justice Assistance offers no-cost, online, and classroom training on human trafficking that can be utilized by law

enforcement, prosecutors, tribal law enforcement, and tribal leaders. The Human Trafficking Training for State Prosecutors that is offered through this program can help familiarize prosecutors with their state's human trafficking laws (DOJ, 2021). This training can help prosecutors understand their state's specific human trafficking laws and will help foster an environment in which the prosecutor is more likely to use human trafficking laws.

The Missing and Exploited Children Training and Technical Assistance Program provides multi-disciplinary training to prosecutors and others to improve the prosecution of child victimization cases (DOJ, 2021). The National Institute on the Prosecution of Human Trafficking offers a course designed to “challenge prosecutors to reevaluate their approach to prosecuting human trafficking cases” (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2015, para. 1). This course provides training on the indicators and dynamics of human trafficking and practical skills to successfully prosecute human trafficking cases while exploring the complex issue of balancing offender accountability with the impact of criminal prosecution on the victims (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2015). Aside from the training offered through these platforms, prosecutors who have undergraduate degrees in fields such as psychology and sociology may have an advantage when forming relationships with victims and prosecuting human trafficking cases. Spellman (2009) stated that “law is about the regulation of human behavior; psychology is the study of human behavior” (para. 2). Prosecutors who understand psychology can potentially form and build relationships with everyone involved in the case process, from the victim to the offender. Psychology can help prosecutors understand people and make better connections, ultimately leading to better relationships among all stakeholders.

The victims' background characteristics often influence prosecutor decisions regarding charging, so most cases of human trafficking identified by local law enforcement are prosecuted on the federal level (Farrell et al., 2012). Overall, there is still a significantly low amount of human trafficking prosecutions brought forward on the federal level compared to the estimates of human trafficking cases in the United States. There have been various explanations for this dilemma: First, insufficient coordination among those responsible for state and federal anti-trafficking efforts (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007); second, government officials are not doing enough to enforce the provisions of the TVPA along with state anti-trafficking laws (Morse, 2007; Zeitlin, 2006). However, in some cases, the lack of prosecution falls on the inability to build a *prima facie* case adequately.

According to the Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School, a *prima facie* case is a “cause of action or defense that is sufficiently established by a party's evidence to justify a verdict in his or her favor, provided such evidence is not rebutted by the other party” (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). A national study of state and local human trafficking prosecutions conducted by the Urban Institute-Northeastern University found that prosecutors often decide not to pursue cases because they “believe victims lack credibility” and that prosecutors “have difficulty getting victims to cooperate because of fear, intimidation, or trauma” or that they “are unaware, in some cases, of their states’ trafficking law or the elements necessary to prove labor or sex trafficking” (Urban Institute, 2012, para. 3). Additionally, based on their analysis of the data from 140 closed human trafficking cases in 12 counties across the country, 530 incident reports of related crimes, and interviews with 166 prosecutors, law enforcement officials, service providers,

and other stakeholders in the criminal justice system determined that most reviewed cases met the federal definition of human trafficking, while only 7% resulted in a state or federal sex trafficking charge and only 9% in a sex trafficking of a minor charge (Urban Institute, 2012). The Urban Institute's Colleen Owens in 2012 concluded that "when law enforcement and prosecutors decide to drop these cases or charge defendants with lesser crimes, they unintentionally reinforce the idea that human trafficking is not a problem in the United States" (Urban Institute, 2012, para. 1).

Victims of Sex Trafficking

Vulnerable Populations

There is no single profile of a trafficking victim; however, numerous commonly identified risk factors can increase the risk for victimization (Chambers, 2019). There is no bias when it comes to who may become a victim of human trafficking, as standard demographic factors such as gender, race, social, immigration, and economic status do not apply (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020). Victims include "migrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and gender-nonconforming individuals, support-network isolated individuals, and survivors of violence and trauma are also at increased risk" (Walk Free Foundation, 2018). The ability to successfully assist vulnerable populations to protect themselves from harm is not conceivable without understanding what makes these populations vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation in the first place (UNODC, 2008a).

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health Office on Trafficking in Persons provided a fact sheet to highlight groups of individuals at higher risk who have experienced or had exposure to forms of violence such as survivors of child abuse and maltreatment, sexual

assault, interpersonal or intimate partner violence, gang violence, community violence; these individuals tend to disengage from support networks as do runaways and victims of displacement by natural disaster (Rothman et al., 2017; Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020; HHS, 2017). Fedina et al. (2019) explained that “running away from home is a known risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation among youth” (p. 1).

The local economic situation in which a potential victim of human trafficking is exposed can impact the vulnerability of the victim. When a population grows faster than the economic resources available, such as healthcare and policing, these services become more sparse, and this instability leads to searching out new moneymaking opportunities (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). Carpenter and Gates (2016) pointed out that individuals with limited economic resources, such as limited family support and career or educational opportunities, are at a higher risk of trafficking. The DOJ (2020c) advised that “some of the most vulnerable populations for trafficking in the United States include American Indian/Alaska Native communities, lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-questioning individuals, individuals with disabilities, undocumented migrants, runaway and homeless youth, temporary guest-workers and low-income individuals” (para. 3). Furthermore, minors are among the most vulnerable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of abuse and exploitation of children due to the shifting focus and resources away from this population during this time. According to Breslin (2020), “Many child predators have altered their methods to fully exploit these, and other opportunities” (para. 6), and “the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions are viewed as a prime opportunity to prey on children and the vulnerable” (para. 6). Despite this increased vulnerability, very few minors ever “gain

access to the services and protections available to them under the TPVA and other laws related to children who are victims of crime generally” (Walts, 2012, para. 9). It is crucial that access to services and protections are afforded to vulnerable populations; without the intervention provided by these resources and services, the cycle of vulnerability amongst these populations will continue.

Recruitment

Traffickers use an assortment of recruitment methods and forms of exploitation to maintain control of their victims (Shelley, 2010). Recruitment is effective when the trafficker relies on victims whom they have turned into loyal enforcers or recruiters or when the potential victim's family members are involved in the process (Bales & Lize, 2005). A study conducted by Rosenblatt (2014) found that based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs that “love and belonging” is the most effective recruitment tool that traffickers use on young and vulnerable girls. Twenty-two of the 32 girls surveyed were deceived into believing the lie of a false father figure, boyfriend, or other family relationship that mirrored their own desire for this basic human need of fulfillment. Additionally, research has found that one in three youths living on the street is recruited for sexual exploitation within 48 hours of homelessness (HHS, 2016). Moreover, sex traffickers may often approach families living in poverty, seeking to purchase young women or girls with promises of a better life, or approach women who are already engaged in prostitution to be transported abroad. Traffickers commonly recruit potential victims who are economically or socially vulnerable, or both, and who are susceptible to addiction, family dysfunction, or other situations that create an unstable foundation that traffickers can exploit (Deshpande & Nour, 2013; Hodge, 2008; McClain & Garrity, 2011).

Development Stages of Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking has devastating consequences on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of millions of women globally (McTavish, 2017). It may even become a way of life for the victim (Baird et al., 2019; Hammond & McGlone, 2014). The development from prostitute to victim of sex trafficking is outlined by Williamson and Folaron (2003), who proposed six developmental phases of prostitution based on their research into adult women who experienced sex trafficking. In the first stage, the trafficker's motive is to entice the victim into the lifestyle, which involves showing that prostitution is a survival strategy and that it can provide financial relief. The second stage, learning the lifestyle, is acclimating the individual to the fast-paced and immediately rewarding nature of prostitution. In the third stage, living the lifestyle, individuals have distanced themselves from relationships and other support networks, and drug use turns from a recreational to a functional purpose required to do the work. In the fourth stage, caught up in the lifestyle, individuals commonly experience depression, drug abuse, a weakened emotional state, and the deterioration of physical and mental health. The fifth stage, leaving the lifestyle, is reached through self-reflection and the realization that continuing the lifestyle is not feasible or sustainable, and there are better options available. The sixth stage is reentry into the lifestyle; due to the lack of options, the support and structure they are accustomed to, while minimal, is no longer available, and victims find they cannot support themselves and are living in poverty. In addition to these developmental stages, there are work style variations for women engaged in prostitution. Motivations at all stages of this development model can vary significantly, as one who is in the earlier stages can decide to exit the lifestyle with minimal risk and

fewer consequences. In contrast, an individual in the later stages may be reluctant to leave the lifestyle as the individual comes to believe that the risk posed by exiting is greater than the freedom of not being part of the lifestyle anymore.

Within the sex trafficking industry, the ability to rob, steal, and manipulate are learned skills. Williamson and Baker (2009) developed three work style typologies of women engaged in street-level prostitution: pimp-controlled prostitution, renegade prostitution, and outlaw prostitution. Pimp-controlled prostitutes are those who were lured, finessed, manipulated, and drawn as minors into working for a pimp in an effort to achieve a lifestyle that could aid in their survival. Renegade prostitutes are individuals, typically women, working without a pimp. These individuals are frequently escapees of the pimp-controlled environment and have built a regular clientele. In this type of prostitution, the risk and threat of violence from a pimp is minimal; however, customers can be violent towards the individual for any number of reasons. Outlaw prostitution, sometimes referred to as “street hustlers,” primarily targets those unfamiliar with the prostitutes, as the goal is to walk away with more than what was agreed upon through manipulation, theft, and robbery. In most cases, with this type of prostitution, the prostitutes typically do not want to engage in sexual activity.

Educating the youth in the United States is an essential step in addressing the developing states of sex trafficking. A more educated youth can potentially recognize the stages of the development cycle and be aware of vulnerable individuals or themselves. According to the Thorn (2018) Survivor Insights Survey, the median age of an individual becoming a victim of human trafficking is 14 years of age, with the range between 1–15 years of age, and of the victims surveyed, 55% reported meeting their trafficker through a

website, text, or mobile application. Therefore, it would seem that in most scenarios, technology-based applications are the primary tools used by traffickers to begin the development stages, and the dangers of this technology should be incorporated into materials and resources used to educate youth.

One may seek to understand the opportune time to educate youth on the dangers of human trafficking and the development stages of sex trafficking, but the answer is not as simple as recommending a particular age. In most cases, the education on these topics is left up to K–12 schools, social and public service agencies, and the government. Therefore, it is likely to be most effective to educate on these topics by incorporating them into lesson plans for elementary-age children and older in classes such as physical education, health science, and history. It would also be beneficial to incorporate a guidance counselor or other school official to provide support to create an environment and lesson that is age-appropriate to the audience. For example, the PROTECT program aims to train school staff to identify and report human trafficking and educate students on prevention. The program consists of four modules spanning the entire K-12 spectrum. The PROTECT curriculum is described as providing a “comprehensive understanding of the dangers, signs and historical roots of human trafficking” (PROTECT, 2020, para. 1) and to “empower students with a better understanding of individual value, identify victims at the earliest possible stage, and respond appropriately with the services and support victims and those at-risk” (PROTECT, 2020, para. 1). The education of youth in the United States will not entirely solve human trafficking but is a step in the right direction that can help to reduce human trafficking among youth. Ultimately, it will take a collective effort amongst the United States and other countries to incorporate

educational campaigns across all schools to help inform the youth of the dangers presented with the development stages of sex trafficking.

Stockholm Syndrome

Sex trafficking victims can be susceptible to Stockholm syndrome when they believe themselves to have a romantic relationship with their pimp and hold out hope that they will eventually leave the life of sex trafficking altogether; due to this romantic relationship, the victims will go to great lengths to protect their abuser (Chesnay, 2013; Levine, 2017). This phenomenon is known as a trauma bond, an “emotional attachment between an abuser and victim, trauma bonds in sex trafficking compel victims to submit to continued exploitation and protect the trafficker” (Casassa et al., 2021, p. 1). The medical definition of Stockholm syndrome is a “group of psychological symptoms that occur in some persons or hostage situation” (Farlex, n.d.). Stockholm syndrome has drawn significant media attention in various kidnapping cases, such as Patty Hearst (1974) and Elizabeth Smart (2002). Though it was significantly debated in the Hearst case, there is significant agreement amongst experts that the syndrome was not present in Smart’s case. On June 5, 2002, 14-year-old Elizabeth Smart was kidnapped from her bedroom by Brian David Mitchell in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was held captive by Mitchell and his wife, Wanda Barzee, for approximately 9 months. Elizabeth Smart has repeatedly stated that she never developed empathy or affection for her captors and showed no signs of traumatic bonding or emotional connections, which are key components of Stockholm syndrome; due to this, she never experienced this phenomenon (J. L. Davis, 2003; McLaughlin, 2015). In Elizabeth Smart’s case, if she were experiencing Stockholm syndrome, she would have put up more resistance to rescue

efforts, according to Baren Rosenfeld, a forensic psychologist at Fordham University (J. L. Davis, 2003). While Elizabeth Smart did not likely experience Stockholm syndrome, her case may contain psychological aspects of human trafficking, such as her being afraid of the situation that she was in or being scared to say anything when the opportunity arose, behavior that is common with victims of human trafficking (Kim, 2018).

Additionally, Elizabeth Smart's trauma during her kidnapping is likely not much different from the trauma experienced by victims of human trafficking. In a 2015 article in the *Bradenton Herald*, Elizabeth Smart stated that “her experience was identical, but in some ways not as bad, as many human trafficking victims experience everyday” (Irby, 2015, para. 4). Elizabeth Smart continued, stating that “these girls survive every single day” (Irby, 2015, para. 4), and “many of these girls are raped a hundred times a day and have been taken from their families” (Irby, 2015, para. 4).

Several conventional psychological theories have proposed that abused women are attracted to, love, and remain with the men who abuse them due to feminine masochism (Graham et al., 1988). The prominent psychological role of masochism is considered a way of avoiding uncontrollable suffering by willingly undertaking milder and more manageable suffering (Békés et al., 2017). Stockholm syndrome was developed to rationalize the psychological responses of hostages to their captors. However, there are inherent similarities between hostages and abused women, and it has been suggested that abused women that remain with their abusers can be better understood through the Stockholm syndrome model (Graham et al. 1988). While Stockholm syndrome usually applies to a hostage situation, since trafficking victims tend to experience the same types of intimidation, seclusion, and control that a hostage victim may experience, this

syndrome can also apply to victims of sex trafficking (Prince, 2016; P. Stevens, 2014). P. Stevens (2014) also discovered that pimps utilize Stockholm syndrome with their victims by making them believe that it is their choice to participate; however, no further studies have been conducted to support this theory (Prince, 2016).

Research has shown that abused individuals may develop an emotional attachment to the abuser; the abuse can be sexual, physical, or emotional and can last for many years. Over this time, the individual may develop positive feelings for the abuser (Cantor & Price, 2007). Individuals who are trafficked often rely on someone else to provide basic necessities such as food and water, and when the trafficker provides these items, the victim may develop positive feelings towards him or her (Karan & Hansen, 2018). Research has proposed that Stockholm syndrome should be considered as a contributory factor to the psychological challenges faced by female sex workers, and it could prospectively help guide intervention accordingly (Karan & Hansen, 2018).

Victim Statistics

The lack of reliable data on the frequency of human trafficking victimization is multi-faceted. It is due in part to the inherent challenges of identifying incidents of human trafficking as well as the lack of a uniform system to keep records and report on human trafficking (Farrell et al., 2008). The Human Trafficking Reporting System is a department of the DOJ-funded system created to collect data on human trafficking incidents investigated by federally-funded task forces on the state and local level (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.). Despite the existence of the Human Trafficking Reporting System and outside the purview of federally-funded task forces, there is no uniform system of reporting state and local prosecutions or investigations of human trafficking

cases. Due to this dilemma, it can be difficult to assess human trafficking estimates when surveying the available research. Fedina (2015) found through a systematic review of literature regarding the use and misuse of sex trafficking research estimates that most sex-trafficking literature simply relies on various sources to provide a representation of the problem.

In some cases, the literature misinterprets the estimates to be actual numbers of human trafficking cases, while others use the data to make their own projections without scientific measures. One reliable study conducted by Northeastern University, Abt Associates, and the Urban Institute in 2009 calculated estimates of victims based on actual counts of trafficking cases within the United States using technical reports, published studies, and scholarly articles; this approach provides a more accurate understanding of the problem (Dank et al., 2014; Farrell et al., 2009; Fedina, 2015). Using this type of data in literature provides researchers with more credible information on the extent of sex trafficking and the known number of victims trafficked each year, and it also can be more clearly identified as a “conservative” figure as opposed to other estimates (Fedina, 2015). While this approach is a step in the right direction, research has pointed out that fewer human trafficking cases overall have been identified when compared to the empirical estimates of the extent of the problem (Farrell, 2014; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Fedina, 2015). This can be attributed to the fact that identified human trafficking cases are not adequately being measured and accounted for and that the problem is more prevalent than what is estimated. This creates a data gap in the victim statistical framework. Non-governmental organizations are attempting to close this gap. The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, created by the International Organization

for Migration in partnership with Polaris and the UN Migration Agency, will allow for a global repository of data on trafficking in persons, and the information gathered will help researchers understand the true extent of the problem while protecting victim identities (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2020).

In addition to the work of NGOs in solving this problem, one proposed methodology to address the estimate of non-detected victims of human trafficking in a particular country is known as Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE). MSE methodology utilizes existing human trafficking victim lists compiled through different authorities or NGOs. Based on statistical methodology, known as the capture-recapture method, the “hidden” population of victims not included on any list is estimated by analyzing the overlaps between the lists (van Dijk & van der Heijden, 2016). The capture-recapture method has been successfully applied in various hidden population settings in various disciplines such as healthcare and biometrics and has proved effective in identifying hidden populations of illicit drug users and prostitutes (Gould & Kendall, 2013; Morrison & Stone, 2000; Poorolajal et al., 2017; van Dijk & van der Heijden, 2016). Additionally, Silverman (2014) utilized MSE on a dataset consisting of five sources to provide the first estimate of the extent of human trafficking in the United Kingdom in the 21st century. The MSE methodology, if utilized in more human trafficking research, may hold the key to better aligning human trafficking population statistics across the field.

Victim Identification

Identifying victims of trafficking is generally understood in the literature to be one of the most crucial problems of current anti-sex-trafficking measures, and victim identification needs to be strengthened to help human trafficking victims (Okech et al.,

2011; Soirila, 2011). Law enforcement must be able to identify sex trafficking victims, but as research indicates, victims are significantly under-identified both in the United States and worldwide. The challenges in identifying victims are inherent to human trafficking cases. Some of the primary challenges to victim identification include the covert and clandestine nature of the activity, victims' inability or unwillingness to seek help, and the fear many victims have of law enforcement (Choo et al., 2010; Farrell et al., 2012; Simich et al., 2014). However, other factors at play relating to the under-identification problem are in part due to police agencies and other first responders' failure to train officers and other front-line individuals to recognize the signs of a potential victim (Farrell et al., 2012). Due to the various legal and behavioral aspects of human trafficking, such as force, fraud, coercion, labor, and sexual exploitation, these aspects are not well understood and are seldom directly noticed by third parties (Simich et al., 2014). This issue lays the groundwork for understanding that only a fraction of the trafficked persons whom frontline agencies discover actually report their victimization (Kangaspunta, 2006). This can be principally attributed to the inefaceable terror, fear, anxiety, and trauma they have suffered or are currently suffering (Simich et al., 2014). Stakeholders, including law enforcement, service providers, and community members, have expressed confusion and misunderstanding about how human trafficking is defined, identified, and reported (Simich et al., 2014).

Victim Cooperation

One of the primary ways of gaining victim cooperation is building rapport with the victim (Shared Hope International, 2020). Schoeberl and Nivens (2018) pointed out that actions are needed to protect victims of trafficking, most notably through state

measures, that permit those who have been illegally trafficked into the United States to have permanent residence and safe harbor, so these victims will be more willing to testify against traffickers and not be reluctant to come forward. Several studies show that law enforcement's most significant challenge in investigating human trafficking cases is the nonexistence of victim cooperation and the isolated nature of human trafficking, limiting law enforcement's contact with victims (Clawson, Dutch, & Cummings, 2006; Farrell et al., 2008; Helton, 2016). Another study found that when law enforcement comes into contact with victims, law enforcement officers fundamentally pressure victims to cooperate in an investigation; this tactic is frequently reported to be used to secure victim cooperation, while another method used to coerce cooperation with ongoing investigations is victim detention (Farrell et al., 2012, 2016). Some trafficking victims do not contact the police or cooperate with the police because the victim fears retribution or punishment by the trafficker. A study conducted by Farrell and Pfeffer (2014) found evidence of this fear in sex trafficking cases that involved American victims in which traffickers often lived in or had connections to the community where the victim and his or her family lived; violence or threats of violence were common in those cases.

When law enforcement officers successfully identify victims of human trafficking, investigative procedures routinely hinder officers from building rapport with victims (Alrabe et al., 2017). Since trafficking victims can experience emotional and psychological trauma and may experience memory loss, lack of focus, and fear during their encounter with law enforcement, their perception of reality may be stunted. In some cases, victims believe that they have committed a crime and face jail or deportation or that family members will be harmed if they cooperate or seek help from the police. This

initial time spent with the victim is essential and must be used to conduct a trafficking investigation while remaining sensitive to the victim's trauma. In this way, law enforcement officers may inadvertently alienate the victim and undermine their own efforts to provide help and build a criminal case against the trafficker (Alrabe et al., 2017).

During the course of building a criminal case, it should be understood that victim cooperation depends on ensuring that victims of sex trafficking are not retraumatized during the criminal justice process (Warpinski, 2013). The trauma-informed care approach can provide another method of establishing victim cooperation and avoiding an instance in which a victim is retraumatized during the case-building process or the initial contact with law enforcement. This approach is defined as follows:

[A] program, organization, or system that realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in individuals; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization. (SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014, p. 9)

This approach provides various procedures to follow during the encounter with a victim, one of the most important of which is to treat individuals with compassion, patience, and respect. Using this approach helps develop a supportive presence and reassures the victim that he or she is no longer in immediate danger (IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, 2018). Victim cooperation could be increased if this approach were to be incorporated into law enforcement organizations' policies and procedures, especially when law enforcement comes into contact with a victim of sex trafficking. Integrating trauma-

informed principles into services for women may be exceptionally helpful to programs focused on the particular issues of women who have been trafficked for sex or labor (Blanch et al., 2012).

Victim Relationship with Law Enforcement

Law enforcement officers are often unprepared to deal with the amount of trauma suffered by victims. Investigations are more complicated with trauma-related symptoms, and victims often require more services for more extended periods than law enforcement has the ability to provide (Farrell et al., 2012). Consequently, law enforcement officers frequently resort to using tactics they would typically use on suspects, including the use of arrest to secure victim cooperation (Farrell et al., 2012). A study conducted by Farrell et al. (2016) found that potential victims were arrested in nearly one-third of the cases in their study. In many of these cases, victims were initially identified as offenders rather than victims. Furthermore, Farrell et al. (2016) showed that this discovery is alarming but not surprising since the law enforcement units, such as vice enforcement that frequently discover sex trafficking, are commonly tasked with making arrests for prostitution before the trafficking situation is recognized. The threat of retribution for human trafficking victims is an obstacle to securing victim cooperation. Traffickers often use coercion to control their victims (Baldwin et al., 2015), and this coercion can cause human trafficking victims to be fearful of disclosing their situation to law enforcement as this could pose a substantial risk to their safety or the safety of their family and loved ones (Pocock et al., 2016).

Victim-Centered Approach to Human Trafficking

The federal government made significant progress after the passage of the TVPA towards developing a victim-centered approach to fight human trafficking; however, more needs to be done to ensure that victims have the tools and resources to move forward (PITF, 2014). Victims of human trafficking can be among some of the most challenging individuals to help (Scaramucci, 2020). Since victim testimony can be critical to an investigation, building relationships with these victims is vital, but as previously discussed, there are inherent breakdowns in the process on the part of both the law enforcement officer and the victim. The victim-centered approach is "the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a non-judgmental manner" (DOJ, n.d.).

A victim-centered approach means that the rights of the victim are at the forefront of the case and that survivors are treated as victims and not criminals. The aspects of this approach include providing nonjudgmental assistance while placing emphasis on empowering the victim, providing support for the victim to make informed choices for themselves, ensuring that the victim feels safe, reviewing existing policies and procedures, and ensuring that they do not inadvertently retraumatize victims, and ensure that the voices and rights of the victims are included throughout the process (Albright, 2020). A victim-centered approach to investigation and prosecution is vital to achieving the law enforcement mission. Human trafficking victims who can tell their stories and testify as witnesses are crucial to effective human trafficking investigations and successful prosecutions (DHS, 2021). In many instances, testifying or even appearing in court can be a frightening or traumatizing experience for a victim of human trafficking

(Mullin, 2020), even if a victim is willing to testify or believes he or she will be safer if a trafficker or buyer is prosecuted (Office for Victims of Crime, n.d.; Rights4Girls, 2018).

There is concern that the United States makes human trafficking a criminal justice issue, even though it consists of severe human rights violations (Kaur, 2019). From a criminal justice standpoint, combating human trafficking is often measured by the ability to prosecute, and early efforts in combating human trafficking were often rooted in criminal codes and legislation. In many cases, the victim and their well-being were not considered or part of the conversation. Gozdziaik and Bump (2008) stated that numerous stakeholders are increasingly voicing their concerns that the U.S. government's approach is too focused on prosecuting crimes instead of protecting the victims. There is some concern that the government prefers taking a law enforcement approach to this problem and considers it more valuable than utilizing the victim-centered approach to combating trafficking.

The use of material witness warrants could be considered an example of a law-enforcement approach as opposed to a victim-centered approach. A material witness is an individual that has unique information that is beneficial to the defense or prosecution regarding a crime (Studnicki & Apol, 2002). The law, referred to as the federal material witness statute, is a powerful tool at the prosecutor's disposal and has been around, with minor changes, since the Judiciary Act of 1789 (Cook, 2007). The purpose of this type of warrant is to secure an individual's testimony who may otherwise elude a subpoena or fail to appear before the court. According to Studnicki and Apol (2002),

After a person is a witness to criminal activity and is deemed to have "material information" pertaining to the crime, the government is allowed to detain them if

the requirements of the applicable material witness law are met. Material witnesses may be required to post a bond or undergo a form of recognizance to ensure their presence at the criminal proceeding. If the witness refuses, or is unable to guarantee his return, these statutes allow the witness to be incarcerated for an indefinite period of time. (p. 485)

Throughout many states, the individuals detained on material witness warrants are not entitled to constitutional safeguards, compensation, or counsel for their time (Carlson, 2008; Goodmark, 2019). Though the federal government often touts the importance of a victim-centered approach in human trafficking prosecutions, courts often utilize material witness warrants without any regard or discussion of the adverse effects that the arrest and detention will have on human trafficking victims (Human Trafficking Legal Center, 2020; Wu & Yelderian, 2020). The use of these warrants, in some respects, is the exact opposite of a victim-centered approach due to these individuals essentially being arrested, jailed, and forced to testify, in some cases, likely against their will.

Trafficking victims held as material witnesses fall into one of two categories: those who are hard to contact and those actively opposed to testifying (Wu & Yelderian, 2020). This practice of using material witness warrants continues to be used to secure a victim's testimony against their trafficker, and in many cases, victims can face imprisonment to secure their testimony, and these warrants have been used to hold both adult and child victims in prison (Wu & Yelderian, 2020). Changes to this practice and other practices encountered during a victim's experience with law enforcement, investigators, and prosecutors can be made through effective legislation, which can lead to integrating a victim-centered approach into an officer's routine work.

The U.S. legislature needs to establish a clear vision and policy that both acknowledges and assists victims of human trafficking. Legislation such as the Child Welfare Response Bill, Child Sex Trafficking Data Bill, Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, and the IOYouth Bill have called for a more victim-centered approach by law enforcement (Abner et al., 2013). By implementing and monitoring such policies, government entities, including law enforcement, human services, and judicial systems, should adopt a victim-centered approach if the goal is to abolish modern-day slavery (Roby et al., 2008).

Summary

The literature indicates that the modern-day equivalent of slavery, human trafficking, is prevalent in the United States and in the world. While the legal definition of the term “human trafficking” is still considered relatively new, sex trafficking has been a practice since the beginning of human existence (Bonilla & Mo, 2019; Crehan, 2017; Dolan, 2018). The legislation covered at the turn of the 20th century paved the way for more modern forms of legislation, most notably, the TVPA of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations. The TVPA mandated the TIP report, which has been crucial in combating human trafficking globally. The ability to combat human trafficking relies on numerous stakeholders besides the TIP report, one of the most notable being line-level law enforcement officers. These officers are in a unique position to be the first contact that victims of human trafficking, and especially sex trafficking, have with the criminal justice system. Since the under-identification of victims of sex trafficking is a significant problem, the focus of improving the identification of sex trafficking victims should

encompass building rapport with the human trafficking victim through a victim-centered approach.

The line-level law enforcement officer has the ability to increase the identification of sex trafficking victims by understanding the perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims from the law enforcement perspective. The research conducted in this dissertation can contribute to solving the under-identification problem. There are numerous components affecting the under-identification problem, including gaps in data about human trafficking, absence of law enforcement protocols, lack of awareness and knowledge, smaller trafficking rings operating in states being unaddressed and overlooked by federal authorities targeting large trafficking rings, and methodological weaknesses all are contributory factors to the under-identification of human trafficking victims (Aghazarm & Laczko, 2008; Schoeberl & Nivens, 2018). However, they are not the only factors; Hopper (2004) explained that human trafficking victims' under-identification can also be seen as aspects of the trafficking situation: traumatized victims, a lack of understanding about human trafficking, and the limitations of the TVPA. One of the most dominant reasons for the under-identification of human trafficking victims may be the lack of a victim-centered approach to victims of sex trafficking.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This dissertation addresses two problems. The first problem is that law enforcement identifying victims of human sex trafficking has been difficult and has not been successful or effective (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Farrell et al., 2014, 2015; Farrell & Reichert, 2017). The second problem is that the under-identification of human trafficking victims has been a consistent and ongoing issue for years, and previous research indicates that victims have been undercounted (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Copley, 2014; Ernewein & Nieves, 2015; Farrell et al., 2010; Farrell & Reichert, 2017). Gozdziaik and Bump (2008) argued that the U.S. government is incorporating a law-enforcement approach to human trafficking rather than a victim-centered approach. The first step in adopting a victim-centered approach to human trafficking is identifying victims, not criminalizing them (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015). This dissertation has been written to better understand law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. Understanding law enforcement officers' perspectives of these topics can help shape future policy on incorporating the victim-centered approach to human trafficking in a better manner and closing the gap of under-identified victims of sex trafficking. Additionally, the study sought to evaluate whether law enforcement officers utilize a victim-centered approach when encountering potential victims of sex trafficking. These perceptions can help better understand the successes and challenges associated with identifying sex trafficking victims.

Design

This study was based on a consensual qualitative research method and incorporated the hermeneutical phenomenology research design. Consensual qualitative research is a method that can be utilized to study experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that are not readily observable and is ideal for in-depth study of the experience of the participants, which is not possible with quantitative methods (Hill & Knox, 2021). Qualitative research offers critical tools that foster a new way of seeing a phenomenon, and the research conducted on qualitative data provides insights that challenge theories and expose new theoretical paths (Bansal et al., 2018; Shaw et al., 2017). Qualitative research is defined as “the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or conversation. It is used to explore meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context” (Malterud, 2001, p. 483). Qualitative research plays a significant role in expanding and refining the understanding of both crime and justice (Palacios, 2020). Numerous studies have been conducted using qualitative research on sex trafficking (e.g., Mano, 2014; Serie et al., 2018; Tidball et al., 2016), but few studies have sufficiently addressed the need for better victim identification (Tyldum, 2008). Qualitative methods are unparalleled for guiding and conducting meaningful research in criminal justice; the numerous advantages of qualitative methods provide a depth of understanding of crime, offenders, and the justice system that exceeds what can be offered by independent, statistical studies (Tewksbury, 2009). While qualitative research is not as common as quantitative research in criminology and criminal justice, qualitative research is recognized for the value and unique contributions it can make (Tewksbury, 2009). The

use of qualitative research in criminology and criminal justice is shifting, which will encourage more scholars to conduct and publish research in the field (Copes et al., 2016).

Data have been acquired through the use of survey research for decades from individuals and groups (Ponto, 2015). Survey research continues to gain momentum and popularity in qualitative research settings (Bachman & Schutt, 2020). Survey research can be utilized in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research strategies (Ponto, 2015). In qualitative research, data can be virtually anything; in some cases, spoken mediums are used in criminal justice research to gather data, such as interviews and focus groups, while other methods such as observations and survey research are more appropriate for gathering data.

Check and Schutt (2012) defined survey research as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (p. 160). Qualitative surveys harness the potential of rich qualitative data and offer the researcher many benefits, including convenience through the use of online delivery methods and flexibility to administer the survey in various applications (Braun et al., 2020). Qualitative surveys utilized in this study using open-ended questions will produce long-form written or typed responses that may reveal opinions, experiences, and perceptions that quantitative methods could not expose.

One approach to qualitative research is phenomenology, which is described as the study of phenomena as they manifest in our experience, how we perceive and understand phenomena, and the meaning phenomena have in our idiosyncratic experience (D. W. Smith, 2018). In simpler terms, it is the study of a person's lived experience of the world (van Manen, 2016). In phenomenological research, the researcher aims to describe the

phenomenon as accurately as possible while abstaining from any pre-given framework and remaining true to the facts (Groenewald, 2004). According to Welman and Kruger (1999), “the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved” (p. 189). Embree et al. (1997) identified seven different types of phenomenology: constitutive, constitutive of the natural attitude, existential, generative, genetic, hermeneutical, and realistic. This dissertation employed hermeneutical phenomenology.

Hermeneutical phenomenology, also known as interpretive phenomenology, is based on the work of Martin Heidegger (Neubauer et al., 2019). Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was born in Germany and began his career in theology but eventually moved into philosophy (Lavery, 2003; Neubauer et al., 2019). Heidegger’s philosophical inquiry was first aligned with Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology. However, there are notable differences between their two philosophies. Heidegger’s hermeneutical phenomenology is fundamentally “concerned with the life world of human experience as it is lived” (Lavery, 2003, p. 24) compared to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology that focuses on “acts of attending, perceiving, recalling and thinking about the world and on human beings as knowers of phenomenon” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 94). Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) extended Heidegger’s work by clarifying the conditions in which understanding takes place and was not focused on further developing the procedure of understanding (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer (2004) declared that “language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting” (p. 390). Gadamer believed that understanding and interpretation are intertwined and are an ever-evolving process; therefore, definitive interpretation is unlikely (Annells, 1996; Lavery,

2003). Despite the differences between Heidegger and Gadamer, these individuals influenced each other and shared similar elements relating to hermeneutical phenomenology. Ultimately, their common goal sought to uncover human experience as it is lived.

Hermeneutics focuses on the subjective experience of individuals and groups and attempts to uncover the world experienced by the individual through his or her life-world stories through practical and reflective activities (Dangal & Joshi, 2020; van Manen, 1990). Therefore, a hermeneutical phenomenological study such as this one can be used to explore the meaning of the lived experience of law enforcement officers who have the potential to encounter victims of sex trafficking and can seek to understand from the law enforcement perspective why these victims are under-identified and the approach that these law enforcement officers take to the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. To date, no other hermeneutical phenomenological studies on this subject have been noted in previous literature, and this approach aligns with the goals of this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?

RQ2: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?

Setting

The setting of this study varied based on the location of the law enforcement agency in which the participant was employed. The participant was sent a structured survey questionnaire via email to complete at his or her convenience using the survey

tool SurveyMonkey®. This setting was chosen for this project because this dissertation study aimed to understand law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. By this selection of setting and incorporation of survey questionnaires, the participants completed the surveys at their convenience, allowing the law enforcement officers' perspectives on the topics to be collected efficiently. Additionally, survey questionnaires were utilized because of the ease of use, confidentiality and anonymity capability, and the ability to quickly capture the participants' perspectives on these topics. Additionally, since this study aimed to understand the law enforcement officer's perceptions, participants were line-level (patrol officers) or second-line supervisors (sergeant or the equivalent for that law enforcement agency; i.e., senior officer or master police officer). While it may have been advantageous to speak with upper management law enforcement officers such as a lieutenant, captain, or chief, the aim of this study was to understand the perceptions of the law enforcement officer most likely to encounter a victim of sex trafficking, which would be a patrol/street officer or his or her immediate supervisor.

Participants

The sex trafficking trade has dramatically increased in size (Moossy, 2009), global attention (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017), and public awareness (CdeBaca & Sigmon, 2014). It has been noted that professionals in multiple disciplines frequently come into contact with potential victims of sex trafficking, such as health care providers (Dovydaitis, 2011) and social workers (Howard, 2015). Still, law enforcement officers are in a unique position to identify victims of sex trafficking as they usually are the first

persons with whom the victim has contact within the criminal justice system. This dissertation study drew a sample from law enforcement officers who potentially encounter victims of sex trafficking in their routine work and who are located in states that have known human trafficking cases. Purposeful sampling and snowballing were utilized to recruit participants to the study. Purposeful sampling in qualitative research is a commonly used method for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015) and has been utilized in previous studies (Cole & Sprang, 2015; Pascoal, 2017) to create sample populations of professionals with experience encountering victims of sex trafficking. In partnership with the purposeful sampling method, snowballing sampling is utilized when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics. Using this method, existing study participants recruited future participants among their colleagues; this sampling method continued until data saturation (N. Burns & Grove, 2005; Ghaljaie et al., 2017).

Procedures

The sample for the dataset is a purposeful sample of law enforcement officers who can encounter victims of sex trafficking within their routine work. The dataset collection phases focused on creating structured email survey questionnaires for the study participants, line-level law enforcement officers, and sergeants. The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (LU IRB) reviewed and approved the study before any data were collected in this research. The process of IRB approval is to guard human subjects' welfare and confirm that physical, psychological, and social risks to the participants are minimalized (Clawson, Dutch, & Cummings, 2006). Additionally, the LU IRB application checklist was used to ensure the efficiency of the IRB request. This process

ensured the dissertation chair, the dissertation reader, and I (the researcher) had completed the necessary CITI training. I then utilized the remaining checklist to ensure that the supplemental documents were in separate Word documents and were attached to the Cayuse IRB application, including the permission request letter, recruitment materials (email); consent materials (informed consent form); and instruments (survey questionnaire).

Eliciting participants for the study included a recruitment email sent to the law enforcement agencies that have the highest likelihood of encountering sex trafficking victims, based on states' data with the most human trafficking cases covered in the literature review. This included local law enforcement agencies in California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. The data gathering was completed by utilizing the survey tool SurveyMonkey®, where the responses were recorded and available for immediate retrieval. All documents, data, and information were accessed only by the researcher and kept in a secure location for a period deemed appropriate by Liberty University, IRB, or other regulations. All documentation procured during the study are kept in a secure location, accessed by the researcher, and will be destroyed after the appropriate length of time as determined. Additionally, information discovered via the use of QSR®NVivo 12 will be kept in accordance with any applicable regulations or protocols put into place by Liberty University or the IRB.

The survey instrument questions were reviewed by experts in the field, and a small study sample was conducted to ensure that the questions were easily understandable and worded clearly. The study sample also provided the opportunity to ensure that the participants received the permission and recruitment email, the survey link

was accessed properly, and the participants could complete the survey successfully. Additionally, face and content validity was established. The concept of validity was developed by Truman Lee Kelley in 1927, who stated that a test is valid if it measures what it is intended to measure (Kelley, 1927; McLeod, 2013). Face validity is a test of the internal validity of the measures (Salkind, 2010) and tests “whether the items of each domain are sensible, appropriate, and relevant to the people who use the measure on a day-to-day basis” (Connell et al., 2018, p. 1894). Furthermore, “a test has face validity if its content simply looks relevant to the person taking the test” (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 29). Content validity is defined as “the degree to which elements of an assessment instrument are relevant to a representative of the targeted construct for a particular assessment purpose” (S. Haynes et al., 1995, p. 238). Salkind (2010) explained that content validity is the extent to which the elements of a test are reasonably representative of the entire domain the test aims to measure. Ultimately, content validity considers whether a measure has incorporated all the relevant issues and excluded all of the irrelevant issues relating to its content (Bannigan & Watson, 2009).

These questions meet face validity due to being recognizable by the participant, a law enforcement officer, as these are topics related to the field of criminal justice. The questions were developed in the context of the criminal justice field and contained relevant questions pertaining to the participant's experience in law enforcement, dealing with prostitution offenses, encountering human trafficking victims, and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. These are all topics that are easily recognizable to the participant. The questions met content validity since they allowed the participant to share relevant information regarding the topics of prostitution, human sex trafficking, and

the victim-centered approach. While these questions allowed for the participant to respond without restrictions, the ability of the participant to answer the question with irrelevant information was minimal, as these questions were specific to the participant's history in law enforcement and the law enforcement officer's experience with prostitution, human sex trafficking, and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking.

Another critical component when developing survey questionnaires is to have the questions undergo a pilot study. While commonly associated with quantitative studies, pilot studies have expanded into qualitative inquiry as a way to prepare for the major study (Majid et al., 2017). Majid et al. (2017) stated that “[a] pilot study asks whether something can be done, should the researchers proceed with it, and if so, how” (p. 601). The piloting study for the developed survey questions was addressed over a multi-step process. The piloting study occurred over a period of 1 week. A total of two emails were utilized for communicating to participants about the proposed study. The first email was a permission email that was sent to the Police Chief / Sheriff of the selected law enforcement agency, seeking permission for law enforcement officers and sergeants employed by their department to have the ability to participate in the study. The second email was a recruitment email that provided information to the participant about the proposed study, eligibility, risk, compensation and invited the participant to complete the survey questionnaire. The participant was advised to contact the researcher before beginning the survey if the participant has any questions. Additionally, the participant had to acknowledge the informed consent disclosure at the beginning of the survey questionnaire before beginning the survey.

The survey questionnaire was sent to selected survey participants for the pilot study, and those participants were excluded from the main study population. The participants completed the survey in its entirety through the SurveyMonkey® platform. I reviewed the entire process to ensure that the relevant emails were sent to the participant and received, that the survey was easily accessed and completed by the participant, and that the results were recorded correctly within the SurveyMonkey® system. The data provided by these survey questionnaires were exported from SurveyMonkey® and imported to QSR®NVivo 12. The data were analyzed by QSR®NVivo 12 using thematic analysis and word clusters to ensure the data has been correctly transferred from SurveyMonkey® to QSR®NVivo 12.

The Researcher's Role

My role as the researcher in this study was multi-faceted. The role included developing, administering, and analyzing the data and survey results collected and provided by the participants, who were law enforcement officers who may encounter potential victims of sex trafficking. I was sensitive to the participants' lived experiences and, to avoid misconceptions, maintained the view that I did not know their individual experiences. The participants were recruited to participate in the study from law enforcement agencies in California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. No participant had a direct relationship with me representing a conflict of interest, such as a reporting relationship or any relationship with me that may have conveyed bias in the research study. I held no bias, assumptions, or perceptions of the research topic that would influence how I viewed the data or how I conducted the data analysis. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, a Master of Science in

Criminal Justice, and an Executive Certificate in Criminal Justice, with all three conferred by Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I had been trained in the skills necessary to carry out the assigned study, as I had significant experience building survey questionnaires in both the public and private sectors. I also had significant experience cleansing, coding, and analyzing data in multiple disciplines and experience with QSR®NVivo 12.

Data Collection

The data collection was conducted through structured email survey questionnaires; participants were anonymous, as this study only focuses on the law enforcement officer's perceptions. The survey responses were analyzed through content analysis to identify themes that arose. The qualitative analysis software program QSR®NVivo 12 was utilized for thematic analysis. This program is a text analysis tool to help identify themes within the survey transcripts. Data analysis is conducted by coding and sorting the data and coupling it with a word frequency feature to identify common themes and most frequently recurring word-meaning clusters, such as words and phrases, within the survey data (Pina et al., 2019). The use of QSR®NVivo 12 software helps to improve the accuracy of qualitative studies (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Zamawe, 2015).

Survey Questionnaires

Collecting research data through more traditional approaches such as in-person, telephone, or mail can be time-consuming and costly (Regmi et al., 2017). To facilitate data collection for this study, structured email survey questionnaires were utilized. This strategy can collect large amounts of data from participants quickly, allows rapid development, and provides an environment in which there are minimal errors since the

need for manual data entry is eliminated in contrast to other methods, such as telephone or mail surveys (Maymone et al., 2018; Regmi et al., 2017). The surveys were sent to participants through SurveyMonkey®, an online questionnaire tool and one of the most popular online platforms for facilitating data collection through questionnaires.

SurveyMonkey® has numerous benefits, including its ease of use, advanced data analysis capabilities, and the capability to export data to other analysis programs such as QSR®NVivo 12.

Standardized Structured Survey Questions

Demographic Data

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your race or ethnicity?
3. What is your age?
4. In which state are you located?
5. Current Job Title
6. Do you enforce laws relating to prostitution or human trafficking?

Participant Data

7. For how many years have you been in law enforcement?
8. For how many years have you worked for the department where you are currently employed?
9. During what year did you attend the law enforcement academy?
10. Did the academy curriculum cover any training related to prostitution? If so, please elaborate.

11. Did the academy curriculum cover any training related to human sex trafficking?

If so, please elaborate.

12. Have you had supplemental training (outside of the law enforcement academy) on human trafficking or prostitution? If so, please elaborate.

13. Have you had supplemental training (outside of the law enforcement academy) on the victim-centered approach to human trafficking? If so, please elaborate.

Police/Sheriff Department Questions

14. What is your current role in the department?

15. Do you have experience working prostitution cases? If so, please elaborate.

16. Do you have experience working human sex trafficking cases? If so, please elaborate.

17. Does your department have a unit designated for combating human trafficking?

18. Does your department have an officer designated for human trafficking-related matters?

Prostitution Questions

19. How would you define prostitution?

20. Have you noticed any commonalities among the individuals that have been arrested for prostitution? If so, please elaborate.

21. Are these individuals hesitant to speak with law enforcement?

22. Do you believe that prostitutes are victims of sex trafficking, or do you believe these individuals are conducting prostitution willingly?

Human Sex Trafficking Questions

23. How would you define human sex trafficking?

24. Have you noticed any commonalities among victims of sex trafficking?
25. Are these individuals hesitant to speak with law enforcement?
26. Can you explain how a human sex trafficking investigation in your jurisdiction normally begins?
27. Can you explain the department procedure when coming into contact with a human sex trafficking victim?
28. What barriers do you face when investigating a human sex trafficking case?
29. Research indicates that human sex trafficking victims are under-identified; do you believe that sex trafficking victims are under-identified?
30. What do you believe are some contributing factors that create an environment for human sex trafficking?
31. What do you think is necessary to eliminate human sex trafficking? (For example, stricter penalties, stronger collaboration among agencies, educational campaigns, etc.)

Victim-Centered Approach Questions

32. How would you define the victim-centered approach to human trafficking?
33. Do you believe the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should be applied to prostitutes?
34. The research indicates that some police officers view prostitutes as criminal offenders, while others view them as victims. Please explain your viewpoint and how you perceive these individuals?
35. What suggestions would you provide to better identify victims of sex trafficking?

36. Do you believe the victim-centered approach has helped improve the victim's relationship with law enforcement and the criminal justice system?

Demographic information in research surveys is collected for two reasons: determining the identity and accurately describing the survey sample (J. Hughes et al., 2016). Questions 1–6 were demographic questions designed to establish pertinent information about the participant as well as ensure the participant met the selection criteria for the study. Collecting basic demographic data such as gender, race, age, and location of the participant provides important data to provide a foundation for the study. Demographic questions allow researchers to collect background information about their participants, provide perspective for the survey data collected, describe their participants, and analyze the data more efficiently (Allen, 2017).

Questions 7–9 continued to gather information about the participant, including how long the individual has been in law enforcement, how long the participant has been employed with their current law enforcement agency, and the year they attended the law enforcement academy. These questions allowed me to establish the participant's relative experience in law enforcement while establishing when the participant attended the law enforcement academy. Additionally, establishing the year the participant attended the law enforcement academy provided data on the training curriculum that was in place during that time. Generally, a law enforcement officer with more experience in the field has a greater likelihood of providing more in-depth details of his or her experience dealing with the populations that this dissertation aimed to study.

Questions 10 and 11 established whether the participant was provided training on prostitution and human sex trafficking when he or she attended the law enforcement

academy. These questions helped build upon the previous research conducted by Clawson, Dutch, and Cummings (2006) that established that a barrier to identification and response to trafficking cases was partially due to a lack of training. These questions provide data on when the participant attended the law enforcement academy and if training on these topics has been incorporated into the law enforcement academy curriculum.

Questions 12 and 13 established whether the respondent had participated in any training relating to prostitution, human sex trafficking, or the victim-centered approach to human trafficking outside of any training provided by the law enforcement academy. Previous research indicates that law enforcement officers have been identified as critical resources in anti-human trafficking efforts. A study conducted by Mapp et al. (2016) found that only 17% of law enforcement officers received training on human trafficking, and most relied on the media for information. Training from official sources is needed to help provide a knowledge base for law enforcement officers to build upon to reduce the knowledge gap. These questions provided needed data about whether the participant had attended supplemental training on prostitution, human trafficking, or the victim-centered approach to human trafficking and helped build upon previous research.

Question 14 provided the participant the ability to describe his or her current role within the department. As noted above, this survey was meant to be completed by line-level law enforcement officers; this question confirmed that the individual completing the survey was the one that the survey intended to sample.

Question 15 sought to establish whether the participant had experience conducting prostitution cases; this question sought the participant's perspective on his or her

experience relating to prostitution cases. This question also built trustworthiness with the data to ensure that the selected participants had experience relevant to the study.

Question 16 sought to establish whether the participant had experience conducting human trafficking cases; this question sought the participant's perspective on his or her experience relating to human trafficking cases. This question also built trustworthiness with the data to ensure that the participants selected had experience relevant to the study.

Questions 17 and 18 aimed to establish whether the participant's current law enforcement agency had a designated human trafficking unit or a specific law enforcement officer designated to handle human trafficking-related matters. Previous research conducted by Farrell et al. (2008) found that only 4% of local, county, or state law enforcement agencies surveyed nationwide had designated personnel or a specialized unit in place and that agencies without these programs in place are significantly less prepared to combat human trafficking than agencies that do have them in place. These questions helped to further the research to determine whether agencies have incorporated specialized units or designated personnel within their department to combat human trafficking.

Question 19 sought to have the participant define prostitution in his or her own words. The provided definition to this question was compared to Question 23 to determine whether the participant has similar prostitution and human sex trafficking definitions.

Question 20 sought to understand whether there are commonalities among the prostitutes that the participant may have encountered or arrested. This question allowed me to determine whether there are common understandings among law enforcement

officers from different jurisdictions, understandings that can be further evaluated in future studies, which may help guide law enforcement training or procedure dealing with prostitutes.

Question 21 sought to understand from the participant whether the individuals who are suspected of prostitution are hesitant to speak with law enforcement. Previous research has indicated that women involved in prostitution are typically reluctant to speak to law enforcement for various reasons, including negative experiences with law enforcement abuse, trauma bonding, and Stockholm Syndrome (Graham et al., 1994; Lloyd, 2011; Shively et al., 2012; Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). This question helped to understand whether this is still the case.

Question 22 sought to understand from the participants whether they believed that a prostitute is a victim of human sex trafficking or they believed that these individuals are conducting prostitution willingly. Victim identification research suggests that if law enforcement is faced with what they consider to be a bad victim—an individual who does not resemble the preconceived image of a victim of human trafficking, law enforcement is reluctant to treat him or her as a victim at all (Austin & Farrell, 2017). The participant's perceptions of this topic can help provide data on how the cognitive dissonance of the participant influences the officer's efforts at victim identification in terms of prostitution and human sex trafficking.

Question 23 sought to have the participant define human sex trafficking in his or her own words. The provided definition to this question was compared to Question 19 to determine whether the participant has similar definitions of human sex trafficking and prostitution.

Question 24 sought to understand whether the participant had noticed any commonalities between individuals who have been identified as victims of human sex trafficking. This question allowed me to determine whether there are common traits among law enforcement officers from different jurisdictions that can be further evaluated in future studies. The data may help guide law enforcement training or procedure on common traits among victims of human sex trafficking.

Question 25 sought to understand whether the individuals identified as human sex trafficking victims are hesitant to speak with or cooperate with law enforcement. Previous research conducted by Farrell et al. (2008) has indicated that the relationship between human sex trafficking victims and law enforcement is often strained. The data gathered by this question could help to shape future research or curriculum dealing with human sex trafficking victims to form a more cooperative relationship.

Questions 26 and 27 sought to understand how a human trafficking investigation begins in the participant's department and the departmental procedure when dealing with a victim of human sex trafficking. This question sought to gather data and information from several levels. This includes information on how the investigation begins, through methods such as general public tips or comments, social service agencies, or through the victim identification efforts of the law enforcement officer. The questions also sought to establish whether there are specialized procedures (such as incorporating a victim-centered approach) that are followed when encountering a victim of human sex trafficking.

Question 28 sought to understand what barriers the participant encounters when conducting human sex trafficking investigations. This question allowed the participant to

provide his or her perceptions of what makes the human trafficking investigation more difficult based on individual experience and allowed me to determine whether there are commonalities among law enforcement agencies.

Question 29 sought to understand from the perception of the participant why sex trafficking victims are under-identified. One part of the research goal of this dissertation was to answer how law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims can be utilized to better identify victims. This question allowed the participant to provide his or her viewpoint about why these victims are under-identified. This question provided data that could be analyzed along with the other participant study responses to help determine commonalities among departments that could help put these law enforcement officers' perceptions into meaningful action by changing departmental policy and local, state, and federal legislation.

Question 30 allowed the participant to provide his or her perception of what factors may lead to an environment in which human trafficking can develop. The ability to gather this data from the participant's perspective can help shape future change through policy or legislation to alleviate or eliminate those factors.

Question 31 sought to understand from the participant's perspective what is needed to eliminate human sex trafficking. This question provided data that can help determine commonalities among participants about what is needed to eliminate human sex trafficking. The data provided could help shape future research or other methods of change, including legislation or policy.

Question 32 sought to understand the participant's definition of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. This question provided data on commonalities or

differences among each participant's definition and may help shape future research by suggesting that a more uniform definition is needed.

Question 33 sought to understand the participant's perception of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking and whether it should be used in all encounters that the participant has with a suspected prostitute. Previous research conducted by Austin and Farrell (2017) indicated that many law enforcement officers are hesitant to treat prostitutes as victims if they do not meet a preconceived image of a human trafficking victim.

Question 34 sought to understand from the participant whether he or she views prostitutes as criminals or victims. Research has suggested that law enforcement officers have differing viewpoints on this topic. The question collected data from the participant on this matter, which can provide needed insight into other questions in this questionnaire, most notably Questions 19 and 20, as the viewpoint presented in this question may have an effect on why the participant responded to previous questions in the way he or she did.

Question 35 sought to gather data from the participant's perspective on what suggestions or improvements are needed to better identify victims of sex trafficking. This question sought to understand what the officers believe is needed to identify victims from the law enforcement perspective more consistently and help provide a foundation for future research on commonalities observed from the participants.

Question 36 sought to understand the participants' perceptions of the victim-centered approach and their thoughts about whether this approach has improved the victim-law enforcement relationship. The data gathered from this question may help

guide future research or provide a foundation to revise the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. The data can also be utilized to further develop the victim-centered approach to human trafficking to be more cohesive with law enforcement operations in the field.

Data Analysis

During this phase, the researcher plays a critical and instrumental role in the data analysis. This includes making decisions about coding and theming, as well as isolating and reassessing the data (Nowell et al., 2017; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The advent of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), which can be used as an aid to the data analysis process in qualitative research, has helped to make qualitative research more robust (Dalkin et al., 2021). There are several CAQDAS programs that can be used to analyze qualitative data. The tool known as NUD*IST Vivo (NVivo), also known as, QSR®NVivo 12, was utilized for this study. NVivo is a software developed by QSR International for qualitative data analysis. The software allows researchers to store, query, and manage data but also has the capability to analyze unstructured data such as images, audio, social media, email, and video (QSR International, n.d.-c). The software has been utilized in several studies in various disciplines, including criminal justice, to analyze survey data (Fields, 2019; Gibbs et al., 2012). The data provided by the survey questionnaires were analyzed through this program.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research, and a rigorous approach to this analysis can produce trustworthy and insightful findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has several advantages, including the ability to be considerably

flexible in diverse types of studies. This type of analysis does not require detailed theoretical knowledge, unlike other qualitative approaches, and it is easily understood and quick to learn (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Clarke and Braun (2014) define thematic analysis as a “method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data” (p. 283). The use of thematic analysis allowed me to capture the law enforcement officer’s perceptions and experience with prostitutes, human sex trafficking victims, the victim-centered approach, and help to identify common themes among the study participants. Ultimately the aim was to help provide recommendations for improving the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking.

Nodes and Codes

Nodes are containers for coding that represent themes or topics. Nodes are an NVivo term for what is more commonly referred to in research as codes (Houghton et al., 2017). Nodes are meant to represent the variables that researchers are interested in relating to their particular study. QSR®NVivo 12 incorporates different types of nodes, such as free nodes, tree nodes, case nodes, relationship nodes, and matrices, that help provide flexibility for the researcher to use each node as it best relates to the particular study (Ishak & Bakar, 2012). Wong (2008) explained that “[n]odes created in NVivo are equivalent to sticky notes that the researcher places on the document to indicate that a particular passage belongs to a certain theme or topic” (p. 17). The nodes in QSR®NVivo 12 are easily retrievable, simple to organize, and provide flexibility to the researcher to create, erase, modify, browse, or amalgamate nodes at any phase in the data analysis process (Wong, 2008). Tree nodes, which are organized in a hierarchical structure, and

free nodes, which are free-standing and not associated with a structured framework of themes or concepts, are the two most common types of nodes (Wong, 2008). This study primarily utilized free and tree nodes during data analysis.

Within QSR®NVivo 12, the terms “code” and “node” are often used interchangeably (QSR International, n.d.-a). This study utilized an inductive coding approach when conducting the coding step in the data analysis process. The inductive approach to coding means that I attached codes to data units as I analyzed the data files. Within QSR®NVivo 12, the coding process was completed in the document browser of the software platform. Wong (2008) explained that coding includes “the desegregation of textual data into segments, examining the data similarities and differences, and grouping together conceptually similar data in the respective nodes. Coding or categorizing the data is the most important stage in the qualitative data analysis process” (p. 17). While coding is crucial in qualitative data analysis, coding and data analysis are not the same. Essentially, coding subdivides a large amount of raw data and assigns the data to a particular category to be analyzed further. On a basic level, codes are labels for marking identified themes from the data accumulated in the study. In this study, the data were be coded and then analyzed through word frequency query, word tree query, text search query, and a cluster analysis diagram. Word frequency queries allow researchers to investigate which words are used most in their dataset and are used to identify possible themes. This feature also allows researchers to analyze frequently used words within a particular demographic. Another method to visualize the data is through the use of a word tree query. The word tree is interactive in QSR®NVivo 12, allowing researchers to analyze data efficiently. A word tree was created by running a text search query and

showing a visual representation of words that occur in the data (S. Davis et al., 2016). Hai-Jew (2020) explained that in a word tree, “the lead-up words to a target term (or its stemmed forms or its synonyms) and the lead-away words are shown” (para. 16). The results of a word tree can be saved as a node for further review.

Cluster analysis is an investigative method that the researcher can implement to visualize patterns in the data by grouping nodes or sources by word similarity, coding similarity, or attribute value similarity (QSR International, n.d.-b). Word similarity compares the words contained within the selected files or nodes that are being compared; coding similarity compares the coding within the selected files or nodes that are being compared, and attribute value similarity compares the attribute values within the selected files or nodes that are being compared (QSR International, n.d.-b). Cluster analysis diagrams provide a graphical representation of the sources or nodes so the researcher may note similarities and differences quickly. The sources or nodes in the cluster analysis diagram that are closer together are more similar than those that are further apart (QSR International, n.d.-b).

Trustworthiness

High-quality qualitative research is built on a foundation based on the trustworthiness of the results (Birt et al., 2016). As proposed by Guba (1981), trustworthiness addresses the four criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability that are important in establishing trustworthiness within a study. These criteria have been widely accepted by qualitative researchers (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness is concerned with the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods applied to ensure the study is of the highest quality (Connelly, 2016; Polit &

Beck, 2014). Cypress (2017) stated that trustworthiness “relates to the degree of trust, or confidence, readers have in results” and to “ensure one has carried out the research process correctly” (p. 254). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is closely related to rigor (Morse et al., 2002). Morse et al. (2002) stated that “without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility” (p. 14). Trustworthiness can be achieved through methods such as triangulation, thick description, and direct quotation, to name a few. Shenton (2004) explained that triangulation can involve using a widespread range of participants, and by utilizing this form of triangulation, it allows for individual viewpoints and experiences to be verified against other participants. This type of triangulation allows for a thick and rich description of the individual viewpoints and experiences that may be discovered based on the contributions of these participants (Shenton, 2004).

Site triangulation can be achieved by incorporating participants from several organizations, therefore, reducing the effect of the study to local factors specific to one organization. If comparable results develop across different organizations, the findings may have greater credibility (Shenton, 2004). Relative to this study, site triangulation was achieved by surveying law enforcement officers from various states that represented varying geographical locations across the United States. The ability to survey these law enforcement officers from these varying geographical locations helped show credibility and confirmability through site triangulation. It also helped provide the study with a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of the law enforcement officers throughout the country instead of one state in particular. Thick description can be achieved by describing the phenomenon in sufficient detail in which an individual can

begin to assess the extent to which the conclusions are put into context and transferable to other settings or situations (Holloway, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986). While thick description is most notably utilized in ethnography and biography, it can be used across many disciplines and inquiry approaches, including phenomenology (Ponterotto, 2006). Direct quotations can help further establish trustworthiness. The use of quotations has the ability to bring content to life (White et al., 2014). According to Eldh et al. (2020), “while certain procedures, such as member checking or triangulation, have been proposed, a purposeful application of quotations may further illustrate and thus accredit a qualitative analysis and/or illuminate the findings in qualitative studies” (p. 5). Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that “qualitative researchers routinely employ member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, and external audits” (p. 124). This study utilized the methods of direct quotation of the participants, thick description, and site triangulation to establish trustworthiness.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that ensuring credibility is one of the most imperative elements in establishing trustworthiness. Credibility is about providing assurance between the reality that the participant presented and the researcher’s ability to re-construct and adequately represent the presented reality (Eldh et al., 2020; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Korstjens and Moser (2018) described establishing credibility as ensuring that “the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views” (p. 121). Credibility is similar to internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with the truth-value characteristic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). K. E. Burns and Kho (2015)

recommended that significant testing and design, a high response rate, and proper interpretation and reporting of the data analysis enrich the credibility and trustworthiness of survey findings. Sandelowski (1993) suggested that in order to further ensure credibility, additional measures should be incorporated, notably by demonstrating clarity within the thought process during the data analysis and interpretation phase. This thought process ensured that any personal bias that may have influenced the findings of the study was accounted for (Morse et al., 2002); thorough record-keeping and a clear audit trail were established to show that the interpretations of the data were consistent, transparent, and represented accurately (Long & Johnson, 2000).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability focuses on the process used to conduct the study and ensures that the audit trail can be followed (Eldh et al., 2020). Korstjens and Moser (2018) describe this process as “transparently describing the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of the findings. The records of the research path are kept throughout the study” (p. 121). Dependability incorporates the aspect of consistency, ensuring that the analysis process is in agreement with recognized standards of a particular design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability incorporates the aspect of neutrality, that other researchers could confirm the findings of the research study and that the interpretation of the data is clearly derived from the data and not the researcher’s own viewpoints or preferences (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) additionally described confirmability more directly by stating that “the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not

necessarily to gain the same results” (p. 71). Dependability and confirmability were achieved by ensuring that research procedures were documented accurately and appropriately, allowing someone outside the research to comprehend and follow the research and have the ability to audit and critique the research process. Dependability allows for other researchers to replicate the study as they see fit.

Transferability

Transferability, similar to generalizability or external validity, is a process that relies on the reasoning that findings can be generalized or applied to other contexts, settings, groups, or from case to case (Elo et al., 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Based on the contextual nature of qualitative research, transferability of the results to other scenarios must be given thorough consideration (Kuper et al., 2008). S. Johnson and Rasulova (2016) stated that “to achieve this criterion, the researcher needs to provide detailed descriptive information” (p. 24). Incorporating thorough, rich descriptions contributed to the study's transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability has also been described by Shenton (2004) as the “provision of background data to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made” (p. 73). The study’s transferability will be achieved by providing a detailed context of the research, giving other future researchers the necessary information to determine whether the findings and methods used are applicable to their study. Additionally, transferability was achieved by using the purposive sampling method and providing substantial narratives and direct quotations through law enforcement officers' detailed and accurate perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. In this study, the

recruitment of participants and data collection continued until data saturation was achieved.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are inherent in any form of research (Orb et al., 2000). In qualitative research, some challenges that the researcher encounters include the researcher–participant relationship, minimizing the risk of harm, ensuring informed consent, as well as anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality, avoiding deceptive practices, and data storage and management (Sanjari et al., 2014). For this study, I obtained authorization from Liberty University’s IRB to conduct the research and ensured that the study met all ethical requirements. According to Mortense and Kirsch (1996), three factors are needed to protect the participants of a study: the participants’ wellbeing must be upheld, the participants must be informed and aware of all risks related to the study, and the study must have a well-maintained sense of balance between risk and reward. The required institutional permission was obtained to interact with the participants, and their well-being was maintained throughout the course of the study.

The purpose of the study, participant eligibility, and information regarding the informed consent process were disclosed to the participants through the recruitment email (Appendix A) and included the survey link if the participant chose to complete the survey. A permission email (Appendix B) was sent to the Police Chief or Sheriff of the law enforcement agency seeking permission for law enforcement officers or sergeants employed by their agency to participate in the study. The recruitment email (Appendix A) was attached to the permission email (Appendix B) so that the Police Chief/Sheriff could easily forward the recruitment email to law enforcement officers and sergeants who were

willing to participate. Before participating in the study, participants chosen for the study were provided an informed consent form (Appendix C) that outlined their rights as participants at the beginning of the survey. The participants selected in the survey whether they agreed or disagreed with the consent form. A selection of “agree” allowed the participant to move forward to the beginning of the survey. A selection of “disagree” caused them to exit the survey, and the participant was not able to complete the survey. At the beginning of the survey questionnaire, the purpose of the study was restated, and the participant was invited to pause the survey to ask any questions before beginning. The participant could choose not to complete the survey at any time throughout the survey and be provided an opportunity at the end of the survey to review his or her responses to the questions before submission of the survey.

To ensure the anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants and their data, identifying information such as names, law enforcement agencies, location information, and other documentation was kept confidential. The participants' survey answers were sent directly to SurveyMonkey®, where data were stored in a password-protected electronic format. SurveyMonkey® does not collect identifying information such as participant name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, the participant responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify the participant or his or her answers, and no one will know whether the participant completed or chose not to participate in the study. I accessed only the survey information supplied. Any hard copy documents, such as research or coding notes, were kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. No other individuals had access to the computer where the data are stored. The documents and survey results procured during the study will be kept on file to meet

IRB guidelines and discarded after 3 years. Based on a purposive sampling method, the study participants were chosen from the states of California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. The researcher did not have a direct working relationship with the participants. There was no conflict of interest present with any participants and no known bias on my part.

Summary

This chapter covered the research design: a qualitative hermeneutical phenomenology approach. Chapter 3 also described my role as the researcher, the research setting, how the participants were chosen, the procedures used to recruit the participants, and the data collection method through structured survey questionnaires. An overview of the survey questions was reviewed. This review included a detailed explanation for each question regarding the basis of the question and the reasoning for asking the question, which established face and content validity. I also discussed the data analysis plan, including a thorough explanation of the data analysis software utilized to analyze the survey data. The trustworthiness factors were covered, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, including the importance of developing a credible study and one in which the results could be transferred. Ethical concerns were also covered to ensure that the study was conducted to the highest ethical and moral standards.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore law enforcement officers' perceptions of two dimensions of human sex trafficking, the under-identification of victims and the utility of the victim-centered approach to trafficking, to determine how their insights could be used to identify victims more successfully. Narrative data were collected via online questionnaires. Respondents were 14 law enforcement officers located in California, Florida, Ohio, New York, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Analysis was a hermeneutic phenomenology. Officers were both male and female. Thus, supplementary analysis was also undertaken to determine whether there were systematic gender differences between male and female officers. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?

RQ2: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?

In this chapter, the results of qualitative analysis are presented by research question, expanded by thematic interpretation, and organized into five main sections. The first section, Participants, describes the processes of recruitment and selection of the final sample. The second and longest section, Results, is subdivided into four main parts (Part 1 is Theme Development and Explanation; Part 2 is Demographics; Part 3 is composed of research question responses providing the Results for RQ1, and Part 4 is composed of

research question responses providing the Results for RQ2). The chapter ends with a summary.

Participants

This section describes the processes of recruitment and selection of the final sample.

Recruitment

Data collection began in September 2021 and consisted of email solicitation of sheriff and police departments in seven states (California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia). Table 1 lists the websites that were perused to find the necessary contact information. For each state, each department's contact information was organized into an Excel spreadsheet to ensure organization and efficiency when sending emails. The reasoning for the selection of these seven states is multi-faceted. First, these states provided the best ability to gather data from law enforcement agencies that are both in highly populated and rural areas, allowing for differing perspectives and providing the opportunity for a larger population sample to be collected. Second, research has suggested that these states have some of the highest human trafficking cases reported in the United States (Bejinariu, 2019; National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2021).

California

An inclusive list of California police and sheriff departments was located through the State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training website (Table 1). However, this list only provided a comprehensive list of each department and not each department's email address. The email addresses were located by visiting each

department's website individually and searching for an email address for the police chief or sheriff of the department.

Florida

A comprehensive agency list was located for both police and sheriff departments in Florida through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement website (Table 1). The latter two lists provided the contact information and email address for both the police and sheriff departments.

New York

A comprehensive list for New York was located on the website of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (Table 1). The contact information for each department was listed but did not include an email address. The email addresses were located by reviewing each department's website individually, if one was available, to search for an email address for the police chief or the sheriff.

New York was one of the more challenging states to locate an email address for the police chief or sheriff in other ways as well. In many instances, the email contact information was not listed on the department's website. The lack of email information was most common with the smaller, rural township and village police departments with minimal law enforcement staff. However, the lack of email contact information was also noted for larger departments such as New York City, Buffalo, and Rochester, in which the email addresses of high-ranking officials, such as the police chief and sheriff, do not appear to be publicly available.

Ohio

The contact information for each department and the email addresses of the police chief and sheriff of law enforcement agencies in Ohio were located through the website of the Ohio Attorney General (Table 1).

South Carolina

Similar to Ohio, a comprehensive list of police and sheriff departments in South Carolina was found through the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy (Table 1).

Texas

A comprehensive list was located for sheriff departments in Texas through the Sheriff's Association of Texas website, which contained the contact information and email address for each sheriff (Table 1). A comprehensive list was unavailable for police departments in Texas. A list was compiled using the Law Enforcement Directory Search on the Police1 website. This directory was utilized to compile a list of the police departments in Texas. Then, each department website was reviewed individually to search for the email address of the police chief for that department.

Similar to New York, information for contacting the police departments in Texas was unavailable in many cases. The lack of email information was most common in small rural towns where there was minimal staff. However, the lack of ready contact information also characterized larger departments, including Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth. The email addresses of high-ranking officials, such as police chiefs, do not appear to be publicly available.

Virginia

Both Virginia police and sheriff's departments' contact information, including email addresses, was located through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services website (Table 1).

Table 1

Websites Perused to Find Contact Information

State	Contact Source
California	State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training website https://post.ca.gov/le-agencies
Florida	Florida Department of Law Enforcement website http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/ Police departments https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/CJSTC/Documents/Agency-Addresses/Police-Department-Directory.aspx Sheriff departments https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/CJSTC/Documents/Agency-Addresses/Sheriff-s-Office-Directory.aspx
New York	New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/agdir/index.html
Ohio	Ohio Attorney General website https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Law-Enforcement/Law-Enforcement-Directory
South Carolina	South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy website https://sccja.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/SCCJA/General%20Info/AGENCY%20HEAD%20DIRECTORY-2020-03.pdf
Texas	Sheriff's Association of Texas website https://www.sheriffstx.org/plugins/show_image.php?id=1485 Law Enforcement Directory Search on the Police1 website https://www.police1.com/law-enforcement-directory/search/texas/
Virginia	Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services website https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/law-enforcement/programs/criminal-justice-directory

After email addresses for each department in each state were located, a permission email was sent to the police chief or sheriff of each, asking for their

department's participation in this study by completing the anonymous survey questionnaire (See Appendix A). The permission email contained a participation letter as an attachment (See Appendix B) and the police chief or sheriff was instructed to forward the email to their department if they chose to allow their department to participate.

A total of 3,462 individual emails were sent to police chiefs and sheriffs in California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia for subtotals of 2,450 police departments and 1,012 sheriff departments. Table 2 provides a breakdown to show the level of effort invested in soliciting respondents for this study by individual state. The emails were only sent to law enforcement agencies for the city, town, village, or county in which they were the primary law enforcement agency. Excluded agencies included university and college police departments, airport police, hospital or medical center police, and park police.

A total of 221 agencies were excluded from the comprehensive lists for each state located through publicly available methods. The lists compiled manually for the states without a publicly available comprehensive directory did not include the excluded agencies. The reasoning for excluding the listed agencies was due to this study focusing on law enforcement personnel who have the highest likelihood of encountering a victim of human sex trafficking during the course of their routine shift or patrol within the locality or jurisdiction the officer is assigned. In most cases, law enforcement personnel employed by one of the excluded agencies typically patrol a specific area (i.e., airport, hospital, or college/university) and do not typically conduct a routine patrol outside of their assigned jurisdiction, compared to law enforcement personnel that are employed by a city, town, village, or county police department or sheriff's office that have a

significantly larger area to patrol, thus, increasing the chances of encountering a victim of human sex trafficking. One sheriff's department in South Carolina was excluded due to a conflict of interest due to a dissertation committee member being employed by that agency.

The permission email (see Appendix B) also advised the police chief or sheriff to reply to the email if they chose to allow their department to participate. Of the total number of emails sent, 29 police departments and five sheriff departments replied to the permission email advising that they would allow their department to participate and had forwarded the email to their staff (34 participating agencies).

Eight emails were received advising that their department would not participate. Agencies unable to participate cited a variety of reasons. Numerous law enforcement agencies advised that they did not have a problem with human sex trafficking in their jurisdiction. For example, a Florida law enforcement agency head stated, "We are a very small agency that does not deal with human trafficking-related issues very often." A similar response was received by another Florida law enforcement agency head who stated:

Our crime rate is extremely low for the population we do serve, and we have not made a prostitution arrest in over 6 years. We are a bedroom community with little to no commercial or industrial areas, no bars, no restaurants. We are not impacted by human trafficking as you would find in larger communities.

Similar replies were obtained for agencies in other states. For example, a California law enforcement agency head stated:

Our officers work in a very affluent town where prostitution and human trafficking does not happen in the open and is rarely investigated on its own. I spent many years working human trafficking and prostitution cases, so I know our officers are very limited in their knowledge of these investigations.

Another California law enforcement agency also indicated, “We are fortunately a department that does not encounter sex/human trafficking in our jurisdiction.” A similar response was received from a New York law enforcement agency head who stated, “We do not encounter sex-trafficking victims.”

Other reasons for non-participation included competing requests to participate in numerous studies. For example, a California department head advised:

While we emphatically support higher education and the topic of your project, we cannot participate in your study. As you can imagine, we receive numerous requests annually to participate in studies and research. To participate in all of them would be untenable. Therefore, as a matter of policy, we do not participate in external studies.

Several departments replied that they could not participate without giving reasons why. Two emails were received advising that the department could not participate due to current duties and 179 emails were considered failed due to receiving a non-delivery receipt message.

Table 2*Total Number of Emails Sent to Police Departments and Sheriff Offices*

State	Emails Sent to Police Departments	Emails Sent to Sheriff Departments
California	137 police departments	377 sheriff departments
Florida	243 police departments	67 sheriff departments
New York	363 police departments	58 sheriff departments
Ohio	746 police departments	88 sheriff departments
South Carolina	192 police departments	45 sheriff departments
Texas	599 police departments	254 sheriff departments
Virginia	170 police departments	123 sheriff departments
Totals	2,450	1,012

Final Sample Selection

This study aimed to understand law enforcement officers' perceptions of two topics, the under-identification of trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human sex trafficking, to improve the identification of trafficking victims. Therefore, respondents were line-level (i.e., patrol officers) or 2nd-line supervisors (sergeant or the equivalent for that law enforcement agency, i.e., senior officer or master police officer).

A total of 293 officers opened the survey. The demographics of the entire sample are listed in Appendix F. The entire sample of 293 respondents was examined to identify those who had the experience with prostitution and human sex trafficking that was directly pertinent to this study. With respect to experience working prostitution cases (Survey Question 15), only 41% of the 145 responses received for this question had the necessary experience, compared to 59% who did not. Similarly, when the entire sample of 293 respondents was examined to identify respondents who had experience working human sex trafficking cases (Survey Question 16), only 30% of the 145 responses

received for this question had the necessary experience, compared to 70% who did not. These statistics showed that not all of the respondents had the experience with prostitution and human sex trafficking that qualified them to participate in this study.

To ensure that only respondents with the necessary experience were included in the analysis, the decision was made to identify qualifying respondents based on their answers to six qualifying survey questions (see Appendix D for the survey questionnaire). Cases who answered “no” to all of the following 6 qualifying questions were eliminated from analysis because they lacked the experience that qualified them to participate.

The first two qualifying survey questions identified respondents who lacked experience with the two fundamental phenomena of interest in this study. Specifically, all respondents who answered “no” to Survey Question 15 (“Do you have experience working prostitution cases?”) and to Survey Question 16 (“Do you have experience working human sex trafficking cases?”) were eliminated from analysis. The third qualifying question identified cases who did not enforce violations pertinent to this study (Survey Question 6: “Do you enforce laws relating to prostitution or human trafficking?”).

The final three qualifying survey questions identified respondents who lacked sufficient experience with the other fundamental phenomena of interest in this study. The fourth qualifying question was Survey Question 22, “Do you believe that prostitutes are victims of sex trafficking, or do you believe these individuals are conducting prostitution willingly?” Cases who provided the single answer “yes” or “no” to Survey Question 22 without providing further explanations were eliminated because Survey Question 22 was

the combination of two questions. Therefore, it was unclear whether the single answer referred to prostitutes as trafficking victims or to prostitutes who provided sexual services voluntarily. The fifth qualifying question was Question 29, “Research indicates that human sex trafficking victims are under-identified. Do you believe that sex trafficking victims are under-identified?” The sixth qualifying question was Survey Question 34, “Research indicates that some police officers view prostitutes as criminal offenders, while others view them as victims. Please explain your viewpoint and how you perceive these individuals.”

After examining all of the cases, seven Caucasian men and seven Caucasian women were identified who answered yes to all six of the above qualifying questions and who also provided responses to all or most of the remaining survey questions. They were chosen as a homogenous sample of law enforcement officers and could be used to examine gender differences in views of vice. Each officer was identified by arbitrary pseudonyms: Officer M1 through Officer M7 referred to male respondents (indicated by M). Officer F8 through Officer F14 referred to female respondents (indicated by F).

Results

This section is subdivided into four main parts. Part 1 describes Theme Development and Explanation. It summarizes the emergent themes with a thematic schematic. Part 2 is Demographics. Part 3 is composed of research question responses providing the results for RQ1. Part 4 is composed of research question responses providing the results for RQ2.

Theme Development and Explanation

The data were collected with a questionnaire of open-ended questions (see Appendix D). Data were analyzed using qualitative content and thematic analysis to search for the most significant patterns from the collective perceptions of the respondents. The analytical process in this hermeneutic phenomenology was primarily based on two iterative steps. The first step involved manual coding of the narrative data to identify open codes and axial clusters of associated codes, following Saldaña (2013). The second step involved transferring coded data into QSR®NVivo 12 qualitative software to organize the codes, inspect them for meaning, and generate the themes. This additional step provided an added layer of analysis to confirm and ensure that the manually coded data were accurately analyzed to ensure the most robust data analysis possible.

Overarching Theme: Succinct Pragmatism

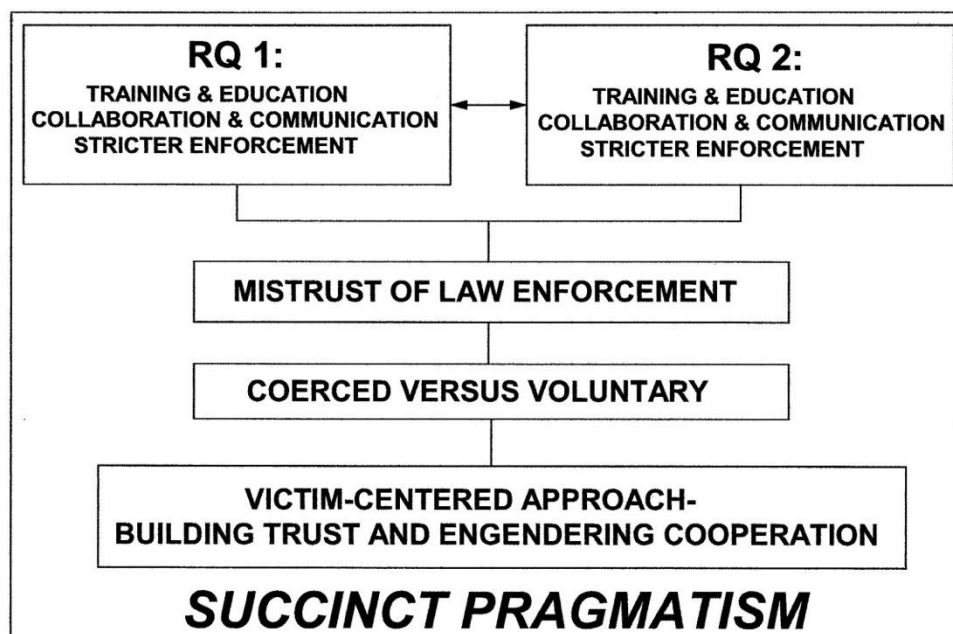
As per Chapter 3, I aimed to determine how to identify trafficking victims more successfully and proposed to analyze the narrative data as a hermeneutic phenomenology. A hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on respondents' subjective experiences to uncover the world they experience through their life stories and practical activities (Dangal & Joshi, 2020; van Manen, 1990). However, close and repeated examination of the "stories and practical activities" during data analysis suggested that the officers experienced their worlds of human sex trafficking and prostitution in a way that was diametrically opposed to rich detailed stories and practical activities. That is, analysis suggested that the officers experienced their worlds of human sex trafficking and prostitution within a framework of *succinct pragmatism*. Succinct refers to verbal or

written communication that is characterized by precise, compact expression without wasted words. Pragmatism is a philosophy that assesses the truth of beliefs and processes in terms of the success of their practical application. Thus, succinct pragmatism was diametrically opposed to the rich detail that characterizes a hermeneutic phenomenology, which was not, and could not, be anticipated when planning this study prior to data collection.

The narrative evidence presented throughout this chapter shows that the officers used concise language to express their views of the relative effectiveness of the law enforcement approaches to prostitution and human sex trafficking. Thus, succinct pragmatism emerged as the primary pattern of meaning and overarching theme because it characterized all but a few exceptional narrative responses. Succinct Pragmatism is therefore illustrated as the all-encompassing pattern of meaning in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Thematic Schematic of the Overarching Theme and Related and Supporting Themes



Main Theme: Victim-centered Approach – Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation

Imbedded within the overarching theme in Figure 1 is the main theme of the Victim-centered Approach: Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation. The officers saw this approach as a compassionate tool for empowering individuals who are powerless. The initial encounter between a law enforcement officer and a trafficking victim is critical. Victims are often hesitant to speak or refuse to speak with law enforcement. Officers must remember that traffickers control every aspect of a victim's life, including provision of the basic needs of food, water, and shelter. Victims are hesitant to speak against their trafficker because, if they do, traffickers immediately withdraw access to these basic necessities. Therefore, establishing a transparent and open line of communication with a victim is paramount. It starts with a two-sided conversation with the victim and which includes listening to them. The victim-centered approach to trafficking is based on the notion that when people are treated with respect, they feel safer and become more willing to communicate, which can translate into a greater inclination to talk to the next officer they meet.

By encouraging a greater inclination to talk to law enforcement from trafficking victims, the victim-centered approach can create relationships between victims and law enforcement personnel. In most cases, the communication between law enforcement and the victim is crucial to establish services for the victim; the more services that a victim has available, the more likely the victim is willing to cooperate in the criminal justice process. Therefore, law enforcement officers should ensure that the resources to help a victim are available before offering intervention services or assistance. If an officer offers

services that are unavailable, for instance, any initial trust between him or her and the victim will be destroyed because the officer cannot keep his/her word with the victim. Trust is central to the victim-centered approach to trafficking. Only after trust is established between a victim and law enforcement can they work together to combat this appalling form of modern-day slavery.

The Victim-centered Approach – Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation emerged as a main theme because the officers thought it applied to all encounters with trafficking victims as well as prostitutes. It is therefore illustrated as the second all-encompassing pattern of meaning, embedded inside Succinct Pragmatism in Figure 1.

Main Theme: Coerced versus Voluntary

The Victim-centered Approach theme was directly related to the second main theme, the distinction between Coerced versus Voluntary. According to the officers, trafficking victims were coerced into providing sexual services, prostitutes volunteered to provide sexual services, and some unknown portion of prostitutes were currently or previous trafficking victims. Trafficking victims shared the commonality of vulnerability to manipulation. Prostitutes shared the commonality of a lack of viable alternatives. The status of Coerced versus Voluntary emerged as a main theme because it colored the officers' perceptions of prostitutes versus trafficking victims and was therefore pertinent to how their perceptions could be used to identify victims more successfully. In Figure 1, the main Coerced versus Voluntary theme is illustrated as directly related to both the victim-centered approach to trafficking and mistrust.

Main Theme: Mistrust of Law Enforcement

The Coerced versus Voluntary theme was directly related to the third main theme, Mistrust of Law Enforcement. This doubting dimension emerged as a main theme because it too colored the officers' perceptions of prostitutes versus trafficking victims and was therefore pertinent to how their perceptions could be used to identify victims more successfully. Numerous respondents noted that prostitutes, trafficking victims, and other people associated with them mistrusted law enforcement deeply. For example, M1 included "distrust of law enforcement" along with emotional and psychological issues as barriers to trafficking case investigations. Mistrust occurred at several levels, including trafficking victims and prostitutes who distrusted men in general, were wary of law enforcement in general, were skeptical that law enforcement personnel would complete the investigation, and doubtful that law enforcement personnel were going to actually help them. In Figure 1, the main theme of Mistrust is illustrated as radiating off the Coerced versus Voluntary main theme, because both trafficking victims and prostitutes mistrusted law enforcement.

Supporting Themes

Further results of the analysis provided evidence that law enforcement officers' perceptions focused on three supporting themes, Training and Education, Collaboration and Cooperation, and Stricter Enforcement. They are illustrated in Figure 1 as emanating off of the main themes because they were pertinent to them as they revealed better ways to identify trafficking victims. For example, training can improve the victim-centered approach, education can lessen vulnerability to coercion, communication can mitigate mistrust, and stricter enforcement can help to identify victims more successfully.

Evidence of the supporting themes emerged for and thus pertain to both RQ1 (How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?) and RQ2 (How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?). All three supporting themes work together to establish the foundation in which an encounter between law enforcement and a victim can be successful and practical. To better identify victims, these recommendations are needed to provide tools and resources that a law enforcement officer can use to help a victim in need. Thus, in Figure 1, they are connected to the main themes and strongly connected to each other (indicated by the horizontal cross arrow at the top of the schematic).

Supporting Theme: Training and Education

One supporting theme is Training and Education (Figure 1) which is relevant to prostitution and human sex trafficking. Law enforcement training is an essential component of professional law enforcement, meant to prepare officers with the necessary knowledge to carry out their duties adequately, although it is not standardized across the United States. The officers called for more training to familiarize law enforcement personnel with prostitution, human sex trafficking, and the victim-centered approach to trafficking. The most important basic training was showing law enforcement personnel how to better recognize trafficked victims and the signs of trafficking. Officers identified several other important types of training as well (e.g., greater enforcement in communities composed of illegal immigrants, periodic training to stay abreast with the latest laws and statistics, etc.). Education expands to public education on the existence of

prostitution and human sex trafficking in the community, information on how to recognize involved individuals, and ways to contact law enforcement.

Supporting Theme: Collaboration and Communication

The second supporting theme is Collaboration and Communication (Figure 1). Human sex trafficking is a borderless crime. Whereas local law enforcement agencies play fundamental roles to combat human trafficking, this theme denotes the need for agencies to share information and intelligence more often and more efficiently. Results of the analysis suggested that greater collaboration and communication are needed across agencies because human trafficking cannot be eliminated by one law enforcement agency working alone. Coordinated efforts across agencies can address prostitution and human sex trafficking more effectively. Effectiveness requires the external perspective (between outside agencies) and the internal perspective (between law enforcement officers within an agency).

Supporting Theme: Stricter Enforcement

The third supporting theme is Stricter Enforcement (Figure 1), which goes hand in hand with enhanced prosecution. Coupled with the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, M6 stated,

I don't think you can have a victim-centered approach without the strong prosecution of the subject(s) involved. It doesn't help that society and social justice warriors, along with the media, trash law enforcement. The criminal justice system as it is now really requires the victim to be 100% involved and due to long-term intimidation and fear, along with mistrust of the justice system, it has not been implemented properly.

Stricter penalties for traffickers (buyers, sellers, transporters) can lead to the victim being more cooperative with law enforcement and district attorneys. The next section provides background for putting the officers' perceptions into better perspective.

Demographics

Demographics are presented in four sections below. The first presents personal and professional demographics to describe the sample and generate descriptions of modal respondents. This is followed by training demographics that establish the background for the officers' perspectives considered in the rest of this chapter. Demographic descriptors include academy training and post-academy training. Training background is followed by post-academy direct "boots on the ground" experience earned while working the law enforcement side of prostitution and human sex trafficking cases.

Personal and Professional Demographics

Table 3 shows the officers' personal and professional demographics. Although some qualitative dissertations provide a rich portrait of each individual who participated in the study (using pseudonyms), the portraits of the 14 officers in this study were minimal, in keeping with the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism based on minimal personal information. Therefore, the pseudonym portraits below are realistic reflections of the culture of the respondents. The modal male officer was a 35–44-year-old patrol officer with 10–14 years of enforcement experience and 5–9 years in his current position. The modal female officer was a 45–54-year-old patrol officer with 20–24 years of enforcement experience and 20–24 years in her current position.

Table 3 shows that the male officers ranged in age from 25 through 44 whereas the women officers ranged in age more broadly, from 25–54 years. States of residence

were generally East Coast states (New York, Virginia, Ohio, South Carolina, and Florida) although two of the officers resided in Texas and California. Three-quarters of the men were patrol officers (71%) compared to only half of women (50%). In terms of the total range of years of law enforcement experience among the men, Officer M3 and Officer M5 had the least experience whereas Officer M1 had the most experience. Among the women, Officer F10 had the least experience and Officer F11 had the most experience, respectively. The roles of two officers focused specifically on human sex trafficking and prostitution, with Officer M4 serving as a vice and narcotics detective and Officer F12 as a dedicated human trafficking detective.

Table 3

Officer Demographics

Officer	Age	State	Job	Role	Experience (Yrs)	Current Dept
M1	35–44	FL	PO	Detective	15–19	15–19
M2	35–44	FL	PO	Supervisor on Patrol	10–14	10–14
M3	25–34	CA	PO	Patrol	5–9	5–9
M4	25–34	VA	PO	Vice & Narcotics Detective	10–14	10–14
M5	25–34	NY	S	Sergeant	5–9	5–9
M6	35–44	SC	PO	Community Patrol	10–14	1–2
M7	35–44	CA	S	Detective–Sergeant	10–14	5–9
F8	45–54	TX	PO	Sr. Patrol Deputy	20–24	20–24
F9	45–54	CA	S	Community Affairs	15–19	15–19
F10	25–34	VA	PO	Patrol*	3–4	3–4
F11	45–54	OH	S	Detective Sergeant	25+	25+
F12	45–54	FL	PO	Human Trafficking Detective	20–24	20–24
F13	45–54	SC	S	Specialized Investigations	20–24	20–24
F14	25–34	SC	PO	Investigator Armed Robbery	5–9	5–9

Note. Officer: M# = male officer, F# = female officer. Job = Current job title of patrol officer (PO) or sergeant (S). Experience (Yrs) = Total number of years the officer has worked in law enforcement. Current Dept. = Number of years the officer has worked for his or her current department. Patrol* = Officer F10 Patrol, general instructor, & field trainer.

The following sections present demographic information on training that provided the background for the officers' perspectives. Demographic descriptors begin with academy training and post-academy training on prostitution and human sex trafficking.

Academy Training in Prostitution and Human Sex Trafficking

One way to put the officers' perspectives into context was to understand their initial training on prostitution and human sex trafficking. To this end, the officers were asked about any training related to prostitution and human sex trafficking that had been included in their police academy curriculum. Table 4 shows that exposure to academy-based training in prostitution and human sex trafficking was essentially divided across both the male and female officers. Four of the male officers (57%) did not receive or received minimal prostitution or human trafficking training at the academy. The other three men (43%) received academy training, although Officers M2 and M4 said that training was minimal (Table 4). Officer M4 further noted that human trafficking was "often just referred to as pimping or pandering." Similarly, three of the female officers (43%) did not receive or received minimal prostitution or human trafficking training at the academy, although Officer F11 said she obtained subsequent training. Officer F13 (14%) could not recall training. The other three women (43%) had academy training. Similar to Officers M2 and M4, Officer F10 also indicated that training was minimal.

Officer F8 was the only officer who mentioned compulsory trainings by noting that the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) requires this training. With respect to academy training, male and female officers did not differ, in that half of the men and half of the women had received prostitution and human sex trafficking training at the academy.

Table 4 also shows that the time since the officers had attended their respective academies varied considerably, but that the amount of elapsed time did not correlate directly with the amount of training in prostitution or human sex trafficking. Officer F11 attended the academy three decades ago, and Officers F12 and F13 attended the academy two decades ago; all said they had not received training. On the other hand, Officers M3, M5, F10, and F14 attended the academy within the recent decade yet were divided on whether or not they had received training.

Table 4

Academy Training on Prostitution and Human Sex Trafficking

Officer	Year	Prostitution	Human Sex Trafficking
M1	2006	No	No
M2	2008	Yes. A 4- or 8-hr block on Human Trafficking included prostitution.	Yes. From my memory, there was a basic 4 or 8 hour block on the introduction to Human Trafficking that included prostitution.
M3	2015	Minimal awareness.	Minimal awareness.
M4	2010	Yes. Introduction to prostitution laws and trends in the area.	Yes. At the time, human trafficking was often just referred to as pimping/pandering. It was discussed that some prostitutes are brought/forced from other areas.
M5	2013	Yes	Yes
M6	2008	No	No
M7	2009	No	No

Officer	Year	Prostitution	Human Sex Trafficking
F8	2009	Yes - Texas Commission on Law Enforcement requires this training.	Yes - TCOLE requires this training - more on this than prostitution.
F9	2006	Yes. It included penal codes related to prostitution and special victim handling.	Yes. It included a study of laws related to sex trafficking and special victim handling.
F10	2017	Yes, approximately 8–16 hrs of material included prostitution and human trafficking.	Yes. About 8 hrs
F11	1992	I don't think it was covered at that time; however, I have had training on the topic.	No, it did not. However, I have had multiple training on this topic throughout the years.
F12	2001	No	No
F13	2000	Can't recall	No
F14	2012	Very little	None

Note. Year = year in which the respondent attended the police academy

Post-Academy Training on Prostitution or Human Sex Trafficking

Another way to put the officers' perspectives into context was to understand their subsequent formal training on prostitution and human sex trafficking after graduation from their respective police academies. Only two of the officers reported that they had not participated in subsequent training on either prostitution or human sex trafficking. Thus, M3 and F12 were the respondents with the least amount of formal training subsequent to their academy training.

The other 12 respondents reported various levels of subsequent formal training. M5 had the most training in human trafficking, having attended “over 200 hours of HT [human trafficking] training.” F13 had the next greatest amount of training, having completed personal research, continuing education, attendance at the annual International Association of Human Trafficking Investigations, and completing HT training on Human Trafficking. M4 attended a VICE Undercover School to improve his ability to locate

individuals who solicited prostitution and to identify signs of human trafficking. M2 had formal training with the Sacramento Valley Hi-Tech Crimes Task Force relating to child pornography. M7 completed TCOLE-required continuing education, and F8 attended a training class on human trafficking. M1 took some online classes. With respect to training subsequent to academy training, male and female officers did not differ, in that 86% of both male and female officers had subsequent formal training in prostitution and human sex trafficking.

Experience Working the Law Enforcement Side of Prostitution

A third way of placing the officers' perspectives into context was to understand their subsequent exposure to prostitution, which was the first criterion for inclusion in this analysis. Highlights of those experiences in this section illustrate gender differences in direct experiences working prostitution.

Six of the seven female officers (86%) had experience working the front end of prostitution by operating in the prostitute's realm directly as undercover agents. F13 called this service "as an undercover decoy." F11 also worked undercover as a prostitute in several operations. F14 said she has "been utilized as an undercover officer to target the 'johns' side of the criminal activity [and also] worked several prostitution-related cases as a former vice/narcotics investigator." Like F14, Officer F10 works "in an undercover role" to locate the individuals who solicit prostitution, assist in their arrests, and later determine if there were signs of human trafficking. The exception among the female respondents was F9, who handled prostitution radio calls when she was on patrol as an officer and a sergeant.

In contrast to the female officers, male officers were more typically involved on the back ends of busts by making the arrests. Whereas all seven male officers had experience in arrests or stings (100%), some areas provided more opportunity to make arrests than others. For example, Officer M3 characterized his area as “saturated with prostitution and human trafficking,” so, although he had the least formal post-academy training, he presumably had ample training on the job. M1 has also “worked numerous prostitution details” which he said entailed identifying, arresting, and interviewing the persons involved in the prostitution cases. Similarly, M2 “set up multiple prostitution stings as part of human trafficking investigations as a detective.” M7 had also been employed with multiple agencies that deal with prostitution: “The subjects in these cases are between the ages of 14–60, and usually have the same patterns associated: Drugs, no family, no income.”

With respect to experience working the law enforcement side of prostitution, male and female officers differed. Six out of seven female officers had served on the front end by working undercover as faux prostitutes. All seven male officers tended to serve on the back end by participating directly in arrests and related follow-up activities.

Experience Working the Law Enforcement Side of Human Sex Trafficking Cases

A fourth way to put the officers’ perspectives into context was to understand their subsequent exposure to human sex trafficking, which was the second criterion for inclusion in this analysis. Highlights presented in this section show that the male and female officers had similar types of experiences with human sex trafficking cases.

Five of the seven female officers (71%) had direct experience with human sex trafficking cases. F12 has handled human sex trafficking cases for the last 7 years as a

detective. As a vice and narcotics investigator, F14 worked cases with Homeland Security as well as on stings that targeted internet crimes against children; the stings focused on the individuals who were suspected of trafficking the children. F10 sometimes worked in an undercover role to look for individuals who were trafficking women. Recently, F11 worked jointly with the FBI, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and the Attorney General's office “on a very large sex trafficking case.”

Experiences among the male officers were similar to female experiences. All seven male officers (100%) had experience with trafficking victims. For example, M1 is currently assigned to the Human Trafficking Unit of his department. M2 has successfully arrested two individuals on the criminal charge of human trafficking and made other arrests as part of various human trafficking investigations. M4 has worked on two cases that involved prostitutes who were forced to travel to his jurisdiction for purposes of prostitution. With respect to experiences with human sex trafficking, male and female officers did not differ, in that the majority had experience.

The following two sections supply narrative answers to RQ1 and RQ2. Passages present direct respondent quotes as evidence of themes described above and illustrated in Figure 1.

Research Question Responses: Results for RQ1

RQ1 asked, How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully? Results for RQ1 are presented in eight sections. The first presents officer definitions of human sex trafficking and prostitution. The second presents perspectives on commonalities among victims of human sex trafficking versus commonalities among

prostitutes. The third has statistics on under-identification of human sex trafficking victims. The fourth through sixth sections list officers' suggestions on better ways to identify victims of sex trafficking, factors that contribute to the sex trafficking environment, and factors that could eliminate human sex trafficking. The seventh section addresses trafficking victim hesitance to speak to law enforcement along with associated barriers to investigations. The eighth section presents the officers' estimated proportions of prostitutes who are also human sex trafficking victims. This Results for RQ1 section ends with the Answer to RQ1.

Officer Definitions of Human Sex Trafficking versus Prostitution

This first section of RQ1 results presents officer definitions of human sex trafficking and prostitution. Male officers' definitions are listed in Table 5. Female officers' definitions are listed in Table 6.

Officer Definitions of Human Sex Trafficking. Both male (Table 5) and female (Table 6) officers defined human sex trafficking with a variety of adjectives that reflected the main Coerced theme (Figure 1), forced to provide sexual services through aggressively imposed helplessness. Aggressively imposed helplessness was engendered by blackmail, force, fraud, intimidation, involuntary servitude, slavery, and the chilling insinuations that emerged from the term "against one's will." Five of seven male officers (71%) and six of seven female officers (86%) defined human sex trafficking as coercion. Only two male officers, M3 and M7, did not refer to any of these adjectives. Moving deeper into the umbrella term of "human sex trafficking," two summarizing words come to mind: *rape* and *slavery*.

Table 5*Male Officers' Definitions of Human Sex Trafficking versus Prostitution*

Officer	Definition of Human Sex Trafficking	Definition of Prostitution
M1	It is when an individual or organization imposes control over an individual and forces them to engage in sexual conduct against their will, both knowingly and unknowingly.	The exchange of something of value for a sexual act.
M2	For a minor, human sex trafficking is when a juvenile is offered something of value in exchange for a sex act or a juvenile is coerced, forced, or frauded into committing commercial sex acts. For adults force, fraud, or coercion must be present with the exchange of something of value for a sex act.	I would define prostitution as a commercial sex act which means, a person trading something of value (usually money) for a sexual act.
M3	Problematic, however, not as "out in the open" as prostitution, although they could be seen as interchangeable.	Problematic. Most, not all, but most are anti-law enforcement and do not seek or want our help.
M4	Victims are being forced, by either force, blackmail, or some other intimidation to have sex for money. The money then is kept by someone else.	When sex or sexual acts are exchanged for money or some other goods.
M5	Someone being forced to engage in sexual acts against the will. Although some may say it is voluntary, many times those in a position of power influence those to engage in these acts.	Horrific
M6	Providing sexual services for gain for the benefit of others.	Providing sexual in nature services for a gain.
M7	By California Statute	By California State Statute

Two men (29%) and three women (43%) officers said coerced victims were forced to provide sex in exchange for something of value. With the exceptions of M2's indirect reference (Table 5), the insinuation was that "something of value" was money. Officers M4, M6, F9, F10, and F12 said that the prostitute provides the sex, but the trafficker keeps the money. With respect to definitions of human sex trafficking, male and female officers did not differ.

Table 6*Female Officers' Definitions of Human Sex Trafficking versus Prostitution*

Officer	Definition of Human Sex Trafficking	Definition of Prostitution
F8	Unwilling victims used for sex or other services.	Sexual acts for benefit
F9	The recruitment, harboring, transportation, patronizing, etc. of a person for the purpose of commercial sexual activity.	Participating in sexual activity for compensation
F10	Exchange of money or goods for a sex act being done so against someone's will by a 3rd party profiting through the money earned.	Exchange of money or goods for sexual acts
F11	The uses of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.	The act or practice of engaging in some type of sexual act for payment of some sort, being money, drugs, or gift.
F12	The use of force, fraud, or coercion to make someone else participate in sexual conduct for the financial benefit of the trafficker.	The exchange of sexual acts for money or goods.
F13	Coerced or forced engagement in prostitution or other involuntary servitude.	Voluntary exchange of money, goods or services for sex.
F14	Human sex trafficking is more along the lines of forced or coerced prostitution for me, whether it is adults or juveniles. Sometimes it is within the state the individual resided, often times it is across state lines. My definition could go on, but that would be a good basic version.	The trade of sexual acts for money or any other form of payment.

Officer Definitions of Prostitution. Of note, only one officer suggested that human sex trafficking is synonymous with prostitution (M3, Table 5). Otherwise, the male officers' definitions of prostitution excluded references to coercion in the provision of sexual favors, with five of seven males (71%) defining prostitution as voluntary sexual services for payment (Table 5). Five of the seven (71%) female officers' definitions of prostitution (Table 6) paralleled the male officers' bland descriptions of sexual services for payment.

With respect to definitions of trafficking compared to prostitution, male and female officers saw the two behaviors as distinct: Human sex trafficking was usually coerced. Prostitution was usually voluntary. In this, the male and female officers did not differ, leading to these distinctions in the Coerced versus Voluntary main theme illustrated in Figure 1.

Commonalities among Victims of Human Sex Trafficking versus Prostitutes

This second section of RQ1 results presents perspectives on commonalities among victims of human sex trafficking versus commonalities among prostitutes. Officers' comments on commonalities are presented side by side for ease of comparison in Table 7 (male officers' verbatim comments) and Table 8 (female officers' verbatim comments).

Eight of the 14 officers (57%) saw the same commonality among trafficking victims: They were vulnerable to being manipulated or coerced. Their vulnerabilities stemmed from emotional susceptibilities, drug abuse or addiction, or both. Officers M1, M2, M6, M7, F11, F12, F13, and F14 cited several further reasons for these vulnerabilities. M1 was blunt, blaming personality traits that made them vulnerable. M2 mentioned emotional abuse, which M6 echoed in his reference to "unfulfilled emotional needs." F8 further conceded that the parents whose children became trafficking victims were emotionally vulnerable themselves. F12 listed several sources of victim vulnerability.

Table 7

Male Officers' Perspectives of Commonalities among Human Sex Trafficking Victims versus Prostitutes

Officer	Commonalities among Trafficking Victims	Commonalities among Prostitutes
M1	Yes, they exhibit personality traits that allow them to be manipulated.	I would say that those engaged in prostitution have financial problems, whether self-induced or situational.
M2	Most victims of sex trafficking are involved with substance abuse, emotional abuse, and [are] vulnerable due to some type of trauma in their life.	Most individuals arrested for prostitution have a misdemeanor criminal background as well as substance abuse issues.
M3	Little personal contact with victims. Most are anti-law enforcement.	Low income, drug dependent
M4	Illegal immigrants	Typically, they are drug addicts or illegal immigrants.
M6	Yes, deep-rooted emotional needs not being met.	No
M7	Broken families and drugs. Usually, juvenile runaways where there is no one looking for them.	Yes: drugs

In contrast, officers saw different commonalities among prostitutes. Ten of the 14 officers (71%) saw the same commonality among prostitutes: lack of viable alternatives. The lack of viable alternatives stemmed from addiction, poverty, or a combination of these (rather than emotional vulnerabilities). Thus, Officers M1–M4, M7, F8–F9, F11–F12, and F14 viewed prostitutes as selling their bodies voluntarily because they lacked viable alternatives for supporting themselves, whereas human sex trafficking was usually coerced. M2 cited criminal backgrounds that served as gateways to prostitution. F8 attributed prostitution to lack of education.

M4 saw a common thread in victims being illegal immigrants. F9, who was primarily exposed to vice by taking calls on incidents and lacked direct experience

working as an undercover prostitute, simply said that she had not noticed any commonalities. Officers M5 and F10 did not provide answers.

Thus, both male and female officers characterized trafficking victims with one set of commonalities but characterized prostitutes with a different set of commonalities. Otherwise, male and female views on victim commonalities were similar, and male and female views on prostitute commonalities were similar.

Table 8

Female Officers' Perspectives of Commonalities among Victims of Human Sex

Trafficking versus Prostitutes

Officer	Commonalities among Trafficking Victims	Commonalities among Prostitutes
F8	Most didn't realize they would be in the position they are in and don't want to do it but feel they have no other choice.	Drug use / lack of education
F9	No	Many are homeless
F11	With child victims, I have noticed that the parents have drug issues and were letting the children be abused to get drugs.	Some do it to feed an addiction, others for money for family and children.
F12	PTSD, previous sexual abuse, trust issues, financial hardship	Strung out on drugs and/or homeless
F13	Foreign, homeless, drug addicted	Past sexual abuse victims. From broken homes. Distrustful of law enforcement.
F14	Of my interactions, there are some. One of the commonalities I found involved the younger victims. I had two victims who were from good families and just weren't happy with their parents' rules. They essentially met someone online and were coerced to meet them and essentially kidnapped and forced to make money for those suspects. In a similar sense, those same suspects prey on poorer individuals as well and entice them with the money they can make.	Yes, frequently homeless and drug addicted

Under-identification of Human Sex Trafficking Victims

This third section of results for RQ1 addresses under-identification of human sex trafficking victims. Law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of trafficking victims can be used to identify victims more successfully with the initial realization that, in their experience, trafficking victims are clearly under-identified. Under-identification translates into considerable uncertainty about the potential or actual numbers of trafficking victims. This in turn introduces considerable uncertainty about the manpower and other resources that law enforcement must allocate to be adequately prepared. Therefore, the officers' perspectives on under-identification were examined closely in this study.

There was nearly complete agreement among the 14 officers (93%) that trafficking victims were under-identified (six of seven males, 86%; all seven females, 100%). F14 thought that part of the issue stemmed from the law enforcement side, suggesting that some level of under-identification is "due to lack of training" and some due to poor logistics, citing "some issues with the time between [when] tips are received and when they are investigated that makes it difficult for contact in the first place." Otherwise, as evidence of the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism (Figure 1), the officers generally provided brief responses. For example, M3 said that his department receives most of their information from trafficked victims themselves, and then conceded that this was "rare;" however, recall that M3 also characterized his jurisdiction as "saturated" with prostitutes and trafficking.

The sole exception, M4, disagreed that trafficking victims were under-identified:

I think the term [human sex trafficking] is overly broad and generalized. The general population is under the impression that it involves kidnapping and forcing women into sex trafficking. In reality, it is closer to most criminal activity.

Someone becomes involved in criminal activity and that leads to the force or intimidation. The first criminal activity could be drugs or coming into the country illegally.

Thus, male and female officers agreed almost unanimously that trafficking victims are under-identified. These unified perspectives argue that more training (Training and Education supporting theme, Figure 1) is needed on signs that allow officers to recognize trafficking victims. The next sections reveal what they know.

Officers' Suggestions on Better Ways to Identify Victims of Sex Trafficking

This fourth section of results for RQ1 lists officers' suggestions on better ways to identify trafficking victims. The thrust of the officers' suggestions related to the themes of the Victim-centered Approach, more Training and Education, and/or Stricter Enforcement (Figure 1) even as the brevity of commentary provided evidence of the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism.

A third of the officers (M1, M2, M3, F11, and F14; 36%) emphasized the importance of engaging persons in conversation, listening carefully, and/or trying various ways to solicit trust (evidence of the Victim-centered Approach theme, Figure 1). M3 suggested succinctly that better identification of trafficking victims would emerge from "more trust in law enforcement." M1 alluded to trust when he advised law enforcement personnel to hold "a non-confrontational and non-judging conversation toward the person with the intent to better understand them and how they came to be where they are found."

Along these lines, M2 compassionately counseled officers to “look deeper than the surface” because “victims will talk when they trust that you have their best interest.” F11 advised officers “to listen to people when they talk and be very sensitive to what they have been through and let them tell you in their own way.” Further, she recommended that officers “see if you notice any of the signs that you look for in a victim.” Recall that F14 had often worked as an undercover prostitute to target “johns.” Echoing F11, she appealed to officers to engage prostitutes in conversation and listen carefully to what they have to say. F14 stated:

I think it is really important to ask questions when it comes to interactions with prostitutes. If they themselves are not victims of human trafficking, they often do know of individuals and want to help those individuals that they are aware [who do] not willingly seek to prostitute themselves. It also helps the officers to be able to learn the prostitution side of their community.

Three officers (21%) suggested better identification through better education for law enforcement personnel as well as the citizenry (evidence of the Training and Education supporting theme, Figure 1). In many respects, education is synonymous with training. Whereas F12 simply said “education” without going into further detail, several officers specified the target of educational efforts. F9 called for “better education for police officers and social workers,” augmented by “some kind of reporting hotline like Children and Family Services or Adult Protective Services” so that interested parties could report their suspicions to law enforcement. F8 thought that better identification would emanate from better “education to the civilian population.” F8 stated:

I believe law enforcement in Texas has been educated appropriately but we don't see [human sex trafficking] because it's so well hidden. We get most of our information from the public. Most of the civilian population isn't aware this is an issue or just don't report suspicious behavior. These people live amongst them but they don't realize or report it to law enforcement.

The only officer whose comment came anywhere close to vociferousness, M7, said better identification called for stricter enforcement (evidence of the Stricter Enforcement supporting theme Figure 1): “Prosecute every person involved with sex trafficking and send them to prison” by flooding the industry with dedicated task forces composed of trained and experienced detectives. They will “make it hard to operate.”

The remaining five officers (36%) did not share their suggestions for better ways to identify trafficking victims. F13 sidestepped the question by noting succinctly, “It's subjective.” The other four officers (M4, M5, M6, and F10) either bluntly stated that they did not have any suggestions or simply left the response blank.

Factors that Contribute to the Sex Trafficking Environment

This fifth section of results for RQ1 lists officers' views of factors that contribute to or create the sex trafficking environment. In contrast to the relatively scant commentary on better ways to identify trafficking victims, officers identified a range of contributory factors. Table 9 lists 15 factors. Seven of the factors, or about half, were only cited by one officer each (low self-esteem: M1; fear: M8, hopelessness: F8; mental health issues: F10; immigrant status: F13; low community involvement: F13; and youth: F13). These largely pertain to characteristics of individuals.

Table 9*Officers' Views on Factors that Contribute to Human Sex Trafficking Environments*

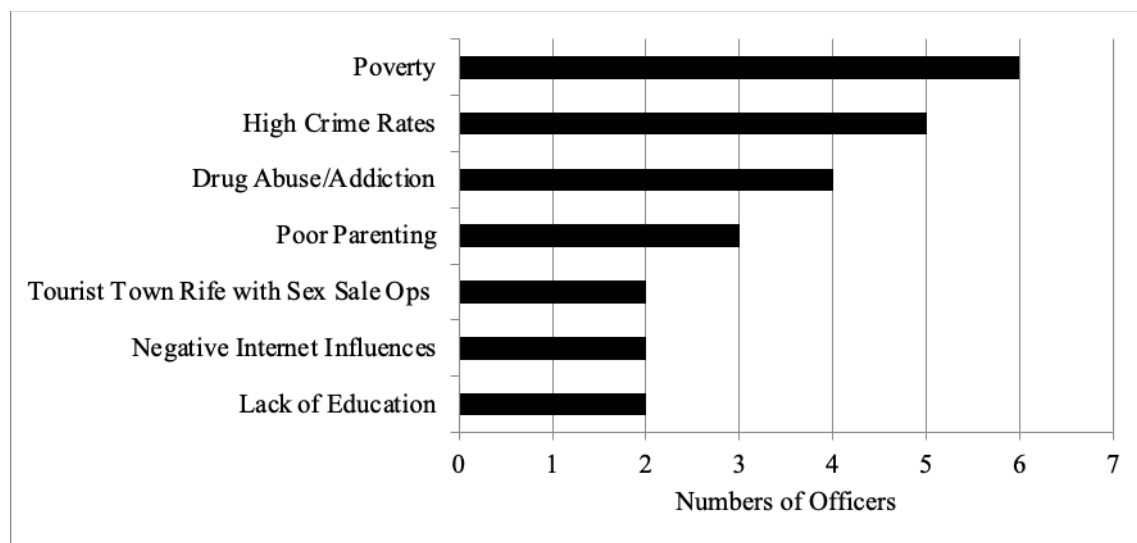
Officer	Officers' Views on Factors that Contribute to Human Sex Trafficking Environments
M1	Lack of self-esteem, lack of education, and lack of employment options
M2	High crime areas
M3	Low income, drug use
M4	Involvement in criminal activity
M5	Lack of good parenting (fathers included) in the home
M6	Not enforcing quality of life, not enforcing crimes
M7	I speak primarily for California. This state no longer sends people to prison for anything other than maybe murder.
F8	Fear, believe no way out, poverty, violence, lack of education
F9	Homelessness, economic stress, the internet
F10	Substance abuse, mental health concerns, child abuse/neglect
F11	Low income, drug addicted areas, parents not being home with their children, runaway children, social media
F12	In our city, it is a combination of a tourist destination, conventions, nice weather, and oblivious patrol officers and business owners.
F13	Poverty, drug addiction, illegal/immigrant status, lack of community support, age
F14	Largely populated areas with lots of interstate travel that passes through.

Figure 2 illustrates factors that were cited by more than one officer. Two officers each cited lack of education (M1 and F8), negative influences from the internet (F9 and F11), and an attractive tourist town rife with opportunities for commercial sex sales (F14 and F12). Three officers cited lack of parenting (M5, F10, and F11). Four officers cited drug abuse or addictions (M3, F10, F11, and F13). Parents and addictions largely pertain to characteristics of individuals. Five officers cited areas with high crime rates (M2, M3, M4, M6, and F8). Six officers cited lack of decent employment and poverty (M1, M3, F8, F9, F11, and F13). The external or societal environment that contributes to human sex

trafficking is characterized by drug abuse, high crime rates, and poverty. These factors often characterize a community concurrently.

Figure 2

Factors that Contribute to Human Sex Trafficking Environments Cited by Two or More Officers



Officer M7 resides in California (Table 3). He blamed state statutes for creating an environment where criminals are emboldened to flaunt the laws and crime runs rampant because criminal penalties have been muted. His perspective provided evidence of the supporting theme of Stricter Enforcement in Figure 1. M7 stated:

I speak primarily for California. This state no longer sends people to prison for anything other than maybe murder. This behavior breeds criminal activity and emboldens criminals when they know the chance of being prosecuted and going to prison is unlikely.

F12 resides in Florida (Table 3). She blamed tourism along with watchdog oblivion, a perspective that provided more evidence for the supporting theme of Stricter Enforcement (Figure 1):

In our city, it is a combination of being a tourist destination, a lot of conventions are held there. The weather is always nice, and we have a lot of hotels/motels tied with oblivious patrol officers and business owners.

Factors that Could Eliminate Human Sex Trafficking

This sixth section of results for RQ1 lists officers' views of factors that could eliminate human sex trafficking. Exhibiting rare volubility of language and thus supporting the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism by its rarity, M3 dismissed the possibility of elimination as preposterous:

It will never be eliminated. It comes down to the victim being cooperative, which most are not. We can only help those that want our help. All the education or stricter penalties will not eliminate the issue. One extreme example would be homicide, which has arguably the most severe penalty one is able to receive, yet it is still being committed.

However, the other officers were not so dismissive, nor so voluble. Table 10 shows that the suggestions for eliminating human sex trafficking fell into three main categories: more education (synonymous with training), stricter enforcement, and more collaboration, all supporting themes illustrated in Figure 1. Eight of the officers (M2, M6, F8, F9, F11, F12, F13, and F14; 57% of 14 officers) called for more education at a variety of levels. The targets of better education included the public, families, teachers, law enforcement personnel, social services, hotel personnel, hospital staff, and societal attitudes. Education was also needed to help members of law enforcement and the public learn the signs that identify trafficking victims. Whereas M6 claimed, "Education is probably the most effective way to reduce human sex trafficking," M3 vociferously

disagreed, arguing that “all the education or stricter penalties will not eliminate the issue” because law enforcement “can only help those that want our help.”

Six officers (M4, M7, F9, F11, F12, and F14; 36% of 14 officers) called for stricter enforcement. Echoing the supporting theme of Stricter Enforcement (Figure 1), M7 thought that elimination could be accomplished through harsher penalties for people who promote trafficking and called for greater enforcement muscle in two ways. First, he appealed to law enforcement to provide “dedicated task forces with trained and experienced detectives who *flood* the industry and make it hard to operate [a human sex trafficking operation].” Second, he summoned law enforcement to “prosecute every person involved with sex trafficking and send them to prison.” M7 was also adamant about stricter enforcement of crimes emanating from drugs, substance abuse, and addictions:

Stricter penalties on drugs and sex trafficking crimes. Drugs almost have a nexus to EVERY sex trafficking investigation. The victim is dependent on drugs or the abuser is pushing them. However, without strict laws, there is no teeth to combat drugs and drugs have a trickle-down effect on all crime, including sex trafficking. Further, abusers who sex traffic should be punished swiftly and harshly to lay a foundation that this type of behavior will not be tolerated. When your criminal justice system continuously attempts to rehabilitate, criminals will continue to prey on the helpless.

Three officers (M1, F9, and F11; 21% of 14 officers) called for more collaboration (Figure 1), especially among different law enforcement entities but also among related facilities and personnel, such as hotel owners. M5 and F10 did not answer

the question. Only F12 thought that more training for law enforcement personnel, including the victim-centered approach, would help.

Table 10

Factors that Could Eliminate Human Sex Trafficking

Officer	Factors that Could Eliminate Human Sex Trafficking
M1	A lot more collaboration and sharing of information amongst law enforcement, non-government support groups, and employers
M2	Educational campaigns so parents can know what to look for. Unfortunately, human trafficking is a cultural epidemic. Our societal norms will need to shift to eradicate human trafficking.
M3	It will never be eliminated. It comes down to the victim being cooperative, which most are not. We can only help those that want our help. All the education or stricter penalties will not eliminate the issue. One extreme example would be homicide, which has arguably the most severe penalty one is able to receive, yet it is still being committed.
M4	What are you asking? People need to stop paying for sex is the ultimate answer. Realistically, strict border enforcement and a strong deterrence through arrests and media releases of arrestees.
M6	The problem is this is not a whole enforcement issue. This is a nuclear family issue. Education is probably the most effective way to reduce human sex trafficking.
M7	Stricter penalties on drugs and sex trafficking crimes. Drugs almost have a nexus to EVERY sex trafficking investigation.
F8	Educational campaigns
F9	I'll go with stricter penalties, stronger collaboration among agencies, educational campaigns, and the creation of a regional office to handle the victims.
F11	Education to everyone involved to include teachers, law enforcement, social services and hospital staff. Knowing what to look for could help a lot. A joint effort with every agency working together for the same result and stiffer penalties for sure.
F12	Stricter penalties. Better victim-centered training for law enforcement, prosecutors and service providers. Mandatory training for hotels, businesses, and law enforcement.
F13	Educational campaigns, changing attitudes towards prostitution (which are evolving)
F14	Education. Stricter penalties. More convictions. More publicity to make the public aware of the arrests.

Another element of under-identification is related to the extent to which trafficking victims will talk to law enforcement personnel, the topic of the next section.

Hesitance to Speak to Law Enforcement and Associated Barriers to Investigations

This seventh section addresses trafficking victim hesitance to speak to law enforcement along with associated barriers to investigations. The officers' suggestions to improve the identification of trafficking victims included building trust and engendering cooperation through considerate conversation and careful listening, a main theme of the Victim-centered Approach to trafficking illustrated in Figure 1. However, that depends on prostitutes' and trafficking victims' *availability* for officers to apply the victim-centered approach. This section presents evidence that prostitutes and victims are generally unavailable to receive the victim-centered approach.

The officers reported general consensus that trafficking victims are hesitant to speak to law enforcement personnel (Table 11). Six out of seven male officers (86%) agreed that victims hesitate. The exception, M6, said trafficking victims do not hesitate to speak with law enforcement personnel because "a lot don't believe they are a victim." In his view, one barrier to investigation is created by a person's willingness to be a trafficking victim.

Other than M6, the officers agreed in one way or another that human sex trafficking was an "underground" and "secretive" reality that victims were unwilling to divulge. M7 attributed hesitancy to "fear of getting into trouble, but also in fear from retaliation from their abusers." F11 said, "Most of them are [hesitant] at first because they don't want their parents in trouble," suggesting that she had young runaways or other minors in mind. F14 found trafficking victims "to be more hesitant because they have either been convinced that law enforcement are the bad guys or they are scared of the suspects." F14 went into unusual detail:

Some are [hesitant], but I found being a female deputy has made it easier for me to build a rapport and open up the lines of communication. Those who are forced into the lifestyle are not typically in plain view, and are not normally who we deal with. Those who have found prostitution to be financially beneficial are the easiest to locate, especially those are constantly searching to meet their drug addiction needs. I have been told many times how much easier it was to find a john to take the steps to the next high.

F12 was the only female officer who did not agree unequivocally, qualifying hesitance as only “sometimes” (Table 11). Thus, with respect to whether trafficking victims are hesitant to speak with law enforcement personnel, male and female officers did not differ: six out of seven agreed.

Table 11

Hesitance to Speak to Law Enforcement and Associated Barriers to Investigations

Officer	Hesitant	Barriers to Investigating Human Trafficking
M1	Yes	Distrust of law enforcement, emotional and psychological [<i>sic</i>] issues.
M2	Yes	The biggest barrier law enforcement faces is the victim's reluctance to cooperate with the investigation, assuming of course, law enforcement properly identifies the situation as a human trafficking situation.
M3	Yes	It's very "underground" and most victims are not willing to speak with law enforcement.
M4	Yes	n/a
M5	Yes	Victims [un]willing to speak about their "bosses"
M6	No	Willingness of a victim
M7	Yes	Sex trafficking victims refuse to cooperate with investigations a lot of times. When that happens, we almost never get prosecution. California laws have made it extremely hard to investigate any crime, let alone something as complex as sex trafficking.
F8	Yes	Victims unwilling to participate or speak with law enforcement out of fear of trafficker or law enforcement action on them.
F9	Yes	Getting victim participation

Officer	Hesitant	Barriers to Investigating Human Trafficking
F10	Yes	Fear by victims, no trust of law enforcement. Scared of what will happen to other victims who they are with.
F11	Yes	Victims not wanting to talk or help during an investigation, afraid that they will be made fun of or parents will be charged. Some were younger and have problems remembering everything.
F12	Yes*	As a detective, the hardest part is getting road patrol to recognize it and to contact us.
F13	Yes	Victim cooperation
F14	Yes	Lack of resources. Lack of training. There is a need for more investigators.

Note. F12 said “sometimes.”

Male and female officers also agreed that trafficking victims mistrust law enforcement, leading to the emergence of the main theme of Mistrust of Law Enforcement in Figure 1. Table 11 shows that 11 of the 14 officers (79%; M1–M3, M5–M7, F8–F11, and F13) cited mistrust of law enforcement as a major barrier to human sex trafficking investigations, revealing an approximately equal division between the sexes. Three officers (21%) cited fear: fear of retaliation to the victims from their traffickers (F8), of retaliation upon their associates in the trafficking trade (F10), and of what might happen to their parents (F11). Another barrier was the implication of emotional and psychological incapacities (M1).

The consensus among the male and female officers was that the main barrier to human sex trafficking investigations (Table 11) was victims’ and prostitutes’ hesitance to talk to law enforcement because of mistrust. Mistrust removes many opportunities to evaluate who is a trafficking victim and who is not. The next section reveals considerable gender differences in the proportions of prostitutes as trafficking victims.

Estimated Proportions of Prostitutes Who Are Also Human Sex Trafficking Victims

This eighth section of results of RQ1 presents the officers' estimated proportions of prostitutes who are also human sex trafficking victims. Under-identification could be mitigated by greater knowledge about the proportion of prostitutes who are trafficking victims. This approach was explored by asking the officers if they thought that prostitutes were more likely to be trafficking victims or to be prostituting themselves voluntarily. Table 12 shows that the officers' perceptions diverged broadly along a graded continuum from a "few" prostitutes to "most" prostitutes being trafficking victims. For example, about one in five officers (21% of 14 officers) thought that only *some* prostitutes were trafficking victims (three male officers, M1, M4, M7, accounting for 43% of the men; zero female officers). Nearly half of the officers (43% of 14 officers) estimated that probably *half* of the prostitutes were trafficking victims (one male officer, M3, accounting for 14% of the men; five female officers, F8, F10, F11, F13, F14, accounting for 71% of the women). About a third (29% of 14 officers) thought that *most* of the prostitutes were trafficking victims (two male officers, M2 and M6, accounting for 29% of the men; two female officers, F9 and F12, accounting for 29% of the women). This range of views on prostitutes as trafficking victims implied a complex situation about which officers disagreed. Officer F11 pointed out that the situation was complicated because each situation had to be understood for itself. F11 stated:

I think there are people who are victims of sex trafficking. Those I feel like we interacted with more through the online escort/prostitute sources. I do believe there is a side that is "willing," meaning they willingly prostitute to meet

financial/material needs [although it is] not necessarily their first choice of "employment."

Table 12

Officers' Views of Prostitutes as Willing Participants or Unwilling Victims

Officer	Officers' Views of Prostitutes as Willing Participants or Unwilling Victims
M1	Some
M2	My belief is that most prostitutes are victims of human trafficking even if they do not self-identify. With that said, I do believe there are some individuals that view prostitution as a profession.
M3	In this area, split down the middle for the majority. I'd say a slightly higher number of willing participants.
M4	I have contacted probably over 100 prostitutes. Only a few would qualify as human trafficking and even those are rarely forced in a way that they are unable to leave.
M5	Yes
M6	Both. Mostly willingly
M7	The majority of adult prostitutes that I come in contact with are selling themselves willingly. However, they are working in this industry because it is all they know. With that said, most prostitutes have been the victim of sex trafficking at one time, laying the foundation for their continuous behavior. Again, a lot of prostitution-related crimes revolve around drug and their dependency on drugs.
F8	I have experienced both types.
F9	Both, but I believe the vast majority are victims of sex trafficking.
F10	There is a mix.
F11	It really depends on the situations. I have dealt with both. Some being victims and others are doing it on their own to get money. Every case is individual and looked at from every aspect.
F12	I believe most are either currently victims or were at some point victims. Very few have not been victims in the past.
F13	Both
F14	I believe there is a case for both.

Male and female officers differed in their estimated proportions of prostitutes who are probable trafficking victims. Broadly speaking, the female officers saw prostitutes as trafficking victims and the male officers did not. Specifically, all of the female officers

(100%) estimated that *half to most* of the prostitutes were trafficking victims. In contrast, four of the male officers (57%) estimated that *some to half* of the prostitutes were trafficking victims. Only two men (29%) estimated that *most* were victims. These contradictory statistics provide evidence of the Coerced versus Voluntary main theme in Figure 1.

The above section showed that the officers disagreed on the extent to which prostitutes were likely victims of human sex trafficking, creating a gender difference in perspective. Prostitutes who are also bona fide victims, but who are not identified as such, constitute one element of under-identification.

Answer to RQ1

Results for RQ1 showed that trafficking victims and prostitutes mistrust law enforcement and mistrust interferes with law enforcement officers' efforts to identify victims more successfully. Nonetheless, the answer to RQ1 (How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?) was multi-faceted because the officers' perceptions provided numerous potential ways to improve under-identification. One, victims may be identified more successfully by drawing on officers' definitions and commonalities: They defined trafficking victims as coerced and vulnerable to manipulation but defined prostitutes as selling sex voluntarily because they lack the educational and financial wherewithal to find viable alternatives to prostitution. Two, victims may be identified more successfully when officers employ the victim-centered approach (with its implications of developing trust) and promote more education (synonymous with training) for all stakeholders, not just law enforcement personnel. Three, victims may be

identified more successfully by officers remaining vigilant to 15 factors that intermittently or regularly contribute to a trafficking environment, the most-cited factors being involvement with drugs, areas with high crime rates, and areas of poverty. Four, victims may be identified more successfully by officers promoting the three main factors that could conceivably eliminate trafficking: more education (synonymous with training), more collaboration, and stricter enforcement. Five, victims may be identified more successfully by officers acknowledging that trafficking victims and prostitutes hesitate to speak to them because of mistrust; officers can behave accordingly to minimize distrust or draw on the services of intermediaries (such as counselors who are not sworn officers) to build trust. Six, victims may be identified more successfully by officers understanding that their colleagues' perceptions of the proportions of prostitutes who are probably also trafficking victims are widely divergent and involve a strong gender difference, with female officers estimating that half or more of the prostitutes were trafficking victims whereas male officers estimated that much less than half of the prostitutes were trafficking victims.

Results for RQ2

RQ2 asked, How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully? Results for RQ1 showed that trafficking victims and prostitutes mistrust law enforcement, and this mistrust interferes with officers' efforts to identify victims more successfully. The evidence presented in this section suggests that incorporating the victim-centered approach to interactions with potential victims of trafficking is paramount to cultivating a relationship between law enforcement and the victim. The evidence also underscores the

main theme of the Victim-centered Approach – Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation and supporting themes of Training and Education, Collaboration and Communication, and Stricter Enforcement illustrated in Figure 1.

Results for RQ2 are presented in five sections. It begins with officers' definitions of the victim-centered approach to trafficking, followed by the role of the victim-centered approach in improving victim-criminal justice system relationships. Next is whether the victim-centered approach to trafficking victims ought to be equally applied to prostitutes. This is followed by information on officers' supplemental formal training in the victim-centered approach to trafficking. Next is how departments allot resources by designated human sex trafficking units and officers. The final section gives the answer to RQ2.

Definitions of the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking

This first section of results for RQ2 presents officers' definitions of the victim-centered approach to trafficking as one way to identify victims more successfully. It shows that eight officers described the victim-centered approach as compassionate (one male officer, M7, accounting for 14% of the males; all seven female officers, 100%, F8, F9, F10, F11, F12, F13, and F14; Table 13). This evidence elevated the compassion of the victim-centered approach to trafficking to main theme status (Figure 1).

Throughout this chapter, M7 gave the most articulate description of all of the officers of the compassion of victim-centered approach to trafficking (Table 13). In doing so, he provided more evidence of the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism (Figure 1) when compared to the rarity of expanded discourse among the other officers. M7 described the victim-centered approach as a process designed to minimize the additional shock and distress that typically accompanies finding oneself as a suspect in criminal

justice proceedings. He went further to note how victim advocates and service providers encourage survivors to engage in the process and reassure them that engagement with the proceedings, rather than disengagement from them, give them opportunities to help bring their traffickers to justice. F11 similarly defined the victim-centered approach as a form of empowerment (Table 13); both M7 and F11 implied compassion in their definitions.

Table 13

Respondents' Definitions of the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking

Officer	Officers' Definitions of the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking
M1	It requires law enforcement to approach the victim and all the issues that are affecting them in order to have a productive outcome.
M2	I define it as putting the victim first rather than evidence or other things that would normally be important to building a criminal case.
M3	Victim services are generally very good; however, the outcome is largely dependent on the victim's cooperation themselves.
M4	It is only going to work for real or true victims.
M5	Viewing the person as a victim instead of a suspect.
M6	Regardless of the choices that they have made, or if they believe they are a victim or not, they are [victims].
M7	A victim-centered approach seeks to minimize re-traumatization associated with the criminal justice process by providing the support of victim advocates and service providers, empowering survivors as engaged participants in the process, and providing survivors an opportunity to play a role in seeing their traffickers brought to justice.
F8	Use of victim services or civilian response to help allow victims to be more comfortable talking with law enforcement.
F9	A systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner.
F10	Focusing solely on the victim of trafficking such as providing resources to help them rather than strictly on the prosecution.
F11	Empowering survivors as engaged participants in the process.
F12	Empathetic, caring, patient. Truly trying to understand things from the victim's perspective and addressing real concerns and vulnerabilities of the Victims.
F13	Treat the victim as a victim and take efforts not to re-traumatize.
F14	To not treat the victims like prostitutes but to focus on how they got into prostitution.

As another likely dimension of compassion, Table 13 also shows that five officers described the victim-centered approach as interacting with the coerced individual as a victim rather than as a suspect in criminal proceedings (three of seven male officers, M2, M5, M6, accounting for 43%; two of seven female officers, F10 and F13, accounting for 29%; see Table 13). Three officers (21% of 14 officers) either said the approach depends on cooperation (M3, accounting for 14% of the males) or is used to solicit cooperation (three female officers, F8, F10, and F11, accounting for 43% of the females).

Role of Victim-centered Approach in Improving Victim–Criminal Justice System Relationship

The above evidence argued that the officers generally felt that the victim-centered approach to trafficking was compassionate. In turn, compassion ought to improve the relationships between trafficking victims and law enforcement officers. This second section of results for RQ2 considers the role of the victim-centered approach in improving victim–criminal justice system relationships.

The evidence of whether the victim-centered approach improved victims' relationships with law enforcement and the criminal justice system provided fodder for the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism (Figure 1). For example, whereas Table 14 shows that all of the female officers thought that the victim-centered approach to trafficking improved the relationships between trafficking victims and law enforcement, it also shows that five of the seven female officers (71%) simply and succinctly answered “yes” without sharing their rationale. F14 felt that the victim-centered approach improved officers' abilities to persuade victims to get help whereas F10 said that trust can be built based on assurances that the victim will not be lost in yet another coercive system.

Table 14*Role of Victim-centered Approach in Improving Victim–Law Enforcement Relationships*

Officer	Officers Views' of Role of Victim-centered Approach to Improving Victim–Law Enforcement Relationships
M1	Yes
M2	Yes, but it's a slow painful process.
M3	That's a hard question and it depends. Law Enforcement (LE) only plays a small role in the outcome. The rest is handled by the District Attorney, which varies by area. Some areas have better relationships with the public than others. A lot of it comes down to demographics. If you work in a community that doesn't support LE, regardless of how well trained they are, the outcomes do not favor the victims regardless of the crimes. They do not support or want to associate with LE, therefore it makes it challenging to help them.
M4	No. Most prostitutes have taken advantage as a way to avoid jail and continue in a self-detrimental lifestyle.
M5	To a point. I think, for some District Attorneys, it is more of another reason for them to not do their job. There are victims that do take advantage of the system even after Law Enforcement has spent an enormous amount of time, money, and resources at the victim. I believe that there are a lot who will use this system to primarily stay out of jail and not stop the action. Those are the ones that need to be weeded out so as to allow the "Real Victims" to have the chance to actually get out of the dangerous and deadly cycle of sex trafficking, sex abuse, and prostitution.
M6	No. I don't think you can have a victim-centered approach without the strong prosecution of the subject(s) involved. It doesn't help that society and social justice warriors, along with the media, trash law enforcement. The criminal justice system, as it is now, really requires the victim to be 100% involved and due to long term intimidation and fear, along with mistrust of the justice system, it has not been implemented properly.
M7	Yes
F8	Yes
F9	Yes, definitely. It fits the standards of Procedural Justice [procedural justice is the idea of fairness in the processes that resolve disputes and allocate resources].
F10	Yes. When victims know that we are there to assist them and offer protection that will not leave them alone and vulnerable, they will build a better relationship.
F11	I agree 100% that it has helped.
F12	Yes
F13	Yes
F14	Yes. I do believe, in the cases of human trafficking, it has made big improvements. It has made it easier for those investigators to be able to convince the victims to seek help.

Three of the male officers agreed (M1, M3, M7, accounting for 43%) but did not provide much insight, other than M2 describing the process of improvement in relationships as “a slow painful” one (Table 14). Otherwise, the male officers disagreed with the female officers. The lack of emotional sentimentality in their comments on the victim-centered approach improving relationships provided evidence of the pragmatic part of the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism (Figure 1). M3, M5, and M6 said that the legal dimension and tenor of community relationships played a significant role. M3 put the emphasis on victim cooperation, saying that relationships were not improved in cases where victims “do not support or want to associate with law enforcement” because the lack of cooperation makes it “challenging to help” victims; in this, he provided evidence of the main theme of the Victim-centered Approach - Build Trust and Engender Cooperation (Figure 1). M6 echoed M3’s sentiments when he said, “The [current] criminal justice system really requires the victim to be 100% involved” but, for many reasons, they are uninvolved. Further, calls for greater involvement with the district attorney’s office and general prosecutorial enforcement by M4, M5, and M6 in Table 14 provide evidence of the supporting themes of Greater Collaboration and Stricter Enforcement (Figure 1), without which the victim-centered approach to trafficking is often a waste of resources.

Thus, the question of whether the victim-centered approach improved victims’ relationships with law enforcement and the criminal justice system revealed a gender difference. The female officers thought the victim-centered approach improved victims’ relationships. The male officers did not.

Applying the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking to Prostitutes

This third section of results for RQ2 considers whether the victim-centered approach to trafficking victims ought to be equally applied to prostitutes. Results showed that officers tended to be unanimous that the compassionate approach should be applied to prostitutes. Table 15 shows the data, whose brevity provided further evidence of the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism. More male officers agreed (yes: 4 officers, 57%) than disagreed (no: 2 officers, 29%). Only M7 equivocated, pointing out that the question was not easy to answer because each case had its own set of variables. He did, however, distinguish juvenile prostitutes from career prostitutes, voicing the perspective that juvenile prostitutes need the help of a victim-centered approach to trafficking. M5 had a similar attitude. On the other hand, M4 did not think the victim-centered approach should be applied to prostitutes because in many cases it is simply a waste of resources.

Table 15

Applying the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking to Prostitutes

Officer	Officers' Views of Applying the Victim-centered Approach to Prostitutes
M1	Yes
M2	Yes
M3	Yes, however they must be willing to receive help.
M4	No. They will immediately go back to prostitution.
M5	Yes. A lot of prostitutes don't understand that they are being trafficked and need help getting out.
M6	No
M7	Depends. This isn't an easy answer because a lot of prostitutes choose this lifestyle and don't want help. This should apply to all juvenile prostitutes without hesitation.
F8	Yes
F9	Yes
F10	Yes

Officer	Officers' Views of Applying the Victim-centered Approach to Prostitutes
F11	I think every case needs to be looked at separately but some of these cases should be handled the same way.
F12	Yes
F13	Yes, my agency has evolved to doing so in the recent decades. Attitudes have changed drastically since I first started in 2000.
F14	Within reason. I have interacted with some prostitutes and they are aware of what they are doing, they were not coerced or forced, and they appreciate the victim approach as they have told me that means one less fine they pay if they "play victim" for it.

In contrast to the division among the male officers (Table 15), six out of the seven female officers (86%) agreed that the victim-centered approach should apply to prostitutes. F14 equivocated but landed on the skeptical side, pointing out that some prostitutes work the “victim system” to their benefit. On the question of applying the victim-centered approach to prostitutes, there was a gender difference with more females agreeing.

Supplemental Formal Training in Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking

Law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking were presumably influenced by their post-academy formal training in human sex trafficking. This fourth section of results for RQ2 presents information on officers' supplemental formal training. Respondents' responses, listed in Table 16, revealed a gender difference. Male officers were divided in that four male officers (57%) had supplemental training compared to three who did not (43%). In contrast, twice as many females had supplementary trafficking training (5 female officers; 71%) as did not (2 females; 29%). Supplemental training was completed through in-service hours through the respondents' department, the state attorney general office, webinars, seminars, and symposiums that the respondent has attended, or through training provided by non-profit organizations such as the Julie Valentine Center and SWITCH. M14 explained that

“SWITCH is a South Carolina program that focuses on the victims.” In total, nine of the 14 respondents (64%) had supplemental training.

Table 16 shows that there was little commentary other than M2’s emphatic comment, “The victim-centered approach to handling a human trafficking investigation is probably the single most important tool an investigator can be good at!” This was the only comment that contained even a whiff of strong emotion, providing evidence of the overarching theme of Succinct Pragmatism by virtue of its unique nature.

Findings on supplemental formal training in human sex trafficking revealed a gender difference. Twice as many female officers had supplemental training as did not. Comparatively, approximately even numbers of male officers did and did not have supplemental training.

Table 16

Formal Supplementary Training on Human Sex Trafficking

Officer	Formal Supplementary Training on Human Sex Trafficking
M1	Yes
M2	Yes. It was covered in the IAHTI [International Association of Human Trafficking Investigators] training as well as the IHT [training on human trafficking]. The victim-centered approach to handling a human trafficking investigation is probably the single most important tool an investigator can be good at!
M3	No
M4	No
M5	Yes
M6	Yes
M7	No
F8	Yes
F9	Yes. I attended a training class on human trafficking after the academy.
F10	No
F11	Yes, through the Prosecutor’s Office.

Officer	Formal Supplementary Training on Human Sex Trafficking
F12	Yes, from attending seminars and symposiums.
F13	No
F14	Yes. SWITCH is a program in South Carolina that is focused on the victims and how to handle different types of victims involved in human trafficking and forced prostitution.

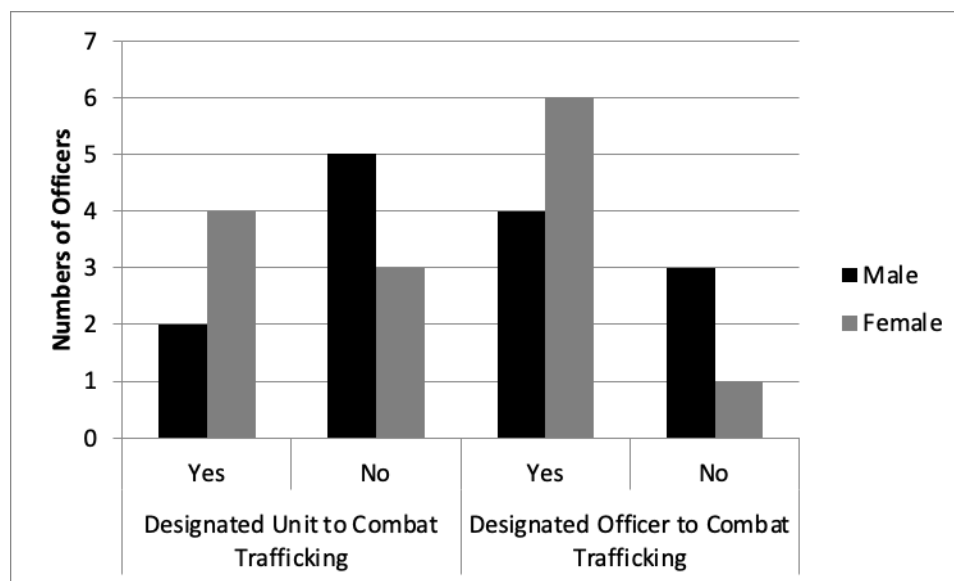
Designated Human Sex Trafficking Units and Officers

Finally, officers were asked if their department had a unit designated for combating human trafficking and/or an officer designated for human trafficking (see Appendix G). Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of officers. For designated units, half as many male officers worked for departments with a designated unit as without a designated unit (two vs. five officers), whereas female officers were divided (four vs. three officers).

For designated officers, male officers were divided between departments with and without designated officers (four vs. three officers), whereas female officers were strongly skewed towards designated officers (six vs. one officer). In other words, the majority of female officers worked in departments with a designated human sex trafficking officer.

Figure 3

Numbers of Male and Female Officers by Department Resources for Human Sex Trafficking



Answer to RQ2

The answer to RQ2 (How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?) was also multi-faceted. First, in a word, the officers' definition of the victim-centered approach was compassion. Second, there was a gender difference on whether the victim-centered approach improved victims' relationships with law enforcement and the criminal justice system in that female officers agreed that it improved relationships whereas male officers disagreed. Third, although there was a slight gender difference, with more females than males agreeing, officers tended toward consensus that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should also be applied to prostitutes. Fourth, findings on the amount of supplemental formal training in human sex trafficking revealed a gender difference, with twice as many female officers who had

training as did not, whereas approximately even numbers of male officers did and did not have supplemental trafficking training. Fifth, when questioned about whether their department had a unit and/or an officer designated for human trafficking, a gender difference arose. For designated units, half as many male officers worked for departments with a designated unit as without a designated unit whereas female officers were divided (four vs. three officers). For designated officers, the majority of female officers worked in departments with a designated human sex trafficking officer.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of trafficking victims and the utility of the victim-centered approach to trafficking, to determine how their insights could be used to identify victims more successfully. Narrative data were collected via online questionnaires completed by 14 law enforcement officers (seven men, seven women) located in California, Florida, Ohio, New York, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. The modal male officer was a 35–44-year-old patrol officer with 10–14 years of enforcement experience and 5–9 years in his current position. The modal female officer was a 45–54-year-old patrol officer with 20–24 years of enforcement experience and 20–24 years in her current position.

Qualitative analysis followed a hermeneutic phenomenology. The overarching theme was Succinct Pragmatism. Three main themes were (a) the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking - Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation, (b) Coerced versus Voluntary, and (c) Mistrust of Law Enforcement. Three supporting themes were (a) Training and Education, (b) Collaboration and Communication, and (c) Stricter

Enforcement. The analysis included gender differences, summarized in Table 17 at the end of this summary.

For training and background, only half of the officers had academy-based training but the majority (12 of 14 officers) had subsequent formal training on prostitution and human sex trafficking. Gender differences in direct experience working prostitution involved female officers serving on the front end as undercover prostitutes and male officers serving on the back end making arrests and related follow-up activities. Male and female officers had similar types of experiences with human sex trafficking cases from a few confirmed incidents. Both male and female officers characterized human sex trafficking as coerced but prostitution as voluntary. Both male and female officers saw the commonality among trafficking victims of vulnerability to being manipulated or coerced stemming from emotional susceptibilities, drug abuse, and addiction, or both; and the commonality among prostitutes as lack of viable alternatives stemming from addiction, poverty, or a combination rather than to emotional vulnerabilities.

There were two research questions. Results for RQ1 showed that trafficking victims and prostitutes mistrust law enforcement, and mistrust interferes with law enforcement officers' efforts to identify victims more successfully. Nonetheless, the answer to RQ1 (How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?) was multi-faceted because the officers' perceptions provided numerous ways to improve under-identification. The following list presents the six findings for RQ1:

1. Victims may be identified more successfully by drawing on officers' definitions and commonalities: They defined trafficking victims as coerced and vulnerable to

manipulation but defined prostitutes as voluntary and lacking in viable educational and financial alternatives to prostitution.

2. Under-identified trafficking victims may be identified more successfully when officers employ the victim-centered approach (with its implications of developing trust) and promote more education (synonymous with training) for all stakeholders, not just law enforcement personnel.
3. Victims may be identified more successfully by officers remaining vigilant to 15 factors that intermittently or regularly contribute to an environment for human sex trafficking, the most-cited factors being involvement with drugs, areas with high crime rates, and areas of poverty.
4. Victims may be identified more successfully by officers encouraging the three main factors that could conceivably eliminate human sex trafficking: more education (synonymous with training), more collaboration, and stricter enforcement.
5. Victims may be identified more successfully by officers acknowledging that trafficking victims and prostitutes hesitate to speak to law enforcement personnel because of mistrust; officers can behave accordingly to minimize mistrust or draw on the services of intermediaries (such as counselors who are not sworn officers) to build trust.
6. Victims may be identified more successfully by officers understanding that their colleagues' perceptions of the proportions of prostitutes who are probably also trafficking victims are widely divergent and involve a strong gender difference, with female officers estimating that half or more of the prostitutes were

trafficking victims whereas male officers estimated that much less than half of the prostitutes were trafficking victims.

The answer to RQ2 (How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?) was also multi-faceted. The following list presents the five findings for RQ2:

1. In a word, the officers' definition of the victim-centered approach was compassion.
2. There was a gender difference on whether the victim-centered approach improved victims' relationships with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, in that female officers agreed that it improved victims' relationships but the male officers disagreed.
3. Although there was a slight gender difference, with more females than males agreeing, officers tended toward consensus that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should also be applied to prostitutes.
4. Findings on the amount of supplemental formal training in human sex trafficking revealed a gender difference, with twice as many female officers who had training as did not, whereas approximately even numbers of male officers did and did not have supplemental trafficking training.
5. When questioned about whether their department had a unit designated for combating human trafficking and/or an officer designated for human trafficking, a gender difference arose. For designated units, half as many male officers worked for departments with a designated unit as without a designated unit whereas

female officers were divided (4 vs 3 officers). For designated officers, most female officers worked in departments with a designated human sex trafficking officer.

Table 17

Summary of Gender Difference Analyses

Aspect of Commentary	Results (<i>n</i> = 7 males, <i>n</i> = 7 females)	Gender Difference
Academy Training on Prostitution or Trafficking	Half had academy training, half did not	No
Post-Academy Training on Prostitution or Trafficking	6 males & 6 females: post-academy training	No
RQ1		
Experience Law Enforcement Side of Prostitution	6 females worked front end as undercover faux prostitutes; 7 males worked back end making arrests	Yes
Experience Law Enforcement Side of Trafficking	7 males & 5 females: direct experience	No
Officer Definitions of Human Sex Trafficking	5 males & 6 females: Coerced provision of sexual services	No
Officer Definitions of Prostitution	5 males & 5 females: Voluntary sexual services for payment	No
Commonalities of Trafficking Victims versus Prostitutes	4 males & 4 females: trafficking victim commonality is vulnerability to manipulation; 5 males & 5 females: prostitute commonality is lack of viable alternatives	No
Under-identification of Trafficking Victims	6 males & 7 females agreed with under-identification	No
Better Ways to Identify Trafficking Victims	3 males & 2 females: victim-centered approach; 3 females: more education; 1 male: stricter enforcement; 3 males & 2 females: no answer	Yes
Factors that Contribute to Trafficking	7 males & 7 females: drugs, crime, and poverty	No
Factors that Could Eliminate Trafficking	2 males & 6 females: more education; 2 males & 4 females: stricter enforcement; 1 male & 2 females: more collaboration	No

Aspect of Commentary	Results (<i>n</i> = 7 males, <i>n</i> = 7 females)	Gender Difference
Hesitance to Speak to Law Enforcement and Associated Barriers to Investigations	6 males & 7 females: victims, prostitutes unavailable to talk to law enforcement; 6 males & 5 females: victims, prostitutes mistrust law enforcement	No
Estimated Proportions of Prostitutes also Human Sex Trafficking Victims	3 males: some; 1 male & 5 females: half; 2 males & 2 females: most	Yes
RQ2		
Victim-centered Approach as Compassion	4 males & 7 females: compassionate approach; 3 males & 2 females: treat person as victim rather than as a suspect	Yes
Role of Victim-centered Approach in Improving Victim-Criminal Justice System Relationship	3 males & 7 females: yes, improved relationship	Yes
Applying the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking to Prostitutes	4 males & 6 females: yes, should be applied to prostitutes	Yes
Supplemental Formal Training in Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking	4 males & 5 females	Yes
Designated Human Sex Trafficking Units and Officers	2 males & 4 females: designated HT units 4 males & 6 females: designated HT officer	Yes

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This study addresses two problems. The first problem is that the law enforcement identification of victims of human sex trafficking has been challenging and has not been successful or effective (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Farrell et al., 2014, 2015; Farrell & Reichert, 2017). The second problem is that the under-identification of human trafficking victims, leading to undercounted victims, has been a consistent and ongoing issue for years (Copley, 2014; Ernewein & Nieves, 2015; Farrell et al., 2010; Farrell & Reichert, 2017).

Human trafficking is gaining attention in the United States. However, despite this positive traction, victim identification is still lacking for a variety of reasons, though the primary factors are because victims often are obscured from the public and victims live in fear of their trafficker. Failure to identify trafficking victims results in two significant concerns: the traffickers are not brought to justice and the victims are often treated as criminals, which results in the victim not being linked with the available resources or care needed to break the cycle. Prior research has indicated that a proactive approach is seldom implemented, and in the cases in which a proactive approach is utilized, traditional vice techniques are usually applied (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Farrell et al., 2015). Law enforcement personnel are typically unprepared to identify victims of human trafficking due to a lack of awareness and training, tools, and resources. These factors contribute negatively to both problems. Proper trafficking victim identification is of paramount importance, and if law enforcement is unaware of what signifies a human trafficking victim, they could consider the individual a criminal rather than a victim. This

ultimately can also lead to several negative impacts, including unsuccessful victim cooperation when building a case against their trafficker, diminishing the victim–law enforcement relationship, leading to mistrust in law enforcement, and law enforcement not applying the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore law enforcement officers’ perceptions of two dimensions of human sex trafficking, the under-identification of victims and the utility of the victim-centered approach to trafficking, to determine how their insights could be used to help identify victims more successfully. The perceptions of law enforcement regarding these topics can help eliminate human trafficking. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings from an empirical and theoretical perspective, implications, study delimitations, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The overarching theme noted was succinct pragmatism. Succinct refers to verbal or written communication that is characterized by precise, compact expression without wasted words. Pragmatism is a philosophy that assesses the truth of beliefs and processes in terms of the success of their practical application. The main themes were victim-centered approach - building trust and engendering cooperation, coerced versus voluntary, and mistrust of law enforcement. The supporting themes were training and education, collaboration and communication, and stricter enforcement. The two research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How can law enforcement officers’ perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims be used to identify victims more successfully?

RQ2: How can law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking be used to identify victims more successfully?

The answer to RQ1 was multi-faceted because the officers' perceptions provided numerous potential ways to improve under-identification. The following list presents the six findings for RQ1:

1. Victims may be identified more successfully by drawing on officers' definitions and commonalities. Trafficking victims were defined as coerced and vulnerable to manipulation, while prostitutes were defined as selling sex voluntarily because they lacked the educational and financial ability to find viable alternatives to prostitution.
2. Victims may be identified more successfully when officers employ the victim-centered approach (with its implications of developing trust) and promote more education (synonymous with training) for all stakeholders, not just law enforcement personnel.
3. Officers may identify victims more successfully by staying vigilant to 15 factors that intermittently or regularly contribute to a trafficking environment; the most-cited factors are involvement with drugs, areas with high crime rates, and areas of high poverty.
4. Officers may identify victims more successfully by promoting the three main factors that could conceivably eliminate trafficking: more education (synonymous with training), more collaboration, and stricter enforcement.
5. Officers may identify victims more successfully by acknowledging that trafficking victims and prostitutes hesitate to speak to them because of mistrust;

officers can behave accordingly to minimize distrust or draw on the services of intermediaries (such as counselors who are not sworn officers) to build trust.

6. Victims may be identified more successfully by officers understanding that their colleagues' perceptions of the proportions of prostitutes who are probably also trafficking victims are widely divergent and involve a strong gender difference, with female officers estimating that half or more of the prostitutes were trafficking victims. In contrast, male officers estimated that much less than half of the prostitutes were trafficking victims.

The answer to RQ2 was also multi-faceted. The following list presents the five findings for RQ2:

1. In a word, the officers' definition of the victim-centered approach was compassion.
2. There was a gender difference on whether the victim-centered approach improved victims' relationships with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, in that female officers agreed that it improved relationships whereas male officers disagreed.
3. Although there was a slight gender difference, with more females than males agreeing, officers tended toward consensus that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should also be applied to prostitutes.
4. Findings on the amount of supplemental formal training in human sex trafficking revealed a gender difference, with twice as many female officers who had training as opposed to those who did not, whereas approximately even numbers of male officers did and did not have supplemental trafficking training.

5. When questioned about whether their department had a unit and/or an officer designated for human trafficking, a gender difference arose.

Discussion

The current study builds on a growing body of research finding that the law enforcement identification of victims of human sex trafficking has been challenging and not successful or effective (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Farrell et al., 2014, 2015), and the under-identification of human trafficking victims, leading to victims being undercounted, has been a consistent and ongoing issue for years (Copley, 2014; Ernewein & Nieves, 2015; Farrell et al., 2010). The under-identification of human sex trafficking victims translates into considerable uncertainty about the potential or actual numbers of trafficking victims throughout the United States. This, in turn, introduces considerable uncertainty about the workforce and other resources that law enforcement must allocate to be adequately prepared. Previous research has shown that local police and sheriffs are often unaware of human trafficking in their jurisdictions and commonly lack the training necessary to investigate these crimes (Farrell et al., 2010; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Gallagher & Holmes, 2008; Newton et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2006). Prior research has indicated that victims have been undercounted (Alvarez & Cañas-Moreira, 2015; Copley, 2014; Ernewein & Nieves, 2015; Farrell et al., 2010), and that victim identification needs to be strengthened to better help human trafficking victims (Okech et al., 2011; Soirila, 2011).

This study corroborates previous research regarding the need for strengthening victim identification as, during the analysis, one out of every three officers failed to provide an answer to the direct question of how to improve identification. This reflects

the possibility that one out of every three officers has minimal input about how to improve identification or, perhaps, has not given their personal role in improvement much thought. The responses to the improved identification question were among the least detailed of the entire data set. Another aspect of prior research that this study corroborates is that victims of human sex trafficking are under-identified, leading to under-counted victims. The data analysis noted that male and female officers agreed almost unanimously that trafficking victims are under-identified. This accentuates that the problem of undercounted victims of human sex trafficking appears to be a well-known issue in law enforcement.

Additionally, this study corroborates previous research that local law enforcement personnel lack the training necessary to investigate these crimes (Farrell et al., 2010; Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; Gallagher & Holmes, 2008; Newton et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2006). The data from this study show that half of the male officers (57%) and half of the female officers (43%) had received prostitution and human sex trafficking training at the academy. This indicates that more training is needed for both topics to better equip officers to investigate these crimes.

Empirical Discussion

Victim-Centered Approach – Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation

Research has emphasized the importance of the victim-centered approach in the prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts identified in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and how it can improve a victim's well-being, decrease future trafficking, and facilitate more effective prosecution procedures (Steiner et al., 2018). The officers referred to the victim-centered approach to human trafficking as a

compassionate tool for empowering individuals who are powerless. It can also help break the cycle of control that traffickers have over their victims. The initial encounter between a law enforcement officer and a trafficking victim is critical, and this single interaction can set the tone of the remaining relationship that the law enforcement officer has with the victim. A victim-centered approach provides a systematic focus on the victim's needs and concerns to ensure compassionate delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner. By taking a victim-centered approach to their investigations, law enforcement officials can make a difference in the lives of sex trafficking victims. Officers can make victims more receptive to the work of agencies and NGOs by focusing on their needs and problems, and recommending available services and resources to the victim, rather than treating the victim as a criminal. This better prepares law enforcement to break the cycle of abuse, violence, and manipulation held by traffickers over the victims.

Coerced versus Voluntary

The Victim-centered Approach theme was directly related to the second main theme, the distinction between Coerced versus Voluntary. According to the officers, trafficking victims were coerced into providing sexual services, whereas prostitutes volunteered to provide sexual services. They also noted that some unknown portion of prostitutes was currently or had been trafficking victims. Trafficking victims shared the commonality of vulnerability to manipulation. Prostitutes shared the commonality of a lack of viable alternatives. Prostitution can be considered one of the oldest forms of oppression; for an individual with no other viable options and after all other alternatives have been exhausted, it becomes the last resort. However, once an individual has no other options or alternatives, this makes the individual highly vulnerable. The two worlds of

prostitution and human sex trafficking are often merged, which creates a significant gray area between these two situations. The distinctions between consensual prostitution and human sex trafficking are blurred. Frequently, in a vast majority of circumstances, the individual encountered by a law enforcement officer may not fit cleanly into either of these two categories. To further complicate matters, the term sexual exploitation, often used in conjunction with prostitution and sex trafficking, can further blur these topics as there are numerous definitions of how this term is applied in various situations.

A global bulletin issued by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on October 9, 2003, set a standard by acknowledging that any individual, regardless of age, affected by sexual violence, is considered a victim of sexual exploitation (Annan, 2003). While the United Nations considers the term to be referring to sexually exploitative crimes based on gender, specifically against women and girls (Gerassi, 2015), in the United States, sexual exploitation is a term most commonly associated with minors involved in sexually exploitative situations. Regardless of which definition of sexual exploitation is utilized, the term should encompass both minors and adults who are affected by sexual violence or are being exploited.

Fundamentally, sexual exploitation can take many forms, can occur to varying degrees to each victim, and is not consistent between victims. For example, minors who choose to sell themselves are considered victims of human sex trafficking because consent is legally unattainable at their age. In other cases, individuals who choose prostitution as a source of income are often controlled and intimidated by a pimp and should be categorized as being sexually exploited and a victim of human sex trafficking. Others can be considered a “voluntary” prostitute by outsiders but could be repaying a

debt to their pimp and should be categorized as being sexually exploited and a victim of human sex trafficking. It is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for a law enforcement officer to establish if a trafficking victim is being manipulated or if a prostitute had a lack of viable alternatives. It is not feasible to categorize these individuals into either one of these categories. These two factors are too similar to each other as both will often emerge together in a victim of human sex trafficking. Ultimately, both someone that is vulnerable and easily manipulated and someone that has a lack of viable alternatives, and who is involved in a sexually exploitative activity, are victims of human sex trafficking.

As a result, there can be inherent challenges in implementing a victim-centered approach to human trafficking victims when encountering these individuals. It can be challenging for law enforcement to define an individual as a willing prostitute or a manipulated sex trafficking victim. The problem of implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking is often exacerbated by the victims' and prostitutes' hesitance to talk to law enforcement because of mistrust. Despite this mistrust, it is prudent that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking is implemented across all encounters with prostitutes or human trafficking victims and not merely when law enforcement believes that some individuals are conducting prostitution willingly and therefore are not "victims."

Mistrust of Law Enforcement

The Coerced versus Voluntary theme was directly related to the third main theme, Mistrust of Law Enforcement. Numerous respondents noted mistrust in law enforcement. A majority of both male and female officers agreed that trafficking victims mistrust law enforcement. Mistrust in law enforcement creates misunderstanding and fosters

ineffective communication between law enforcement and victims. This can create barriers that hinder the ability of law enforcement to implement a victim-centered approach to human trafficking victims. This doubting dimension emerged as a main theme because it also colored the officers' perceptions of prostitutes versus trafficking victims, and was pertinent to how their perceptions could be used to identify victims more successfully.

In most cases, mistrust of law enforcement is due to negative interactions with law enforcement. Other individuals mistrust law enforcement in general without specific occurrences that cause an opposing viewpoint to develop. Others unwaveringly refuse to assist and mistrust law enforcement due to false and manipulative information fed to them by their traffickers, instilling these falsehoods into their belief system. Furthermore, victims will often not reveal their status as trafficking victims, due to concerns that they will be treated as criminals, incarcerated, or deported; this fear further exacerbates their mistrust of law enforcement. In some situations, the victim is trying to flee other struggles in his or her life, such as an abusive family, extreme poverty, drug addiction, or depression/hopelessness/low self-esteem, which the trafficker uses to ensure the victim's obedience. While law enforcement officials are expected to recognize the signs of a human trafficking victim, most law enforcement officers fail to identify victims correctly (D. F. Haynes, 2013; Tucker, 2018).

Gaining a victim's cooperation to be a witness can be a complex process. The fears that victims have must be alleviated in order for victims to become cooperating witnesses in an investigation. However, to gain cooperation, victims must trust law enforcement. While this is often an important and challenging process, implementing the

victim-centered approach to human trafficking can provide a foundation to build the relationship between law enforcement and the victim. Law enforcement can create an environment conducive to trust by maintaining communication, speaking to the victim from a nonjudgmental viewpoint, refraining from making judgmental comments, keeping their word to the victim, and not making promises that cannot be kept.

Supporting Theme of Training and Education

During the data analysis, four of the male officers (57%) did not receive any or received only minimal training in prostitution or human trafficking at the academy. The other three male officers (43%) received academy training, although two male officers, M2 and M4, said that training was minimal (Table 4). Similarly, three of the female officers (43%) did not receive or received minimal prostitution or human trafficking training at the academy. Officer F13 (14%) could not recall training. The other three women (43%) had academy training. Concerning academy training, male and female officers did not differ, in that half of the men and half of the women had received prostitution and human sex trafficking training at the academy. In some instances, the officers received no training at all for prostitution. Some officers were provided a brief overview of the penal code related to prostitution with no further training, while others appeared to have received significant prostitution training.

Some officers received extensive training on human trafficking. However, the data suggest that agencies vary in their emphasis on human trafficking training. It appears that some academies place more emphasis on prostitution training than human trafficking training, while other academies place more emphasis on human trafficking training.

Overall, these findings support the need for more formal training for law enforcement during their academy training.

For supplemental training outside of academy training, male and female officers did not differ in that 86% of both male and female officers had subsequent formal training in prostitution and human sex trafficking. The supplemental training that the respondents participated in varied from in-service training required by the state to maintain licensure, yearly department-sponsored training, human trafficking conferences to courses, and training that the respondents completed on their own. This suggests that more emphasis is placed on supplemental training post-academy than training during the academy.

Law enforcement training is an essential component of professional law enforcement that is meant to prepare law enforcement officers with knowledge and understanding in order to carry out their duties adequately. The law enforcement training academy is a critical first step in providing a foundation of knowledge and skills necessary to enter the realm of professional police work. However, law enforcement training is not standardized across the United States, and the curriculum often varies between states and between academies located in the same state (Blumberg et al., 2019). Equally important is supplemental training on prostitution and human sex trafficking that law enforcement officers receive outside the law enforcement academy. Minimal law enforcement training in identifying and investigating suspected trafficking cases has contributed to the variance in estimates of trafficking victims (Farrell et al., 2010; Gallagher & Holmes, 2008; Renzetti et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2006). This situation is

exacerbated by the fact that many law enforcement officers often mistake probable cases of sex trafficking for prostitution (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014).

The most important basic training that an officer can receive during the academy is how to recognize the signs of a victim of human trafficking. One suggestion to help identify victims of human trafficking is to develop a “pocket” guide that officers can reflect upon while in the field. This guide could include best practices and procedures that are designed to help them recognize the signs of human trafficking, common misconceptions regarding victims of sex trafficking and prostitutes, and available resources in the area. This guide could help mitigate the potential tendency of officers to label a prostitute as a criminal, helping them instead to consider the prostitute as a victim, better preparing the officer to implement the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. Furthermore, this guide could provide an excellent resource to aid law enforcement officers who come into contact with a potential victim of human sex trafficking in the field. A second basic training method to implement could be the training and curriculum available through federal resources, such as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC).

Supplemental training is available on state and federal levels, including through the FLETC. FLETC normally delivers training on a consistent and regular basis across the country. While the COVID-19 pandemic put restrictions and limitations on training delivery, this allowed FLETC leaders to explore alternative training methods (Lefevre, 2021). This resulted in creating the new e-FLETC platform, which can deliver virtual training and increase attendance. The training curriculum is split into two segments. The first segment is led by an instructor and focuses on definitions, indicators, and reporting

protocols. The second segment includes a panel of subject matter experts who are local to the particular geographic region (Lefevre, 2021). This new training platform should prove to be an asset and a benefit to law enforcement agencies throughout the United States, enabling them to provide supplemental training that can be administered conveniently.

Promoting more education (synonymous with training) for all stakeholders, not just law enforcement personnel, was a supporting theme that emerged during the data analysis. Human sex trafficking is poorly understood by the public, as are the signs that identify potential trafficking victims. Public education and raising awareness of human sex trafficking are essential tools to detect and prevent this modern-day form of slavery. While educational campaigns such as the Blue Campaign administered by the Department of Homeland Security have been designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other stakeholders on sex trafficking, the data from this study suggested that more could be done. In addition to the Blue Campaign, NGOs such as Shared Hope International, through the Ambassadors of Hope program, provide education and training to educate youth, young adults, and the public on what sex trafficking is, how it happens, how to recognize the signs of sex trafficking, what can be done to prevent it, how to report it, and how to get involved (Shared Hope International, n.d.).

The supporting theme of training and education for individuals other than law enforcement was not surprising, given that law enforcement often relies on the general public to report suspicious and unusual activity in their communities. It is difficult for the public to comprehend that sex trafficking occurs in their communities. Taking proactive steps against sex trafficking is one beneficial approach to stopping it. One aspect of

proactive action includes early intervention within the school system designed to inform youth and teenagers about human sex trafficking. Such educational programs vary considerably. Some programs are mandated by law while others are voluntary, and programs vary from comprehensive to informative (Tidball & Rajaram, 2017). Several states lack any human trafficking education programs, and some states have implemented several programs into the school system (Tidball & Rajaram, 2017). Legislation can play a critical role in public education and training, specifically, stakeholders other than law enforcement personnel such as schools, hotels, and public transportation employees.

Human sex trafficking legislation varies across the states included in this study. On the federal level, H.R. 4989, the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Prevention Training Act, would mandate the implementation of a curriculum for human trafficking training of students, teachers, and school personnel. On the state level, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia all have legislation that requires school staff to receive education and training on human trafficking. South Carolina introduced a House bill (H4067) on March 11, 2021, that would add Section 16-3-2120, which directs the appropriate agencies to coordinate with the human trafficking task force (an interagency team comprised of multiple stakeholders, including law enforcement and government leaders) to train school personnel and other stakeholders. California and Florida require trafficking prevention education to be provided to students in the public school system in Grades K–12. New York does not appear to have legislation relating to education or training for school personnel. However, Senate Bill S244A, which has passed the New York Senate but not the Assembly as of this writing, would require employees of lodging facilities to have training on human trafficking awareness and recognition of a human trafficking victim.

The data also suggested a need for more reporting hotlines like Children and Family Services or Adult Protective Services for the general public to be able to report potential human trafficking or other suspicious activity. The more educated the general public and stakeholders are, such as school personnel, lodging, and transportation workers, the greater the likelihood of stopping this crime. A more educated public will promote more observant and engaged community members to understand the signs of sex trafficking and potentially identify suspicious activity in their neighborhood; this diligence can be beneficial to law enforcement. An engaged community will help create a partnership between the public and law enforcement, which can be leveraged to stop sex trafficking. Law enforcement often relies on diligent community members to alert law enforcement to suspicious and criminal activity.

More training is needed to familiarize law enforcement personnel and the general public on prostitution, human sex trafficking, the victim-centered approach to trafficking, and the need to be better able to recognize the signs of sex trafficking victims. Practical training includes general public education, specifically educating citizens that sex trafficking exists, and periodic training to stay abreast with the latest laws and statistics. Additionally, greater law enforcement involvement in communities composed of illegal immigrants would help bring awareness to these issues.

Supporting Theme of Collaboration and Communication

Collaboration and communication were another supporting theme noted during the study. Collaboration among key stakeholders could be improved based on this study's findings. Collaboration among agencies is essential because human sex trafficking typically does not occur in one set location. Since human sex trafficking is a borderless

crime, the power of collaboration cannot be underestimated. Collaboration helps promote an understanding of human sex trafficking, an open line of communication, and the ability to share tactics and commonalities between each agency's jurisdiction. Therefore, it is advantageous for agencies to share resources and evaluate and review commonalities of the human sex trafficking incidents occurring in their jurisdictions. Stronger collaborative work between agencies would be helpful to curtail the independent operations of agencies in a region's cities and counties, replacing independence with open partnerships to combat human trafficking on a daily basis. The State Attorney's Office should also synchronize with local law enforcement to ensure smooth investigative processes.

Effective collaboration requires clear communication. Establishing clear communication could encompass having a central location or fusion center that could provide as a communication hub. Because sex trafficking does not stay within jurisdictional lines, trafficking investigations often require the resources and expertise of multiple agencies. Therefore, a clear line of communication should be established among agencies to foster effective collaboration. Effective communication is transparent, robust, consistent, and established both from an internal perspective within the law enforcement agency and from an external perspective amongst law enforcement agencies. Typically, internal and external communication will not thrive independently and should work cohesively.

During the data analysis, two additional subthemes emerged: the victim-centered approach – building trust and engendering cooperation, and mistrust of law enforcement. Trust and relationship building between law enforcement and a potential victim are two

primary factors that help identify a victim of sex trafficking and contribute to a more effective trafficking investigation. Building trust within the community that the law enforcement officer serves is critical to being effective in his or her job duties. This encompasses establishing trust within the general public and victims of human sex trafficking. Multiple respondents spoke of building rapport with victims as key to building the trust and relationship between law enforcement and victims of sex trafficking. Officer F14 stated, “I found being a female deputy has made it easier for me to build a rapport and open up the lines of communication.”

Additionally, during the data analysis, numerous analogous statements mention that having a conversation from an unbiased viewpoint could significantly impact the relationship and help build trust between law enforcement and the sex trafficking victim. A conversation between law enforcement and the sex trafficking victim, from a nonconfrontational and nonjudgmental viewpoint, to better understand the victims and their story of how they came to be in their situation, can have a significant positive impact on the victim.

To gain the trust of the sex trafficking victim, law enforcement must convince the victims that they are safer with law enforcement than their trafficker. If trust can be established, it ultimately leads to the victim’s cooperation. One approach is to ask questions about their circumstances, such as where they live, whom they live with, if they have family in the area, where they obtain money, and where they keep their money. Ultimately, the key to building a relationship of trust is communication. Although an officer can only get as much information as victims are willing to give, efforts to learn

their back story, such as how they came to be in their situation, can expedite the investigation.

Trust can be established through a variety of methods. The most common and effective is to simply talk to the victim without making promises that cannot be kept and to remain patient with the victim at all times. The relationship between law enforcement and the victim takes time to build, if it is to be built at all, and is unlikely to be established with just one encounter. Trust is built through an accumulation of encounters with the victim. Each encounter is meant to build trust and encourage the victims to the point where they are willing to speak with law enforcement comfortably. Law enforcement needs to build the victims' self-esteem, convince them that their story and words mean something, and convince them that speaking with law enforcement is the most important step in removing themselves from "the life."

Supporting Theme of Stricter Enforcement

The crime of human trafficking is considered a "zero-tolerance" policy for the U.S. government. A zero-tolerance enforcement method is a step in establishing stricter enforcement. Stricter penalties for the individuals involved with trafficking, including buyers, sellers, and transporters, can lead to the victim being more cooperative with law enforcement and district attorneys. Since 2000, the United States has established several pieces of legislation to prevent human trafficking in the United States and the world, most notably the TVPA. However, given that hundreds of thousands of people are trafficked each year, these regulations are inadequate (Warren, 2012). The two main criticisms of the TVPA are that it is built on a prosecutorial foundation, requiring victims to be cooperative in the trafficker's prosecution, and the TVPA reflects an abolitionist

perspective aimed at eliminating all types of commercial sex (Jordan et al., 2013; Musto, 2009). Victim cooperation becomes complicated by multiple factors, but a major challenge is that the victims are traumatized to the point where they cannot provide effective court testimony (Gerassi, 2015).

One aspect of stricter enforcement would be for the United States to make prostitution fully illegal and a priority by strictly enforcing the law from a uniform approach. Some states have stricter punishment for the buyer, while some states have stricter punishment for the prostitute. While prostitution is illegal in all 50 states, including Nevada, there is an exception worth noting. Prostitution in Nevada is lawful in 10 counties throughout the state but must be conducted through a licensed house of prostitution (brothel). Once prostitution has been fully outlawed and stricter enforcement has been implemented in the United States, all governments around the world should prioritize making prostitution illegal. Prostitution has been considered a significant driving factor of human sex trafficking (D. M. Hughes, 2002). Instituting stricter enforcement with this crime can decrease the number of victims. There would be no market pressures producing and maintaining the roles of pimps and traffickers as "distributors" if there were no demand for commercial sex, and there would be no force driving the development of a "supply" of persons to be sexually exploited if there were no demand for commercial sex (Shively et al., 2012).

Additionally, stricter enforcement could apply to traffickers, buyers, and sellers. The issue is to what degree. There is vigorous debate on what stricter enforcement would look like and what it would entail. Stricter enforcement could result in legislation banning prostitution, recommending minimum mandatory sentences for traffickers, buyers, and

sellers, or in some cases, mandatory life sentences for anyone involved with human trafficking. While stricter enforcement would result in positive results, there are also negative implications. A study conducted by Akee et al. (2014) found empirical evidence that stricter enforcement will raise the market value of trafficked victims. This factor is primarily due to the greater risk to the trafficker, buyer, or seller if they are arrested and convicted. Stricter enforcement could include anti-trafficking legislation on the national, state, and local level in all areas, both in the United States and abroad, with frequent monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability, honesty, and adherence to the rules. Anti-trafficking legislation should include elements addressing the illegality of demand and funding for demand-prevention programs. It is vital to pass victim-centered legislation that removes the criminal status of the prostituted juvenile or the trafficked overseas victim. Appropriate resources must be committed to investigating buyers of illicit commercial sex services.

Theoretical Discussion

Main Themes

Victim-centered Approach – Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation was a theme that can provide direction for implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. One question is, how does one increase trust? The data analysis showed that law enforcement officers believe that human sex trafficking is “underground” and that victims do not trust law enforcement officers. These factors will give some direction to answering this question. Trust is hard to come by when a victim breaks the law (such as when they engage in commercial sex acts/prostitution), and the

law enforcement officer enforces the law by holding the victim accountable for their crime. Unless and until trust is established, the situation will continue as it has.

While the victim is technically committing a crime, typically the crime of prostitution, law enforcement must remember that these individuals are most likely under duress from their trafficker and have no other choice. Increasing trust could encompass law enforcement not considering the victim a criminal, and instead of arresting the victim for the crime of prostitution, choose to have a conversation with the victim on how law enforcement can best help them get them out of the situation in which they are involved. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, prostitutes pass through the criminal justice system frequently; this cycle often recurs numerous times, and, in many cases, these individuals return to the streets within hours after being arrested. These individuals are often referred to as nuisance offenders. Furthermore, women and girls imprisoned for prostitution are rarely offered resources to assist them in dealing with the conditions that render them vulnerable to further sexual exploitation.

One aspect of increasing trust could be implementing law enforcement personnel who are not officers but take on a more therapeutic role such as a counselor, victim-advocate, or social worker who can mediate between officers and victims and facilitate communication more holistically. An intermediary program that also gives victims other opportunities for gainful employment might offset the lack of trust in speaking directly with officers, especially if a follow-up encounter provides officers with additional opportunities to talk with trafficking victims.

The data analysis noted a clear gender difference, with the women viewing the victim-centered approach to trafficking as the compassionate approach. The men had

other views, some of which included embedded compassion, but less directly so than the women. For example, male officers defined the approach as viewing a suspect in a criminal case as a victim first and suspect second; this is a sign of compassion, though perhaps more reservedly.

The primary way that the law enforcement officers' perceptions of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking can be used to identify victims more successfully is to empower female officers to serve on the front lines of enforcement with this technique. Based on this study's data, from a theoretical perspective, it appears easier for female law enforcement officers to use the victim-centered approach to trafficking victims than men. The victim is more likely to speak with a female than a male for a variety of reasons, but typically because they are able to connect and feel more comfortable speaking with a female than a male. This could be due to female law enforcement officers being better able to speak with victims, who are often female, and can better establish rapport and trust with a victim.

Therefore, it is plausible to assume that a woman implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking to a victim, which in most cases is another woman, can positively impact building a relationship between law enforcement and the victim. The point is that an advocate for intentional gender differences in duties among officers assigned to human sex trafficking and prostitution is needed.

Throughout the data analysis, numerous data points resonated with converging evidence in favor of intentionally promoting gender differences in officer assignments to give each officer duties that he or she does best. The gender difference means women officers could possibly be more helpful in identifying victims because they unilaterally

emerged in the data analysis as believing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking helped. Therefore, more trafficking victims might be identified if female law enforcement officers are more available for the trafficking victims to confide in and speak to.

While the data suggests that females tend to show more compassion and appear to be better able to implement the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, theoretically, there is no clear answer regarding whether male or female officers have an advantage in implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. However, what is unquestionably evident is that an officer's competence, understanding, and compassion for the victim are far more important than gender.

Coerced versus Voluntary. For RQ1, as to how law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims can be used to identify victims more successfully, one approach might be to improve information about whether prostitutes are victims or not. However, the road to improvement is hard to conceptualize due to inherent factors in this theme, notably that law enforcement officers will always have differing opinions on the matter. This road to improvement may be constructed with features that extend beyond mere verbal inquiry at the time of the arrest. One proposal could be a combination of a numeric review of how often this particular individual has been arrested for prostitution, whom this individual is known to associate with, and the individual's attitude at the time of encounter. These items are merely meant to establish markers for comparison. The comparison could include whether a prostitute-by-choice appears to be arrested on prostitution charges with some regularity and shows a more untroubled attitude about it than a victim of human sex trafficking, especially an

individual who is afraid of deportation because he or she is in the country illegally. There is likely going to be a stark contrast between these two individuals. However, despite this comparison model, prostitutes are typically under the umbrella of a trafficker, stating that they act independently but usually get something from their trafficker for their livelihood, which can range from drugs to food to shelter.

We must assume that the initial response to or investigation of the prostitution case is influenced by gender bias. Law enforcement officers may misclassify or underreport human sex trafficking cases, and prostitutes may be treated as criminals rather than victims due to gender bias, whether this bias is explicit or implicit, accidental or on purpose. It may jeopardize law enforcement's capacity to gather information, establish whether the prostitute is a victim of human sex trafficking, and build a case that supports effective prosecution and holds their trafficker accountable for their actions. According to this study's research, male and female officers have very different perspectives on the number of prostitutes who are trafficking victims, resulting in a significant gender gap. Women police believe that the proportion is roughly twice as high as males believe.

Mistrust of Law Enforcement. The vast majority of the respondents interviewed for this study said that one of the most significant challenges they faced was gaining the trust of victims of human trafficking. The mistrust of law enforcement directly results from a few different factors. Ultimately, victims do not trust law enforcement due to previous encounters with law enforcement, preconceived notions of law enforcement, and internalized beliefs and feelings toward the trafficker. Building trust can be accomplished through multiple avenues. One recommendation is to implement the victim-centered

approach to human trafficking in all encounters that law enforcement has with a potential victim. Law enforcement should not choose which situations to apply this approach to, even with frequent prostitution offenders; taking this approach could change how the victim sees law enforcement.

Another recommendation is that law enforcement must convince victims of human trafficking that they will be safer with law enforcement and service providers than with their traffickers. While this may be difficult to achieve, some practical measures could be implemented. First, training on the victim-centered approach to human trafficking and training on the trauma-informed interviewing technique should be required of all law enforcement officers who may encounter a potential victim of human trafficking. This approach should remove any judgmental behavior exhibited by law enforcement, providing the foundation for a fruitful conversation between law enforcement and the victim.

Such training might help investigators learn how to recognize the signs of a human trafficking victim, best practices for implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, and how to mitigate the layers of trauma that trafficking victims have experienced. Second, designated law enforcement personnel (such as a counselor, victim advocate, or social worker) should be assigned to speak with the victim, as many conversations and communication with various law enforcement officers can lead to confusion and frustration. Human trafficking is a cross-border crime, and multiple agencies may interview victims due to the nature of the crime. If this occurs, it would be helpful for organizations to collaborate and coordinate with one another to help victims have fewer interviews and interactions with law enforcement.

Supporting Themes

The supporting themes of training and education, collaboration and communication, and stricter enforcement provide the theoretical basis for practical recommendations. Law enforcement training, in general, appears to be lacking in both topics of human trafficking and prostitution. Almost half of the respondents of this study received no training on these topics. However, most respondents noted that training and public education were needed on these topics. Therefore, training on prostitution, human trafficking, the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, trauma-informed interview techniques, and recognizing the signs of a human trafficking victim is needed during the initial academy training curriculum and through supplemental training. This training can be provided through federal, state, and local resources along with numerous NGOs that offer training on a variety of topics related to human trafficking.

In support of the training and education supporting theme, another method to identify victims more successfully would be for law enforcement agencies to foster collaboration and communication among other agencies to become a united front in eliminating human sex trafficking. This can be done through designated law enforcement personnel who liaise between agencies, regional task forces, or other team collaboration events that promote cooperation. Stricter enforcement will take a coordinated effort between various stakeholders, including lawmakers (senators and representatives), judges, district attorneys, and law enforcement. In this scenario, stricter enforcement starts at the top with lawmakers who draft meaningful and robust human trafficking legislation that establishes severe penalties for an individual involved with human trafficking. With this new legislation in effect, law enforcement conducts thorough

investigations into any individuals involved in human trafficking, utilizing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, which will establish and preserve victim cooperation, therefore bringing a solid and concrete case before the district attorney to prosecute. The district attorney should bring the individual to trial and present the case before the courts. Lastly, judges should ensure that sentencing guidelines are followed, and the trafficker is sentenced to the maximum sentence punishable by law. Ultimately, stricter enforcement requires several stakeholders and numerous moving parts, which are not easy to coordinate.

Implications

This section provides the findings' theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. The findings are presented according to the perceptions of law enforcement professionals who provided the data. The implications will highlight some of the research's findings as they pertain to the context provided by the Literature Review.

Theoretical

The conclusions drawn during the data analysis correlate strongly with the research summarized in Chapter 2. The themes that emerged in the Literature Review were also themes noted after data analysis on the survey responses. The theory guiding this study is Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, as law enforcement officers may experience cognitive dissonance during their routine law enforcement work. As a result, law enforcement officers may be biased when encountering a prostitute or human trafficking victim.

One implication in the results of this study was that it was anticipated that there would be evidence of cognitive dissonance; however, during the data analysis, there was

minimal evidence to support this theory and not nearly as much as was anticipated. In terms of cognitive dissonance, the only evidence to support this theory were “clipped” responses noted in some respondents' answers. These clipped responses could be taken as a potential indication of dissonance. In other words, the respondent gave a minimal response to a question since they wanted to say as little about it as possible because they believe that prostitution or human trafficking is a disturbing topic, and the respondent did not want to talk about it.

There is significant agreement among the officers in some of the emerging themes. One example of this agreement is that the officers agreed that prostitutes are voluntary participants in providing sexual services while human trafficking victims are coerced and are easy to manipulate into providing sexual services. Another example of this consensus is that officers nearly unanimously agreed that human trafficking victims are under-identified. The respondents' agreement from multiple jurisdictions, who were in various stages of experience in their law enforcement careers, showed striking convergence of perspective. The officers showing consensus on these themes is counterintuitive to cognitive dissonance theory.

Empirical

The perspectives shared in this study from local law enforcement officers mirror the literature on several topics. These include the need to implement the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, building trust and the cooperation of the victims, training and education on human trafficking are needed, greater collaboration and communication among law enforcement agencies, and, finally, stricter enforcement. One example is the lack of training for law enforcement on human trafficking, a theme which arose in over

half of the respondents and was also a persistent theme in the Literature Review, including studies by Banachowski-Fuller (2017) and Mapp et al. (2016). Table 4 shows that exposure to academy-based training in prostitution and human sex trafficking was essentially divided across both the male and female officers. Four male officers (57%) did not receive or received minimal prostitution or human trafficking training at the academy. The other three men (43%) received academy training.

Similarly, three of the female officers (43%) did not receive or received minimal prostitution or human trafficking training at the academy. Officer F13 (14%) could not recall training. The other three women (43%) had academy training. Male and female police officers had the same amount of supplemental training in prostitution and human sex trafficking: 86% of male and female officers have had training on prostitution and human sex trafficking. The implication here is that this study builds upon the prior literature regarding the lack of training for local law enforcement officers, as the data suggest that training is still lacking for law enforcement at the academy. In contrast, this study's data suggest that supplementary training on human trafficking occurs more frequently than training in the academy.

Another important implication of this study was the importance of collaboration and communication among law enforcement agencies. This theme that emerged during the data analysis supports a study conducted by Stewart (2011), which found that Texas law enforcement officials rated collaboration amongst agencies as "fair" or "poor" (using a 4-item index dependent variable of "very good," "good," "fair," and "poor"). Based on this theme emerging from the officers involved in this study, the data suggest that interagency communication needs improvement. Moreover, Sander (2010) pointed out

that for the law enforcement response to human trafficking to be successful, it requires more than just a willingness to work together; it also requires the ability for these agencies to share data, information, and intelligence effectively.

Collaboration among law enforcement agencies can be challenging. In some cases, each agency has a particular way of conducting prostitution or human trafficking investigations in its jurisdiction. Sometimes, an inherent cultural difference between agencies can play a factor and create barriers that break down collaboration and communication between agencies. Collaboration among agencies can take many forms, including sharing resources, specialized training, emergency preparedness planning, or specialized task forces. Collaboration and communication are vital because each agency has unique perspectives, viewpoints, and expertise on human trafficking that can effectively mitigate and combat human trafficking. Law enforcement agencies are more effective as a united front against human trafficking than when divided. The data from this study suggest that more collaboration and communication are needed among law enforcement agencies. Numerous respondents noted that stronger collaboration and communication were needed to combat human trafficking successfully.

Another important implication of this study is that respondents advocated for stricter enforcement, which emerged as a supporting theme. Prior research has noted that state prosecutors are wary about using new human trafficking laws and instead choose to charge offenders with offenses such as rape, kidnapping, or pandering with which prosecutors are more familiar; human trafficking cases are often prosecuted under federal statutes and criminal laws relating to slavery and involuntary servitude, often pieced together and not as robust as needed (DOJ, 2017a; Farrell et al., 2012; Newton et al.,

2008). This study suggests that stricter enforcement is needed and that the implementation of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking and building trust with law enforcement is dependent on improving enforcement, as, without it, it will be difficult if not almost impossible to build a relationship and trust with a victim of human trafficking. Respondents noted that they believed victims were under-identified, with male and female officers agreeing almost unanimously that trafficking victims are under-identified. In the majority of instances, victims do not self-report, leaving law enforcement to discover human trafficking victims. As a result, statistics on the number of people who have been victims of human trafficking are difficult to estimate, leading to under-identification. One implication of this study is the respondents' difference in definitions of prostitution and human trafficking. Prostitutes were conducting the activity voluntarily, while human trafficking victims were coerced into conducting the activity. The Coerced versus Voluntary main theme emerged due to the differences noted by these definitions. It is possible that, at least to a certain extent, under-identification is due to law enforcement defining prostitutes and victims of human trafficking differently. Only one officer suggested that human sex trafficking is synonymous with prostitution. The data analysis noted that five of seven male officers (71%) and six of seven female officers (86%) defined human sex trafficking as coercion.

Perhaps the difference in definitions contributes to the under-identification of human trafficking victims. The data observed during this study suggest that law enforcement has differing definitions of prostitution and human trafficking. Prostitution is a significant driving factor of human sex trafficking, and prostitution is a type of human sex trafficking (Clawson et al., 2009; D. M. Hughes, 2002; Hunt, 2013). Previous

studies have discovered that most women engaged in prostitution want to exit “the life” but have difficulty doing so. According to a 1998 San Francisco survey, 88% of prostitutes desired to leave the sex trade but could not find a way out or were afraid to leave because of their traffickers' threats (Hunt, 2013; Raymond et al., 2001). In comparison, in a 2003 study published in the scientific *Journal of Trauma Practice*, 89% of prostitution victims desire to leave (Farley et al., 2004). Therefore, it is apparent that prostitutes want to leave their traffickers but cannot, due to various factors often outside of their control.

From the results observed in this study, implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking can be dependent on how the officer views a prostitute or a victim of human trafficking. For example, an officer who encounters a prostitute during a routine patrol could conduct his or her interaction and handle this encounter based on the definition known to the officer that prostitutes conduct this activity voluntarily. This preconceived notion will significantly decrease the chances of the victim-centered approach to human trafficking being implemented since the officer may not view the prostitute as a victim of human trafficking. The issue with this example is that victims are often isolated, do not self-report, and are fearful of law enforcement. Therefore, law enforcement must do everything in their power to ensure effective communication is established in every encounter.

One recommendation to help alleviate this inconsistency would be to implement the victim-centered approach to human trafficking in all encounters with prostitutes, as it is impossible to distinguish between the two individuals without more information. Another recommendation, which harmonizes with the training and education supporting

theme, would be for law enforcement agencies to provide training on the signs of a human trafficking victim, relationship building and effective communication strategies, and developing policies and procedures for law enforcement officers to follow during encounters with prostitutes and human trafficking victims. The training could include various curriculum enhancement methods such as case studies, guest speakers, videos, field training, and student-centered exercises intended to enrich and engage the student in the learning experience and emphasize the significance of taking a victim-centered approach.

Practical

This study found that law enforcement officers believe the victim-centered approach to human trafficking is a compassionate tool for empowering powerless victims. Additionally, the data showed that most law enforcement officers believe the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should be applied to prostitutes. An important implication from this study is the endorsement by officers that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should be applied to prostitutes. The implication is that half of the officers who participated in this study had zero or minimal training in prostitution and human sex trafficking as new recruits. Only one officer had mandatory training, which implies that law enforcement officers develop their perspectives on the job of what constitutes a prostitute versus a human trafficking victim and only develop a few preconceived ideas regarding the two that are generated from formal training. The issue with this is that while officers believe that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should be implemented, law enforcement lacks training on how to implement the approach properly. It appears that law enforcement officers ultimately reflect the

“lived experience” in its most elementary form. From a practical standpoint, one must assess whether formal training is effective compared to what officers will learn on the street. Based on “boots on the ground” lessons in prostitution and human sex trafficking, one might conclude that their opinions are based on the amount of prostitution and human sex trafficking they have seen and its frequency: a few incidents here and there over a year as opposed to a morass of daily exposure.

An intriguing aspect of the results of this study is the implementation of formal training on prostitution and human trafficking and the comparison among respondents and their timing of academy attendance (before or after 2001). This comparison is noteworthy because of the key piece of legislation, known as the TVPA, signed into law on October 28, 2000, which was the first federal law to address human trafficking. The officers’ academy training on human sex trafficking did not correlate with TVPA, another form of evidence that police training has not changed much in 20 years. Prior research conducted by Blumberg et al. (2019) noted that the complexity of modern policing demands that law enforcement agencies broaden the training methods of law enforcement officers.

Formal training is generally grounded in the most effective and up-to-date methods for solving a problem. When law enforcement officers participate in standardized formal training with qualified and effective trainers, they are better able to understand prostitution and human trafficking and the impact these issues have on the victims and the communities in which they occur. Through formal practical training, officers learn to identify the signs of a human trafficking victim, tactics for identifying prostitutes (including reviewing the crimes that generally surround the crime of

prostitution such as drug violations, extortion, theft, and robberies), how to implement the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, interviewing and relationship building skills, de-escalation techniques, and community and NGO resources available for victims of human trafficking.

When developing a curriculum for one of the topics mentioned above, it is imperative to tailor the curriculum to appeal to the broadest audience possible. One way to accomplish this is to understand the three learning styles and incorporate each when developing the curriculum. The three primary learning styles are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Visual learners are best taught by a curriculum geared towards observing or watching. Auditory learners are best taught by listening or hearing. Kinesthetic learners are best taught by hands-on approaches. For formal training to be practical, these learning styles must be blended into the curriculum to make the training as effective as possible.

Some effective strategies to implement in delivering formal training include presenting material clearly and in an organized manner to appeal to a broad audience. Ensure to accommodate the various learning styles in the curriculum delivery (training should not be delivered by only one method). Kinesthetic experiences can be integrated into formal training by establishing foundational concepts by incorporating tangible experiences. For example, kinesthetic training on human trafficking would be more effective in an area with a high concentration of prostitution than in a suburban residential neighborhood. Formal training can be effective when appropriately applied; therefore, it is imperative that training on prostitution, human sex trafficking, and other related topics is incorporated into the law enforcement training academy curriculum.

On the other hand, what law enforcement officers learn on the street, through their “lived experience” of prostitution and human sex trafficking, can have both positive and negative impacts. On a positive note, officers typically understand the jurisdiction in which they are assigned for a routine shift; the officers know who belongs and who does not belong. This experience allows the officer to detect suspicious or illegal activity more efficiently. Officers understand what works and what does not work in their area, and their “lived” experience is beneficial in this regard. Therefore, the “lived experience” of what has been learned in the street is practical and positive.

A negative impact of what officers learn on the streets through their “lived experience” can influence their understanding and worldview of prostitution and human trafficking. The “lived experience” can thus be acquired through negative encounters with prostitutes, potentially tainting the officer’s bias toward prostitutes in the future. However, one critical aspect is never to compare these individuals. An officer must remember that everyone he or she encounters is independent of the other and should bear in mind that just because an officer had a negative encounter with one prostitute does not mean he or she will with another prostitute.

Another potential negative impact of the “lived experience” is the training that less experienced officers learn from more experienced officers. Tenured personnel, such as field training officers or sergeants, have considerable influence over less experienced officers. A less experienced officer is much more capable of being molded to learn specific aspects of his or her job, especially from a more experienced officer, which he or she may not understand to be the most effective or correct way of handling a situation. A

less experienced officer may be molded by a more experienced officer with a differing opinion or negative viewpoint of a prostitute.

In some cases, less experienced officers' decisions on the job in situations directly result from how their superior officer, such as a sergeant or a senior officer, wants to handle a situation. This influence can impact how an officer views a particular aspect of his or her job. One example would be a less experienced officer establishing his or her worldview from other officers that may have a tainted bias towards prostitution and human trafficking. Subsequently, this could negatively impact how the officer views a prostitute or a human trafficking victim. This can be detrimental, especially when implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. There could be instances when officers learn something through their “lived experience” that does not provide the best foundation for incorporating a victim-centered approach to human trafficking.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that law enforcement officers place a high value on more education and training on human trafficking and prostitution. The best method to meet this request is through formal training conducted through the law enforcement training academy and supplemental training throughout the law enforcement officers' careers.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

As with any study, some delimitations related to the current research should be discussed. First, this study was conducted using a qualitative research method based on a phenomenological approach. The rationale behind this decision was due to the study

seeking to understand the perceptions of law enforcement related to the problem statement. I believe that approaching this study from this perspective allows the respondent to discuss, without restriction, the problems this study addresses. It is worth noting that a mixed-method approach could also have been used for this study, as the data collected from some of the survey responses could have been used for quantitative approaches as well, and this approach may be applied in similar studies in the future.

Second, this study is limited to the states of California, Florida, Ohio, New York, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. These states were included, as, based on prior research, they appear to have some of the highest numbers of reported human trafficking cases (Bejinariu, 2019; National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2021; Polaris Project, 2019b). It would be advantageous to include more states in a future study. This study is readily accessible for any researcher to replicate and build upon as the software used in this study is reasonably inexpensive or free (QSR®NVivo 12, Google, Excel). The law enforcement agencies' contact information was conducted through open-source and publicly available methods, typically through the law enforcement agencies' websites or in a central registry maintained by a state agency (such as the state Attorney General's office).

Third, this study was limited to law enforcement officers employed with a local police department or sheriff's department. The rationale behind this decision stemmed from prior research showing that local law enforcement is the most likely to encounter a victim of human trafficking (Mapp et al., 2016). Local law enforcement agencies play a fundamental role in addressing the problem of human trafficking. In terms of sample population among law enforcement agencies, this study excluded university and college

police departments, airport police, hospital or medical center police, and park police. The reasoning behind this decision was that this study sought to understand the perceptions of local law enforcement officers who are most likely to encounter a victim of human sex trafficking. Law enforcement personnel employed by one of the excluded agencies typically patrol a specific area (i.e., airport, hospital, or college/university). They do not typically conduct a routine patrol outside of their assigned jurisdiction, in contrast to law enforcement personnel employed by a city, town, village, or county police or sheriff's department with a significantly larger area to patrol, thus, increasing the chances of encountering a victim of human sex trafficking. This is not to say that human trafficking does not occur within the specific areas above; it most definitely can, as human trafficking is borderless. However, based on this study's aims, these excluded agencies did not fit the study's overall goal. A future study could easily incorporate these agencies.

This study used a qualitative research method, specifically a hermeneutical phenomenology approach. The study would have benefited from being conducted from a mixed-methods approach, as there were numerous survey questions and their responses that could have been analyzed using quantitative methods. A future study could incorporate the same survey instrument or one similar and conduct the data analysis using a mixed-methods approach.

Limitations

As with any study, some limitations related to the current research should be discussed. Ultimately, the major limitation in this study was that prostitution and human sex trafficking are “underground,” and it is difficult to get answers. Thus, the main theme of succinct pragmatism emerged during the data analysis. The second limitation, which

ties into the overarching theme of succinct pragmatism, was the sole use of a qualitative research method, specifically from a hermeneutical phenomenological perspective. The rich detail generally associated with hermeneutical research was not observed for this study, which could not have been determined before data collection. The third limitation in this study was that prostitution and human sex trafficking are not just limited to the United States, nor the seven states included in this study, and thus, research of a similar nature in other countries and different states could yield different results.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions of law enforcement officers relating to the under-identification of human trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. This study solicited 3,462 law enforcement agencies from seven states: California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Several law enforcement agencies that were solicited did not participate for a variety of reasons, including not having staff with sufficient experience to qualify, being too busy to complete the survey, their department not participating in external studies, or simply, not responding to the invitation email for unknown reasons. Overall, 34 law enforcement agencies (29 police departments and five sheriff departments) replied to the permission email advising that they would allow their department to participate and had forwarded the email to their staff. Phone numbers for the law enforcement agencies were easily available, and at times, more readily accessible than locating the email for the police chief or sheriff. I strongly believe that a recruitment approach of first sending the permission email and then conducting a follow-up phone call within 48 hours would have likely resulted in more responses. This scenario presents

two recommendations for future research. First, given the difference between the solicited agencies and the agencies that responded, there are numerous law enforcement agencies that are still available from the states that this study covered to recreate a similar study in the future. The second recommendation for future research would be to ensure a future study's recruitment method incorporating the use of both email and phone communication for the solicited law enforcement agencies.

As noted previously in Chapter 5, one suggestion to help identify victims of human trafficking would be to develop a guide that officers can reflect upon that helps them recognize the signs of human trafficking and common misconceptions regarding victims of sex trafficking and prostitutes. Another recommendation for a future study is to talk with law enforcement officers and find out their perspectives on this guide and solicit more signs of human sex trafficking from their experience.

Regarding training, the results of this study indicated that there appears to be scant training at the academy, so the officers were mainly educated while on the job. Another recommendation for future research is a qualitative study in which officers are interviewed to understand specifically how they have learned to recognize trafficking victims and prostitutes.

Regarding the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, the study results noted that there appear to be gendered differences indicating that women may be more inclined toward the victim-centered approach to trafficking than men. Women may be more effective in human sex trafficking environments for various reasons related to emotional intelligence, such as being able to connect with victims, as most victims are women, and having greater flexibility and understanding of the victims. A

recommendation for future study could include exploring this concept by interviewing women officers who have experience enforcing prostitution and human trafficking laws through a qualitative research model.

Summary

This study, which uses a qualitative research design, explores perceptions of local law enforcement officers relating to the under-identification of human sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking to better identify victims. The thematic analysis results provided overarching, main, and supporting themes from the law enforcement professionals related to these two topics. The overarching theme was Succinct Pragmatism. Three main themes were the Victim-centered Approach to Trafficking – Building Trust and Engendering Cooperation, Coerced versus Voluntary, and Mistrust of Law Enforcement. Three supporting themes were Training and Education, Collaboration and Communication, and Stricter Enforcement.

The study results yielded a wealth of information on the research questions and broader subjects that address the officers' definitions of a prostitute and a human trafficking victim, commonalities that officers' notice among prostitutes and human trafficking victims, and possible solutions to combating human trafficking beyond victim identification and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. The results of this study are unique in that there was no other study found in the research that utilized a qualitative research method, specifically from a hermeneutical phenomenological approach, that addressed these two topics. Additionally, this is the first study to look at gender differences among officers with respect to the topics mentioned above.

There are a few key takeaways from this study. First, law enforcement officers believe that the victim-centered approach to human trafficking is a compassionate tool for empowering individuals who are powerless. Second, mistrust of law enforcement is a significant barrier to both implementing the victim-centered approach to human trafficking and human trafficking investigations. Numerous respondents noted that prostitutes, trafficking victims, and other people associated with them mistrusted law enforcement deeply. Third, law enforcement officers believe that trafficking victims were coerced to provide sexual services while prostitutes volunteered to provide sexual services and that some unknown portion of prostitutes are currently or previous trafficking victims. Fourth, law enforcement training on prostitution and human trafficking is insufficient; however, the results from the study indicate that law enforcement officers want more training and education on these topics for both themselves and the public. The more that is understood about human trafficking and prostitution, the better law enforcement and the communities they serve will be positioned to combat human trafficking.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Dear Law Enforcement Officer,

As a student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice. The purpose of my research is to understand law enforcement officers' perceptions of the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be law enforcement officers with the rank of patrol officer or sergeant of a local law enforcement agency in the states of California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, or Virginia; 18 years of age or older; enforcing laws relating to prostitution and human trafficking, and willing to participate in the survey.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire. It should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete the procedure listed, depending on how much you choose to share. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click the survey questionnaire link here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NQPDQ9J>

A consent document is provided on the first page of the questionnaire. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the button to proceed to the questionnaire. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

You may contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Sean J. McKnight
Ph.D. Student

Appendix B: Permission Email

Dear Police Chief / Sheriff,

As a graduate student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The title of my research project is The Human Trafficking Epidemic in the United States: Perceptions of Law Enforcement on Improving Victim Identification and the Victim-Centered Approach. The purpose of my research is to better understand law enforcement officers' perspectives on the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking.

I am writing to request your permission to allow law enforcement patrol officers and sergeants employed by your law enforcement agency to participate in my research study. I would ask you to please forward the attached recruitment letter to officers/deputies that are willing to participate.

Participants will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email.

Sincerely,

Sean McKnight
Ph.D. Student

Appendix C: Consent Form

The Human Trafficking Epidemic in the United States: Perceptions Of Law Enforcement on Improving Victim Identification and the Victim-Centered Approach

Sean J. McKnight
Liberty University
Helms School of Government

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a law enforcement officer of a local law enforcement agency in the states of California, Florida, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia; 18 years of age or older; enforce laws relating to prostitution and human trafficking; a law enforcement patrol officer or sergeant; willing to participate in the research. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research. Sean J. McKnight, a doctoral candidate in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to better understand the insights of law enforcement officers regarding the under-identification of sex trafficking victims and the victim-centered approach to human trafficking. The perceptions of law enforcement regarding these topics can make an important impact on eliminating human trafficking.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- 1) Complete an anonymous, 30 to 45-minute survey.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include that your insights into these topics can help shape future legislation, regulation, or policy regarding human sex trafficking victims.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. You may feel a little discomfort from answering some of the survey questions relating to sex trafficking. To decrease the impact of these risks, you can choose to skip any question or stop participating in the survey at any time.

Confidentiality: Your survey answers will be sent to a link at SurveyMonkey.com, where data will be stored in a password-protected electronic format. Survey Monkey does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

Survey Withdrawal: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please [exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Sean J. McKnight. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Sharon Gordon-Mullane.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher or faculty advisor, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Consent: Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records, or you can print a copy of the document for your records. Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher or faculty advisor using the information provided above.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.
[Agree] or [Disagree]

Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire

Human Trafficking in the United States: Perceptions of Law Enforcement on Improving Victim Identification and the Victim-Centered Approach

Standardized Structured Survey Questions

Demographic Data

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your race or ethnicity?
3. What is your age?
4. In which state are you located?
5. Current Job Title
6. Do you enforce laws relating to prostitution or human trafficking?

Participant Data

7. For how many years have you been in law enforcement?
8. For how many years have you worked for the department where you are currently employed?
9. During what year did you attend the law enforcement academy?
10. Did the academy curriculum cover any training related to prostitution? If so, please elaborate.
11. Did the academy curriculum cover any training related to human sex trafficking? If so, please elaborate.
12. Have you had supplemental training (outside of the law enforcement academy) on human trafficking or prostitution? If so, please elaborate.
13. Have you had supplemental training (outside of the law enforcement academy) on the victim-centered approach to human trafficking? If so, please elaborate.

Police/Sheriff Department questions

14. What is your current role in the department?
15. Do you have experience working prostitution cases? If so, please elaborate.
16. Do you have experience working human sex trafficking cases? If so, please elaborate.
17. Does your department have a unit designated for combating human trafficking?
18. Does your department have an officer designated for human trafficking-related matters?

Prostitution questions

19. How would you define prostitution?
20. Have you noticed any commonalities among the individuals who have been arrested for prostitution? If so, please elaborate.
21. Are these individuals hesitant to speak with law enforcement?
22. Do you believe that prostitutes are victims of sex trafficking, or do you believe these individuals are conducting prostitution willingly?

Human Sex Trafficking questions

23. How would you define human sex trafficking?
24. Have you noticed any commonalities among victims of sex trafficking?
25. Are these individuals hesitant to speak with law enforcement?
26. Can you explain how a human sex trafficking investigation in your jurisdiction normally begins?
27. Can you explain your department's procedures when coming into contact with a human sex trafficking victim?
28. What barriers do you face when investigating a human sex trafficking case?
29. Research indicates that human sex trafficking victims are under-identified. Do you believe that sex trafficking victims are under-identified?
30. What do you believe are some contributing factors that create an environment for human sex trafficking?
31. What do you think is necessary to eliminate human sex trafficking? (For example: stricter penalties, stronger collaboration among agencies, educational campaigns, etc.)

Victim-Centered Approach questions

32. How would you define the victim-centered approach to human trafficking?
33. Do you believe the victim-centered approach to human trafficking should be applied to prostitutes?
34. The research indicates that some police officers view prostitutes as criminal offenders, while others view them as victims. Please explain your viewpoint and how you perceive these individuals.
35. What suggestions would you provide to better identify victims of sex trafficking?

36. Do you believe the victim-centered approach has helped improve the victim's relationship with law enforcement and the criminal justice system?


Appendix E: IRB Approval

D do-not-reply@cayuse.com
 Fri 9/10/2021 4:27 PM

To: Mullane, Sharon Gordon (Helms School of Government); McKnight, Sean

You don't often get email from do-not-reply@cayuse.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content.]



LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 10, 2021

Sean McKnight
 Sharon Mullane

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-100 Human Trafficking in the United States: Perceptions of Law Enforcement on Improving Victim Identification and the Victim-Centered Approach

Dear Sean McKnight, Sharon Mullane,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(j). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
 The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

[Reply](#) | [Reply all](#) | [Forward](#)

Appendix F: Entire Sample Demographics

The first seven questions of the survey questionnaire were designed to solicit demographic data from the respondents. Survey Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7 were designed to ensure that the respondent met the requirements for participation in the survey. If the respondent answered the question in a manner that was not consistent with the survey requirements, he or she was exited from the survey after completing Question 7.

A total of 294 responses were received during the survey period; of this total, 293 agreed to Question 1, which was the informed consent disclosure while one respondent did not agree to the informed consent disclosure. For Question 2, which focused on gender, 270 respondents provided an answer while 24 respondents skipped the question. Of the 270 respondents, 44 (16.30%) were female, 218 (80.74%) were male, and 8 (2.96%) preferred not to answer. For Question 3, which focused on race or ethnicity, 270 respondents provided an answer while 24 respondents skipped the question. Of the 270 respondents, four (1.48%) were Asian, five (1.85%) were Black or African American, 27 (10.00%) were Hispanic or Latino, one (0.37%) was Middle Eastern or North African, five (1.85%) were Multiracial or Multiethnic, three (1.11%) were Native American or Alaska Native, 222 (82.22%) were White, and three (1.11%) were another race or ethnicity. For Question 4, which focused on age, 272 respondents provided an answer while 22 respondents skipped the question. Of the 272 respondents, seven (2.57%) were 18 to 24 years of age, 82 (30.15%) were 25 to 34 years of age, 88 (32.35%) were 35 to 44 years of age, 67 (24.63%) were 45 to 54 years of age, 27 (9.93%) were 55 to 64 years of age, and one (0.37%) were 65 to 74 years of age. For Question 5, which focused on the respondent's state, 272 respondents provided an answer while 22 respondents skipped the

question. Of the 272 respondents, 38 (13.97%) were located in California, 51 (18.75%) were located in Florida, 28 (10.29%) were located in New York, 18 (6.62%) were located in Ohio, 43 (15.81%) were located in South Carolina, 41 (15.07%) were located in Texas, and 53 (19.49%) were located in Virginia. For Question 6, which focused on the current job title of the respondent, 272 respondents provided an answer while 22 respondents skipped the question. Of the 272 respondents, 148 (54.41%) had a current job title of Patrol Officer, 49 (18.01%) had a current job title of Sergeant, and 75 (27.57%) selected “none of the above.” For Question 7, which focused on if the respondent enforced laws relating to prostitution or human trafficking, 272 respondents provided an answer while 22 respondents skipped the question. Of the 272 respondents, 252 (92.65%) provided an answer of “Yes” while 20 (7.35%) provided an answer of “No.” Through the course of this question sequence, 89 respondents were disqualified due to not meeting the requirements of the study. Of the 89 respondents, one (1.12%) respondent did not consent to the informed consent disclosure, 71 (79.78%) respondents answered that they were not at the rank of a patrol officer or sergeant, 13 (14.61%) respondents answered that they did not enforce laws related to prostitution or human trafficking, and four (4.49%) respondents answered that they were both not at the rank of a patrol officer or sergeant and did not enforce laws related to prostitution or human trafficking.

The respondents' law enforcement total career work experience ranged from less than 1 year of experience to more than 25 years of experience, which was the focus of Question 8 of the survey questionnaire. Of the 157 respondents that provided an answer to this question, 94 respondents (59.87%) had over 10 years of experience in law

enforcement while 63 respondents (40.12%) had less than 10 years of experience in law enforcement.

Table F-1
Law Enforcement Total Career Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Less than 1 year	6	3.82%
1-3 years	12	7.64%
3-5 years	15	9.55%
5-10 years	30	19.11%
10-15 years	25	15.92%
15-20 years	27	17.20%
20-25 years	27	17.20%
25 years or more	15	9.55%

A correlation was noted in the data between the law enforcement total career work experience and the current time employed with their current department. This correlation could indicate a higher staff renewal rate amongst departments with individuals who have less than 10 years of law enforcement experience. In effect, this can lead to law enforcement officers who have less experience dealing with prostitution and human sex trafficking incidents and could be more susceptible to confirmation bias than law enforcement officers with over 10 years of experience. The current time the respondent had been employed with their current department ranged from less than 1 year to more than 25 years, which was the focus of Question 9. Of the 157 respondents who provided an answer to this question, 70 respondents (44.59%) had been with their current department for more than 10 years while 87 respondents (55.41%) had been with their current department less than 10 years.

Table F-2
Years Employed by Current Department

Years Employed	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Less than 1 year	11	7.01%
1-3 years	25	15.92%
3-5 years	22	14.01%
5-10 years	29	18.47%
10-15 years	23	14.65%
15-20 years	19	12.10%
20-25 years	20	12.74%
25 years or more	8	5.10%

The years in which the respondents attended the law enforcement training academy ranged from 1980 to 2021, which was the focus of Question 10. Of the 155 respondents that provided an answer to this question, 37 respondents (23.87%) had attended the law enforcement training academy before 2001 while 118 respondents (76.13%) had attended the law enforcement training academy after 2001. The comparison of law enforcement officers that attended the law enforcement training academy before and after 2001 is noteworthy because, on October 28, 2000, a key piece of legislation known as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was signed into law, becoming the first federal law to address human trafficking. The data indicates that most of the respondents likely received some form of training during the law enforcement academy on the new legislation from 2001 onward.

Appendix G: Initial and Subsequent Procedures of a Human Sex Trafficking Investigation

This section lists officers' descriptions of their department's initial procedures for investigations into suspected human sex trafficking and subsequent procedures for direct contact with a human sex trafficking victim (Table G-1). Only M1 and M5 indicated that the department had law enforcement personnel patrolling and alert to the possibilities of prostitution and/or human sex trafficking. The other 12 of the 14 officers (86%) reported that their department is usually made initially aware of prostitution or human sex trafficking from incoming tips.

Subsequent procedures involve alerting the personnel assigned to prostitution or human sex trafficking cases (M1, M2, M3, M6, F8, F11, F12, F13, F14; 64%) or providing assistance to support victims (M5, M7, F12; 21%). Officer M4 said it did not occur often enough in his jurisdictions for a standard procedure to be in place. Two of the female officers briefly addressed the physical and psychological ramifications of subsequent procedures: Officer F9 said that her department treated a human sex trafficking case like a sexual assault. Officer F14 echoed this idea when she said, "What we have been told is to treat them with extra care and awareness to the possible trauma but also be aware of resistance to want help." She added, "I do not believe there is any specific procedure but there has been minimal training on recognizing the victims."

Table G-1*Descriptions of Typical Initiating and Subsequent Procedures of a Human Sex**Trafficking Investigation*

Officer	Initial and Subsequent Procedures of a Human Sex Trafficking Investigation
M1	Detectives proactively look for people engaging in prostitution. After confirming that prostitution is occurring, we attempt to interview them and look for signs of human trafficking. Detectives are supposed to be notified for follow-up investigation.
M2	Typically, if we start a human trafficking investigation, it's because of a tip that we received from either the community or National Hotline. If patrol comes into contact with a potential victim, they are supposed to alert their supervisory, who will call out a member of the criminal investigations section to take the investigation over.
M3	Most begin with the victim coming forward, which is extremely rare. [There are] very few third party reports. Patrol takes the initial report with basic details and forwards it to our detective unit.
M4	[Begins with an] anonymous tip. It doesn't happen enough to have a standard operation procedure.
M5	Contact with Patrol in various motels. In short, [we] offer assistance. We have special victims on call as well as a Victim Witness Program, whether it be a safe home, clothes, etc. We can provide that at that moment. NCMEC's also provides a 24-hr help line and recourse to the department.
M6	Prostitution operation. Victims advocate involvement
M7	Sex trafficking usually is reported by a reporting party, which can be from anyone, i.e., hospital staff, CPS, citizens, social media networks. Next, the victim must cooperate with law enforcement or an investigation is hard to complete. The victim usually participates (must be willingly) in a forensic interview to disclose the crime. [We] offer assistance, reassurance that no criminal charges or harm with coming to them. Reassure they need to speak with investigators to help them. Provide assistance in the form of contacts, money, transportation, lodging, etc.
F8	Either patrol response or tip received by detectives. CID is contacted and respond to scene investigation immediately begins.
F9	A radio call of prostitution or some kind of disturbance at a hotel or motel within our city. I don't know if we have a specific procedure, but we would treat them very similarly to the victim of a sexual assault—there is a lot of crossover of resources in our city.
F10	No comment
F11	It usually starts with a tip from the community, school officials, and or a victim coming forward. They are instructed to get in touch with the detective that handles this type of situation. These cases are worked jointly with the prosecutor's office SVU unit.
F12	We are both proactive and reactive. A lot of our reactive cases come through theft or battery investigations at the patrol level, sometimes through our local hospital or DCF. Contact an HT Detective. HT detectives are available 24 hrs a day and will respond to the incident location and/or a safe place to speak with the victim. Medical and mental health care is offered as well as a safe place to stay. Food is provided and transportation back to family is offered if the victim requests it.
F13	A report of prostitution or a disturbance investigation. Contact Human Trafficking Investigator and Victim Advocate

Officer	Initial and Subsequent Procedures of a Human Sex Trafficking Investigation
F14	It depends on how we get called about it. Sometimes it starts on the road with a uniformed deputy. That information travels to a sergeant who then makes contact with our human trafficking investigator. Sometimes we get tips and those usually go straight to our human trafficking investigator. The investigator uses his resources and any man power necessary to investigator into the claims. I do not believe there is any specific procedure but there has been minimal training on recognizing the victims. What we have been told is to treat them with extra care and awareness to the possible trauma but also be aware of resistance to want help.

Designated Human Sex Trafficking Personnel

This section provides evidence of differences in law enforcement personnel who are specifically designated for human sex trafficking investigations across various jurisdictions by state. Three differences emerged: 1) jurisdictions that had designated both units and officers, 2) jurisdictions that had designated officers only, and 3) jurisdictions that did not have specifically-designated personnel. The term “human sex trafficking” is abbreviated HT for ease of reading below.

Five officers said their department had an HT-designated unit and 10 officers said their department had an HT-designated officer; this created the range of differences. None of the officers’ departments had an HT-designated unit but not a designated officer.

Designated Unit and Officer

Five officers said their department had both an HT-designated unit and HT-designated officer (two males: M1 in Florida and M6 in South Carolina, 29% of the males; three females: F12 in Florida, F13 in South Carolina, and F14 in South Carolina, 43% of the females). Agencies with both designations were in Florida or South Carolina. This was 36% of the 14 officers.

Designated Officer Only

Five officers said their department had an HT-designated officer but not an HT-unit (two males: M2 in Florida and M4 in Virginia; 29% of the men; three women: F8 in

Texas, F10 in Virginia, and F11 in Ohio, 43% of the women). These states included two officers in Virginia, and one each in Florida, Texas, and Ohio. This was 36% of the officers.

Four officers said their department did not have either an HT-designated unit or a designated officer (three males: M3 in California, M5 in New York, M7 in California, 43% of the males; one female: F9 in California, 14% of the females). Three of these four jurisdictions were in California. This was 29% of the officers.