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Keely E. Beck

April 25, 2013

Date

The Process, Populations, Barriers to Elimination, and Health Effects of Sex Trafficking in the
US: A Literature Review

By

Keely E. Beck

Master of Public Health

Hubert Department of Global Health

[Chair's signature]

Dr. Monique Hennink

Committee Chair

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By

Keely E. Beck

Bachelor of Arts

George Mason University

2005

Thesis Committee Chair: Monique Hennink, Ph.D

An abstract of

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University

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Abstract

Sex trafficking is considered to be one of the greatest human rights violations of our time, one of the world's greatest human injustices that continues to plague both domestic and international societies. While a large amount of research has been done on sex trafficking internationally, domestic sex trafficking within the U.S. has begun to receive attention. The high occurrence of domestic sex trafficking nationally, underscores that the need for additional research to more fully understand this problem.

In this study a systematic literature review was conducted to synthesize research on sex trafficking in the US. This review focused on three areas: to describe the process of sex trafficking within the U.S.; identify those most vulnerable to sex trafficking in the U.S.; identify the barriers to eliminating sex trafficking in the U.S. and the health effects on victims of sex trafficking in the U.S.

A systematic review of peer-reviewed scientific articles was conducted, in addition to official organizational reports.

Results show that children are at most risk for sex trafficking in the U.S. Particularly those children who were runaways, homeless, or in foster care, in addition to victims of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. A variety of barriers continue to exist and challenge the elimination of sex trafficking. These include facilitators such as social media, societal views that glorify the role of pimps and prostitutes, a culture of tolerance, and the continued demand for sexual services from youth.

This literature review shows that domestic sex trafficking is a complex problem that requires a holistic response from U.S. legislation, medical practitioners and nonprofit organizations devoted to the issue. Sex trafficking is not only a human rights problem, but is an economic problem, a health problem, a legal problem, and a gender problem, as it continues to undermine each of these systems, within the U.S. A standard set of definitions, protocols, and rehabilitation services is needed in addition to further research to fully understand sex trafficking in the U.S. context, obtain accurate figures, and develop effective rehabilitation services for victims of sex trafficking.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is a systematic literature review which explores the influences on sex trafficking within the U.S. through a review and synthesis of published peer-reviewed articles and official government and organizational documents and reports. The aims of this literature review are to:

1. Describe the process of sex trafficking in the U.S.
2. Identify circumstances, characteristics, and populations that cause individuals to be particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking in the U.S.
3. Identify the barriers and challenges to eliminating sex trafficking in the U.S.
4. Identify physical and psychological health effects on victims of sex trafficking in the U.S.

This literature review will use published peer-reviewed articles and official government and organizational documents to respond to each of the aims stated above. In addition, a description of the background of sex trafficking in the U.S. is provided, including the U.S. definition of sex trafficking, the key players and their roles in sex trafficking, and the demand of sex trafficking and its influence on sex trafficking as both a business and a growing practice among consumers.

Sex trafficking is considered to be one of the greatest human rights violations of our time, one of the world's greatest human injustices that continues to plague both domestic and international societies. Sex trafficking is virtually everywhere, yet remains hidden due to the illicit nature of the crime, creating a paradox of an insidious relationship between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, and the advantaged over the disadvantaged that perpetuates a world in which the injustice of slavery still exists.

Chapter 2: Background of Sex Trafficking

Over the past 15 years domestic sex trafficking has received much less attention than international sex trafficking however, in many countries, such as the U.S., in-country trafficking outnumbers cross-border trafficking (Zimmerman et al., 2009). Both public and private sectors are beginning to realize that while the issue is vastly global and international in scale, it pervades all sectors of societies, communities, and populations including within the U.S. (Zimmerman et al., 2009).

Sex trafficking does not affect only those of a specific age, race, or socio-economic status (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). It does not discriminate between who engages in its participation as exploiters, both “pimps” and “johns”, or purchasers, alike, and those who fall victim to the coercive tactics of the traffickers (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). Several studies have identified that there is not one specific “type” of man who purchases sex from women and girls who have been trafficked (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008).

One study in Chicago addressing the demand for sex explains, “There is no common “profile” of men who purchase sex. They are from every race, age group, sexual orientation, profession, economic class and education level” (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). These consumers may or may not even be aware that the women and girls with whom they have sex have been trafficked and sexually exploited against their will; however, ignorance is not synonymous to innocence, as the actions of these men contribute to the continued exploitation of these women and girls, regardless of whether or not they are informed of the girls’ illegal trafficking and abusive environment (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008).

In an effort to understand the full scope of the problem, we must deconstruct our pre-existing assumptions of the profile of those who purchase sex from sex trafficked victims in order to identify the people involved in the process from beginning to end, on behalf of both the trafficker and the purchaser in order to truly understand the growing phenomenon of sexual exploitation that is sex trafficking (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008). Every individual, both male and female has the power to make the decision to continue the proliferation of sex trafficking by condoning its practice through a culture of tolerance or take a stand against an appalling violation of human rights and contribute to its ultimate abolition.

It is essential to understand that sex trafficking, or any form of human trafficking, does not require an individual to be transported to another country or state (Strauss, 2013). This common misconception is one reason domestic sex trafficking has failed to gain serious attention from the federal government, until recently, and remains one of the reasons why it has been able to increase significantly within the U.S. (Strauss, 2013).

Domestic sex trafficking is still generally understood as sex work, or prostitution, in the U.S., resulting in the women involved in the sex industry being treated as criminals, rather than victims, while their exploiters and purchasers are rarely prosecuted (Strauss, 2013). This sheds light on various widespread problems that perpetuate sex trafficking in the U.S. today, including the criminalization of sex trafficking victims, the lack of support services for victims, and the under-enforcement and uneven prosecution of traffickers and consumers of sex at the local level (Strauss, 2013).

In September 2012 President Obama called for an increased initiative to fight all forms of human trafficking, including sex trafficking, calling it a “debasement of our common humanity that

tears at the social fabric of our communities, distorts markets, endangers public health, and fuels violence and organized crime” (The White House, 2012). At the time the current estimate of victims of human trafficking was 20 million people worldwide, including the U.S. (The White House, 2012). Today, the total numbers of sex trafficking victims and perpetrators continue to grow as both the demand and access for illegal sex increases (U.S. Department of State, 2012). However, due to the covert and illegal nature of sex trafficking along with high levels of under-reporting, the total number of victims within the U.S. remains unconfirmed (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

One of the fundamental problems with sex trafficking, and ultimately one of the primary reasons it remains difficult to reduce in numbers, is that it cuts across a wide range of development issues at the most basic level, from poverty to social inclusion, to justice and rule of law issues, as well as having a strong relevance for practitioners in the community (The World Bank, 2009).

History of Sex Trafficking Legislation in the US

In 2000, the U.S. passed the *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* (TVPA), and later its subsequent reauthorizations (TVPRA), as a national policy to address human trafficking, including sex trafficking in the U.S. The TVPA and TVPRA have been integral to the application of a legal definition of ‘trafficking’ in the U.S.; thereby contributing to a holistic and iterative process that begins with victim identification and ends with victim rehabilitation. The focus of this act and its continued reauthorization in the U.S. is the prevention of the act of human trafficking, protection for the victims of human trafficking, and the prosecution of the perpetrators of human trafficking (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010).

This U.S. policy defines sex trafficking as a severe form of human trafficking in which commercial sex is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which a person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor services, through use of coercion, for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, and slavery (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010). The three main objectives of TVPA are: to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers in the U.S. (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010).

The U.S. *Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act* (TVPRA) of 2008 is the most recent piece of U.S. TVPRA legislation and is an improvement over the prior years of the policy's reauthorizations because it addresses domestic sex trafficking, while the original TVPA did not explicitly address sex trafficking as a domestic problem within the U.S. In addition, it increases the U.S. efforts against sex trafficking worldwide, provides increased penalties for traffickers and their accomplices, and ensures greater support for their victims'.

Definition of Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is only one of the several forms of human trafficking that exists. This thesis will focus solely on sex trafficking in the U.S.; however, it is important to note that while human trafficking is not synonymous with sex trafficking, sex trafficking is considered an "extreme type of human trafficking. Therefore, this thesis will refer to human trafficking throughout the document which will serve to encompass the whole of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation; however, I acknowledge that human trafficking and sex trafficking are not explicitly one and the same.

The United Nations defines all forms of human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or 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 consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the “exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013b).

Specifically, the TVPA defines sex trafficking defined as a commercial sex act which is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or when the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (U.S. Department of State, 2012). An important distinction in this definition is that it is not required for a victim to be physically transported from one location to another in order for the crime to be considered an act of sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

The United Nations describes the fundamental elements leading up to the trafficking of a victim as the Act (*What* is done), the Means (*How* it is done), and the Purpose, (*Why* it is done) (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013b). The Act of sex trafficking includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons; the Means includes the threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim; and the Purpose includes any purpose for exploitation, including exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or similar practices and the removal of organs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013b).

The 2012 *Trafficking in Persons Report* defines sex trafficking in further detail describing that sex trafficking has been committed when an adult is coerced, forced, or deceived into prostitution, or maintained in prostitution even if initially giving consent (U.S. Department of State, 2012). A person involved in the recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining a person for that purpose is responsible for trafficking crimes (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Sex trafficking may occur within debt bondage, where women and girls are forced to continue in prostitution through the use of unlawful “debt” incurred through their transportation, recruitment or “sale” which exploiters insist they must pay off before they are allowed to be freed (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

Child sex trafficking occurs when an individual under 18 years of age is induced to perform a commercial sex act (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Due to age of the individual, as a minor, proving force, fraud, or coercion against their pimp is not necessary in order to be characterized as sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2012). This is due to the commonly agreed principle that minors under the age of 18 are legally incapable of consenting to involvement in commercial sex acts (Reid & Jones, 2011). The 2012 *Trafficking in Persons Report* explicitly states that there are no exceptions to this rule (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

In addition, it states that no cultural or socioeconomic rationalization should prevent the rescue of children from sexual servitude and that the use of children in the commercial sex trade is prohibited both under U.S. law and by statute in most countries around the world (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

While there are several forms of human trafficking, this literature review will only address sex trafficking, using the U.S. 2012 *Trafficking in Persons Report* two-part definition of sex

trafficking: 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 an 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 of a sexual nature (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

In addition, while physical force is often used and associated with sex trafficking, it is not necessary to be present in order to qualify as sex trafficking. Sexual exploitation is often violent in nature, but one of the most effective methods of traffickers is the use of non-violent coercion, resulting with the victim acting willingly under the pretenses of fraud, guile and misplaced trust (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

Scope of the Problem

In the 2012 ILO *Global Estimate of Forced Labor* report, the International Labor Office estimated that approximately 4,500,000 individuals are currently victims of forced labor for sexual exploitation globally (International Labour Office, 2012). This estimate greatly increased from the ILO's original estimate of 1,390,000 individuals as victims of sex trafficking in 2005 (Patrick Belser, 2005). The 2012 ILO estimates recognize that trafficking is defined by exploitation, not by movement, and estimates that women and girls make up 98% of sex trafficking victims (International Labour Office, 2012). While the 2012 estimates are divided by world regions, these divisions include all forms of human trafficking and forced labor, with the estimate of sex trafficking included in this global estimate. This makes it difficult to determine the number of sex trafficking victims specifically within the U.S. as these results are not explicitly stated in the report.

Even within the U.S. it is difficult to estimate the number of sex trafficking victims due to its hidden nature (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). In 2005, the Department of Justice estimated between 14,500 and 17,500 victims sex trafficked into the U.S. each year (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). As of January 2013, this continues to be the most recent and current estimate (Siskin & Wyler, 2013).

U.S. government estimates of sex trafficking victims typically focus on the number of foreign victims who are trafficked into the U.S., while nongovernmental studies tend to focus on the number of minor victims of sex trafficking or foreign victims in a specific geographic area, causing additional uncertainty in the total numbers of victims of sex trafficking across the U.S. (Siskin & Wyler, 2013).

Terminology

Various terminologies exist in relation to sex work and sex trafficking. The term “john” is often given to the man who purchases and engages in an act of sex with the girl or woman being exploited. For the purposes of this literature review I will occasionally refer to the individual engaging in the act of sex with the victim as both the john and the purchaser or customer interchangeably so as not to confuse this individual with the pimp or trafficker. I will not refer to the pimp or trafficker as the exploiter, as the john or purchaser is also participating in the exploitation of the victim, and is therefore also an exploiter.

It is important to note that anyone involved in the sex trafficking of an individual, whether known or unknown, should be considered the perpetrator and exploiter of this individual. The term ‘trafficker’ will be used for anyone participating in the act of trafficking or coercion of the victim and the term ‘pimp’ will be used to represent the primary individual male who oversees

and regulates the management of funds, activities, and lives of the victims, also considered the victims' 'owner' or 'debt holder'.

The Difference between Sex Trafficking, Sex Tourism, and Sex Work

Sex trafficking is often confused or incorrectly associated with sex work (e.g. prostitution). Sex work is the practice or occupation of engaging in sex with someone for payment. The greatest difference between sex trafficking and sex work are the matters of choice, consent, and coercion. Both sex trafficking and sex work are exploitative in nature and often involve sexual assault by purchasers and pimps with women suffering extreme stress reactions, trauma, depression, and multiple medical problems from both (Dovydaitis, 2010). Table 1 presents the primary differences that often distinguish sex trafficking from sex work, as defined by (Dovydaitis, 2010).

Table 1. Differences Between Sex Work and Sex Trafficking (Dovydaitis, 2010)

Sex Work	Sex Trafficking
Woman is generally aware of the type of work in which she will participate (voluntary involvement)	Woman is generally unaware of the type of work she will be doing (involuntary involvement)
Women work independently or with a pimp	Women always have a pimp or Trafficker
Commonly work in the same geographic location	Commonly are moved by the trafficker to different locations
Women are paid	Women are generally not paid
May be legal or illegal	Always illegal
Does not always involve force, fraud, or coercion	Always involves force, fraud, or coercion

For the purposes of this literature review, articles discussing those engaged in consenting sex work will not be included in this review, unless the sex work is explicitly stated as forced sex work or forced prostitution. Forced sex work and forced prostitution each involve coercion and force at different levels, meeting the criteria for sex trafficking and will be included and considered synonymous for the purpose of this review.

Another factor that ties into sex trafficking is sex tourism. Sex tourism plays a large role in the sexual exploitation of women and girls and is becoming increasingly popular in cities that have a thriving adult entertainment industry, such as strip clubs, lingerie and sex shops, escort services, and massage parlors. Sex tourism is a term that is becoming increasingly common throughout the tourism and sex work industry. Sex tourism is associated with touring a destination for the specific purpose of engaging in sexual services available in the visited region (Flowers, 2011). This includes tourism with the intention of exploiting permissive or poorly enforced local laws concerning sex, as well as those which are legal, but vary between states, regions, or countries (Flowers, 2011).

While sex trafficking is often a component found within the business of sex tourism, sex tourism itself will be considered consenting sexual services for the purposes of this review, unless an element of coercion, force, or fraud is stated within the literature. However, it is important to point out that often establishments involved in sex tourism often pose as businesses with consenting employees but are actually serving as an underground method for sex trafficking, further challenging the identification of sex trafficking victims, which will be discussed later in this review (Priebe, 2005).

Challenges in the Elimination of Sex Trafficking

One of the most difficult challenges in addressing sex trafficking is that it is intrinsically hidden in nature. The victims and perpetrators of sex trafficking are often difficult to identify as traffickers are extremely careful to hide any information or signs that might uncover their activities (Priebe, 2005). Often times the perpetrators will fabricate identities in order for themselves and their victims to blend into society unnoticed and without drawing attention to themselves (Polaris Project, 2013). Frequently trafficking victims are kept hidden from public view, literally kept behind locked doors, virtual human slaves with little to no personal freedom. In these cases, the “johns” or “purchasers” will often come to the location where the victim is held so that she never has to leave the premises (Zimmerman et al., 2009).

In situations where the victims and perpetrators are in public, the false identities and fraudulent relationships act as a cover for them, such as presenting fake guardian relationships as boyfriend, friend, uncle, father, or cousin (Polaris Project, 2013). Furthermore, in these circumstances of coercion, the victim is often threatened both physically and verbally, and obeys the trafficker for fear of individual harm or the harm of family and loved ones. This situation leads to vast under-reporting of sex trafficking crimes (Department of Health & Human Services, 2012).

Chapter 3: Methods

In order to guide the literature search the following research questions were established:

- What is the process of sex trafficking in the U.S.?
- What are the circumstances, characteristics, and populations that cause individuals to be particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking in the U.S.?
- What are the barriers and challenges to eliminating sex trafficking in the U.S.?
- What are the physical and psychological health effects of women and girls who are sex trafficked in the U.S.?

Article Selection Criteria

The primary inclusion criteria used for the articles included in this literature review were peer reviewed scientific articles published in academic journals with full text editions available online, between the years 2005 to 2013, written in English, and including one or more of the following terms “sex trafficking”, “forced prostitution”, “sexual exploitation”, and “forced sex work”. Only articles discussing sex trafficking domestically within the United States were included in this review. Articles discussing sex trafficking outside of the United States were excluded. The government and non-profit reports as well as newspaper articles that were included in this review were selected for background material and met the criteria as being published between the years 2005 and 2013 and referred specifically to “sex trafficking”, “forced prostitution”, and “sexual exploitation”, and “forced sex work”.

A systematic review of literature was conducted to identify published peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals focusing on the process, content, and context of sex trafficking in the United States. The search was conducted from December 2012 to March 2013. In an effort to examine

only the most relevant and up to date information only articles published after January 2005 were included in this review.

The age of the women and girls identified in this review was not a determining factor of inclusion or exclusion criteria for the purposes of this literature review. Therefore, this literature review includes both underage girls as well as women over the age of 18 in an effort to obtain a comprehensive perspective of sex trafficking of all ages. While men and boys are also at risk for being victims of sex trafficking they were not included in this literature review due to lack of sufficient data in addition to substantial data supporting the fact that women and children are the primary victims of sex trafficking (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012).

In order to select the most relevant data for this review literature searches were conducted using the PubMed and PsychINFO electronic databases. Peer-reviewed articles from scientific journals and organizational and nonprofit reports were used to help build a detailed and comprehensive account of sex trafficking in the United States and to provide reference material along with current data and statistics. The organizational and nonprofit reports were each identified from the reference section of the articles that were identified from the literature searches conducted in PubMed and PsychINFO. Only official government and nongovernmental organizational and nonprofit reports from 2005 to 2013 were included in this review.

Database Searches

The literature search was conducted in the electronic databases PubMed and PsychINFO. To conduct an exhaustive search of the literature the search phrase “sex trafficking” was used as the keywords for the literature search. The following search strings were used in the initial searches:

sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, sex trafficking and United States, sexual exploitation, forced sex work, and forced prostitution.

Each search was tracked in both PubMed and PsycINFO databases in order to keep an ongoing file of the articles to be used in the review. These searches originally yielded a total of 54 articles to potentially be used in this literature review.

This initial scan eliminated any articles that had no relation to the topic of sex trafficking in the U.S. with particular reference to any of the research questions, yielding a total of 44 articles left to examine. These 44 articles were then reviewed using the date of publication as a filter to remove any articles that were published prior to January 2005. This process of elimination resulted in the removal of 9 articles, leaving a total of 35 eligible articles.

Each of these 35 articles were then read and divided into categories according to how they would provide information to respond to each research question. The articles were divided according to those that related to the process of sex trafficking, those that identified vulnerabilities and “at risk” indicators for sex trafficking, those that identified barriers to the elimination of sex trafficking, and those that discussed the health effects of women and girls who have been sex trafficked.

The remaining 15 resources came from government and nongovernment official publications and reports on sex trafficking in the U.S. These included reports from the United Nations, the International Labour Department, the U.S. Federal Government, and Nonprofit Organizations.

Once I determined the final selection of 50 sources that I would be including in this literature review, I scanned each article in more depth creating an outline from which to refine the research questions. The sections of the literature that related directly to the research questions were then

synthesized and are presented in the results section in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Overall, I identified a total of 50 reports on sex trafficking in the U.S., which included peer reviewed journal articles and organizational reports that provided current information on the process, populations at risk, and the health effects of sex trafficking in the U.S. Sex trafficking largely affects children as one of the most vulnerable populations to sex trafficking in the U.S.; however, various populations among adults are also at a risk of sex trafficking relating to their socio-economic, cultural, and geographic status. The results section of this review synthesizes the literature to describe sex trafficking in the U.S. among both children and adults, with the focus on women and adolescent girls.

The Process of Sex Trafficking in the United States

One of the primary goals of this literature review was to identify the process of sex trafficking within the U.S. as reported in the literature. Sex trafficking is often associated within an international context; however, domestic sex trafficking is vastly abundant, more easily attainable for domestic traffickers and continues to grow at alarming rates (Hodge, 2008). The scale of sex trafficking in the U.S. varies (Roby, 2005). It can be small scale and carried out by relatives or acquaintances, or large scale carried out by groups involved in organized crime who routinely utilize the methods of bribery, abduction, falsified documents, violence, and coercion for their personal financial gain (Roby, 2005).

The Process as Described by UN Office of Drugs and Organized Crime

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Organized Crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013a) depicts the process of sex trafficking as a flow chart beginning with the Act combined with the Means and the Purpose which then leads to the trafficking of the victim as the

result (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013a). It is upon the basis of these three elements that trafficking is defined by the U.N. *Trafficking in Person Protocol* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013a). The Act includes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013a). The Means is how the act is carried out, whether by threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013a). The purpose describes intended purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, or similar practices (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013a).

Methods of Entry into Sex Trafficking

As stated in the previously defined definitions there are three primary methods by which women and girls are sex trafficked in the U.S. These methods include using force, fraud, and coercion in order to lure the victim into sex trafficking (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). These methods are described below.

Force

Sex trafficking by force involves the use of physical restraint or serious physical harm. Physical violence, including rape, beatings, and physical confinement are often employed as a means to control the victims of sex trafficking, especially in the early stages of victimization when the trafficker attempts to break down the victim's resistance (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). Violence is a well documented tactic that is often used throughout the entire process of sex trafficking from the beginning of the "recruitment" or kidnapping to the end,

whether resulting in death of the victim or her escape (Cwikel & Hoban, 2005). Sex trafficking is a crime occurring within the confines of a forced relationship, not a single event or moment in time, and involves the continued force of commercial sex acts or sexual exploitation induced through the use of coercion, fraud, or threats (Miller, Decker, Silverman, & Raj, 2007).

Fraud

The most prevalent form of recruitment used by traffickers is through deception, with traffickers often posing as an agent offering potential victims legitimate work in the United States.

However, upon arrival to the victim's or pimp's living quarters the victims discover they are expected to be used for sex for the trafficker's economic gain and are often brutalized in transit by the traffickers in order to ensure their compliance (Kevonne & Small, 2006).

Coercion

The method of coercion involves threats of serious harm to or physical restraint of any person, intended to be sex trafficked. This also includes any scheme or plan intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to a person or threatened abuse, including threatened abuse of the legal process (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012).

Pimps typically use coercion to recruit a vulnerable child or victim into sex trafficking by first offering affection and attention and the promise of a stable relationship (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Once the pimp has gained the trust of his victim, and the victim has formed an emotional and psychological attachment to the pimp, he introduces the idea of prostitution to her as a way in which she can contribute financially to her "street family". Once the pimp has successfully manipulated his victim into the false pretenses of a healthy "relationship", the pimp

will begin to normalize her to the life of prostitution by ensuring that she is completely dependent upon him by taking all of her belongings, money, and identification cards (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

In order to increase his control over the victim, the pimp or pimp's counterpart will often beat, torture, and starve the victim to force her into complete obedience (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Pimps also use alcohol and drugs to increase the level of dependency the victim has on her pimp, and will use emotional tactics such as renaming her to break down her identity and separating the victim from all family and friends as well as anything familiar to increase her emotional dependency and disassociate her from anything which provides her comfort, leaving her entirely vulnerable and helpless to the demands of the pimp (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

The pimp will use a combination of praise as well as abuse in an effort to keep the victim constantly seeking his affection, strengthening his physical and psychological control over her (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Therefore, the victim results in being physically and emotionally dependent on the pimp for everything from food, clothing, shelter, to attention and affection, leaving the victim believing that she is completely incapable of surviving without him (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

Use of Social Media to Promote Sexual Services

In the age of technology advancements, the internet has long been used for seeking and promoting sexual services and is also increasingly contributing to the process of recruitment for sex traffickers. According to a 2008 study of men in Chicago who purchase sex, 34% of men interviewed said they seek prostitution services through the internet from web sites such as

Craigslist, Eros.com, Adultfriendfinder.com, and MySpace, as well as through Google internet searches (Rachel Durchslag, 2008).

The Internet facilitates the anonymous purchase of sexual services because the purchaser's identity is completely hidden and they can engage in dialogue and make the purchase from the comfort and safety of their own home. This is often seen as much less of a risk than visiting a bar, strip club, escort agency or massage parlor, which the study identifies as the most frequented locations for men looking to purchase sex (Rachel Durchslag, 2008). In a world where the economic and social markets thrive on social media, there is a large abundance of advertisements and marketing directed towards individuals seeking these sexual services.

Populations Most Vulnerable to Sex Trafficking

Ethnic Minorities

The Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center offers harm reduction programming to at-risk adolescent American Indian girls, recognizing the American Indian population particular vulnerability to sex trafficking due to their stigmatized role and minority status within the U.S. (Pierce, 2012). One study noted that several participants interviewed mentioned anecdotal evidence and stories about Native American girls and women moved off of the reservations and forced into prostitution in nearby cities (Pierce, 2012).

Children

Children are among the most vulnerable populations for sex trafficking in the U.S. The number of American children who are trafficked into the national and international sex industry continues to grow at a rapid pace (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010). Shared Hope International

states that underage girls are the bulk of sex trafficking victims who become part of the commercial sex markets, which include pornography, stripping, escort services, and prostitution (Shared Hope International, 2007).

Children who have run away from home, are homeless, have been kidnapped or those in foster care are at an elevated risk of forced prostitution and trafficking (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010). Children and youth who have been prostituted typically lack parental support and usually become clients in the public child welfare system once they are finally able to seek help (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010).

In 1995, the U.S. government created a taskforce solely responsible for initiating research about the commercial and sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) which played a large part in the passing of the TVPA (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010). Although funding to implement TVPA continues to be reauthorized in recent years, most of the services were aimed towards adults rather than children before 2008 (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010).

Many of the victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. are vulnerable youth living on the street or from the foster care system. In 2003 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children created a coalition called the *Innocence Lost Initiative* in an effort to identify and rescue children in cities across the country that were reported as having high incidences of sex trafficking (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010). As a result of this initiative, in 2008 the FBI reported a total of 577 rescued children, with more than 300 pimps, madams and associates of crimes against children having been convicted and more than 3 million dollars having been seized from these operations as of 2009 (Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010).

On the contrary to many studies on child sex trafficking, a study in Atlanta found that not all children forced into prostitution were runaway, homeless, or delinquent youth (Richardson, 2007). This study found that many of the girls forced into prostitution in Atlanta were kidnapped or lured from public places such as movie theaters, schools, bus stops, and shopping malls (Richardson, 2007). After several years of victimization, the stories of these girls often appear to be that of the same as other child prostitutes who came from abusive backgrounds, despite the different means of entry into forced prostitution (Richardson, 2007).

The young age of children and youth, coupled with fear and a lack of understanding of the system and of their personal rights results in children and youth being a highly vulnerable population at risk for sex trafficking.

Runaways

Runaways are typically girls under 18, who have fled their home and family or foster care, often due to violence, abuse, or neglect taking place in the home. Runaways are increasingly becoming identified as a highly vulnerable population at risk of becoming coerced into sex trafficking due to the vulnerable nature of a runaway, which often involves an unstable life at home, including conflicts within the family, difficulty in school or among peers, and potential physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). These runaways are often coerced into the custody of a pimp or trafficker within 48 hours of running away, by the pimp or trafficker approaching the girl and offering comfort, food, and protection (Center Against Rape & Domestic Violence, 2013).

Homeless

Homeless women and girls are a particularly vulnerable population to sex trafficking because they often lack the fundamental human necessities such as food, clothing, and safety, placing them at an increased risk of being sex trafficked due to their lack of shelter, food, income, and overall stability and quality of life (Betz, 2012). Often times a pimp will seek out a homeless girl, aware of her vulnerable state, befriend her, spend money on her, and pay her the attention she does not receive elsewhere in an effort to gain her trust (Jeremy Wilson, 2007). Eventually the pimp will convince the girl to have sex for money, all of which is turned over to him. In some situations it has been found that the pimp will father a child with the girl in order to achieve even greater control over her and her dependency upon him (Jeremy Wilson, 2007).

Victims of Physical, Psychological and Sexual Abuse

Commercial sex traffickers and pimps prey on vulnerable children and youth by luring them into a life of prostitution and then use physical and emotional abuse to keep their victims trapped in a painful life of exploitation (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). Pimps target those who are most vulnerable to exploitation, such as those with low self-esteem, runaways or throwaways (individuals ostracized from society), with histories of physical and sexual abuse by identifying these weaknesses early on and using them to their advantage, often gaining trust and then repeating the abuse the victim has experienced in the past and is helpless to fight (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

There is evidence in the literature that children who are victims of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) are at an increased risk of being involved in sexual exploitation (Lalor & McElvaney, 2010). An additional study suggests that stigmas associated with childhood sexual abuse “may result in an inability to glean nonsexual or emotional rewards from relationships, therefore placing victims in

potentially risky or exploitative sexual situations” (Noll et. Al 2003). In the 2007 article by Stoltz et al. a significant relationship was found between child maltreatment (sexual, physical, and emotional) and later involvement in prostitution (Stolz 2007). The study did not explicitly state whether or not the prostitution was coercive, however the significance of this finding is in their further analysis that children who are sexually victimized develop psychologically and emotionally in ways that make them vulnerable to continuing sexual predation (Lalor & McElvaney, 2010).

Steel and Herlitz (2005) further hypothesize a possible pathway from childhood sexual abuse to sexual risk behavior, with psychological symptoms or disorders as a potential mediator. This includes the psychological factors such as depressive symptoms, poor self-esteem, lack of assertiveness, poor self-worth and PTSD which may lead to future risk behavior due to feelings of unworthiness, the inability to be assertive and prevent unwanted sexual advances, avoidance or inability to comprehend emotionally laden information concerning sexuality, or having competing needs for affection and acceptance (Steel & Hertz, 2005). The article concludes by stating that future research is warranted to both understand the mechanisms underlying the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and sexual risk behavior/sexual exploitative actions and to explore other childhood and adolescent experiences that may predict sexual risk behavior as an adolescent or adult (Steel & Hertz, 2005).

Social Economic Status and Poverty

Economic injustice and poverty are among the major macro-level risk factors for sex trafficking in the U.S. Poverty also contributes indirectly to sexual exploitation in such circumstances where children who do not attend school, or spend most of their lives on the streets where they

are more susceptible to crime related activities and can become involved with, or simply seek protection from, gangs (Roby, 2005).

Barriers to the Elimination of Sex Trafficking and Challenges to Prevention

A multitude of barriers to the elimination of sex trafficking and challenges to prevention exist within the U.S. These include a culture of tolerance of the objectification of women and the misplaced glorification by society of the life of a pimp, which is perpetuated through media and popular culture, such as music, books, songs, and music videos. Other barriers to the elimination of sex trafficking include the hidden, “underground”, nature of sex trafficking as a highly illicit crime, the large demand that exists for sexual services, funding the industry and creating a steady job market for pimps and traffickers, in addition to flaws in the legislation and legal process making it difficult to identify victims and provide proper rehabilitation services as well as prosecuting the pimps, traffickers, and purchasers of the victims.

Social Sanctioning of Prostitution

Research suggests that one of the main reasons sex trafficking and sexual exploitation continue to exist in the U.S. is due to the culture of tolerance among society as well as a culture that glamorizes pimping and prostitution (Shared Hope International, 2007). Evidence shows increasing numbers of children and youths are being lured into sex trafficking in order to service the demand resulting from the normalization and promotion of commercial sex across America, driving up demand and creating a culture of tolerance of sexual exploitation (Shared Hope International, 2007).

This common culture of tolerance is fueled by the glamorization of pimping throughout the U.S. from clothing, songs, television, video games, and other forms of entertainment (Kotrla, 2010).

The music industry thrives off of popular songs that are frequently based on the glamorization and the “hard knock” life of pimping (Kotrla, 2010). “Pimps and Hos’ parties are wildly popular among American youth, while songs such as “Pimpin All Over the World” and television shows such as “Pimp My Ride”, continue to be targeted towards youth and foster the idea that “pimping” is a popular and socially acceptable way of American life (Kotrla, 2010). There is even a free video game titled ‘Keep Pimpin’ (<http://www.keeppimpin.com>) where the player is a pimp and you get to “slap your hoes, pimp the streets, kill the competition, and ally with your friends to take the pimp world by storm.”

Furthermore, the song “It’s Hard Out Here for a Pimp” took top honors for Best Original Song at the 2006 78th Academy Awards, proving that not only is the culture of pimping and prostitution and sexual exploitation acceptable and condoned by the public, but is honored and praised by the media and music industry (Kotrla, 2010). Petchesky (2012) conducted a quick online search using the phrase “how to be a pimp” that returned over 44,200 results detailing “how to be a pimp in no time” and even featured hand written letters from “actual pimps” describing the “rules of game” with one of the top rules being “always have control of your ho’s mind body and soul”.

Covert Nature of Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is illegal and is therefore conducted in a covert manner often associated with illicit organized crime. Therefore, obtaining information on the traffickers, the routes and methods of trafficking, key people involved in the process, and the practices accompanying trafficking is incredibly difficult (Kevonne & Small, 2006). This also contributes to the well known gaps in accurate statistics on the prevalence, and locations of sex trafficking in the U.S.

(Kevonne & Small, 2006). A large amount of information is provided directly by victims of sex trafficking, but due to the extremely traumatic nature of their experience, this information is highly susceptible to inaccuracies due to memory loss, recall bias, and the fact that much of the process as far as names and locations was hidden from the victims themselves (Kevonne & Small, 2006).

In addition to sex trafficking being an illegal and highly illicit crime, there is also the factor of shame, not necessarily by the traffickers, but by the men purchasing and using the women for sex (The Schapiro Group, 2012). This shame, in addition to fear of repercussions hinders the men from discussing the issue publicly, thereby limiting access to data regarding the demand side of sex trafficking (The Schapiro Group, 2012). This limited access results in little being known about the various elements of sex trafficking, and without this knowledge an appropriate response is unable to be developed.

Demand for Sexual Services

Studies show that the demand for prostituted children and victimized women and girls remains high in the U.S. leading to the supply of victims and thriving business for pimps and traffickers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). From 2004 through 2008 ICAC Task Forces saw a 914 percent increase in the number of child victims of prostitution complaints processed by their members (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

It is important to note that the ICAC Task Force is primarily responsible for investigating Internet-based crimes against children, and this increase in complaints could reflect an increase in the use of the Internet as the facilitator of prostitution that had already been occurring through other avenues prior to the ICAC report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

In 2010, the Schapiro Group released a study called “Men Who Buy Sex with Adolescent Girls: A Scientific Research Study”, also commonly known as the *Georgia Demand Study* found that the average age of a man seeking sexual services from an underage girl is 33, with 65% of men doing so in and around suburban Atlanta, with 9% of men attempting to purchase sex with young females located near the airport, supporting prior claims that travel and tourism play a major role in the process of sex trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children (The Schapiro Group, 2012).

The study also found that 12,400 men in Georgia alone pay for sex with a young female in a given month, with 7,200 of these men exploiting an adolescent female, and 27,000 men buying sex with young females in Georgia multiple times a year, demonstrating the demand for sexual services, some of which will be from sex trafficked girls (The Schapiro Group, 2012). While many of the men who exploit children are not necessarily seeking out adolescent females in particular, the study shows that approximately half of the men are willing to pay for sex with a young female even when they know for sure she is an adolescent (The Schapiro Group, 2012).

Profit from Sex Trafficking

One of the primary reasons sex trafficking is difficult to eliminate is that it is a thriving multi-billion dollar industry, rating only third in profits under the leading drug and arms trafficking (Wheaton, Schauer, & Galli, 2010). Kotrla (2010) states that sex traffickers are ultimately driven by money, a powerful incentive, which exists as the true driver behind the economics of sex trafficking (Kotrla, 2010). She goes on to explain that anywhere there is a thriving sex industry exploiters need to generate a supply for the ravenous market to consume fellow human beings as sex commodities (Kotrla, 2010 and Lagon, 2008). However, in order to sustain a large supply an

even larger demand must be present and active in its consumption. Being a multimillion dollar industry, the demand for illegal sex is proving to be a thriving business driving up the continued supply of women and girls being victimized through sexual exploitation (Berman, 2010).

Policy Language

The language in the policy of *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* of 2000 is obscure and unclear in places, leading to a variety of interpretations of the policy (Potocky, 2010). The *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* of 2000 defines human trafficking as “a form of modern-day slavery”, yet no other forms of trafficking are identified (Potocky, 2010). While the term “trafficking” is not synonymous with “movement”, it is commonly used in this manner and often misunderstood to be a requirement in qualifying as “trafficking” (Potocky, 2010). Additionally, the term “abolition” has been commonly designated to refer to prostitution, rather than slavery, confusing the issue further and placing less emphasis on the crime of slavery and more on the criminalization of prostitution (Potocky, 2010).

Without clear legislation using commonly defined terminology, confusion and misinterpretations around the issue of sex trafficking will continue to exist, resulting in the failure of the protection of the victims and the legal methods of justice for the perpetrators of sex trafficking (Potocky, 2010). This will only further impede progressive and effective policy needed through the collaboration of the public sector, the private sector, and the government agencies (Potocky, 2010).

The multitude of variations in definitions of trafficking, including the differences found among the state, federal, and international arena only further confuses an already complex issue (Potocky, 2010). Advocating for the use of plain language of the issue, such as using the term

“slavery” in place of “human trafficking”, will allow for less confusion and unproductive discourse on the issue and more action on solving the problem (Potocky, 2010). This type of confusion and uncertainty results in a misinformed or misunderstood legal system; thereby resulting in the inability to effectively prosecute the perpetrator and provide proper rehabilitation services for the victims (Potocky, 2010).

Lack of Victim Identification in Health Care Settings

Often times, in order for a victim of sex trafficking to receive the care that they need, they must first be identified as a victim of sex trafficking by an outsider, such as a doctor or nurse, as they often do not realize they are a victim or are too scared to try to get help (Sabella, 2011) . Most often, the people who come into the lives of a victim of sex trafficking who are not associated with the traffickers are those of health care providers, addressing the immediate healthcare needs of the victims (Belles, 2012). One study cites the most likely reason for the lack of help to victims was the lack of knowledge by the provider in recognizing sex trafficking victims (Belles, 2012). The Family Violence Prevention Fund (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2005) determined that 28% of sex trafficking victims encountered a healthcare professional during captivity, but not one of these encounters led to a victim’s identification or rescue.

Lack of Adequate Resources for Victims

The 2010 Report to Congress states that prosecutions are very resource-intensive, requiring a large investment in investigative, prosecutorial, and victim-service resources (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). However, there is a vast shortage of adequate resources for victims which have a direct affect on not only the treatment and recovery process of the victim, but on the successful prosecution of the perpetrator as well (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

When a victim does not testify against his or her perpetrator, it is significantly more difficult for the perpetrator to be convicted of the crime committed. Without appropriate and adequate resources and services for victims' rehabilitation, it remains unlikely that the victim will be willing to participate in the prosecution, resulting in the release of the perpetrator, allowing him to continue victimizing the same child and others with no legal consequences, and therefore preventing the punishment of the perpetrator and the elimination of the sex trafficking (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

Health Effects of Sex Trafficking

One of the main reasons sex trafficking has begun to receive such significant attention is in part because of the horrendous abuses reported to be perpetrated on the victims, both physically and psychologically (Zimmerman et al., 2009). Victims of sex trafficking are frequently raped by one or more males as a form of "initiation" and "intimidation" in an effort to gain compliance (Zimmerman et al., 2009). These intimidation and fear tactics used to "condition" victims may include starvation, confinement, beatings, physical abuse, rape, gang rape, threats of violence to the victims and the victims' families, forced drug use and the threat of shaming the victims by revealing their activities to their family and their families' friends (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012).

They are often forced to engage in high-risk sex, such as intercourse without condoms, anal sex, and gang rape (Zimmerman et al., 2009). While the most apparent health concerns are the contraction of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases to which victims are repeatedly exposed, other concerns can easily be discerned when looking at the forced communal living of

victims, lack of appropriate diet and hygiene provided with little to no access to any form of health services and health care.

It is not unusual for victims to be held captive under lock and key, to be escorted to and from the work venue and forced to live and work in the same location, working extremely long hours, forced to service large numbers of men each day (Zimmerman et al., 2009). Both the physical and psychological effects that each of these aspects would have on an individual pose detrimental and even life threatening consequences for the victim, particularly when combined and sustained for long periods of time (Zimmerman et al., 2009).

There is very limited evidence on health effects of women and girls who have been sex trafficked (Zimmerman et al., 2009). This is in part because of the hidden nature of sex trafficking, the lack of identification of trafficking victims by medical care practitioners, and victims not coming forward for rehabilitation services, when possible (Baldwin, Eisenman, Sayles, Ryan, & Chuang, 2011). While a victim's exploiter may bring her in for healthcare treatment if her symptoms are severe enough, often these girls are not allowed in public, and therefore, go untreated to the detriment of both their mental and physical health (Baldwin et al., 2011). Despite the violence and abuse inherent in most trafficking situations there is very little evidence on the individual and public health implications of sex trafficking (Zimmerman et al., 2009).

Due to the fact that the health risks associated with sex trafficking have not been well documented, there is extremely limited reliable data on the health needs of trafficked persons to inform policy and practices (Zimmerman et al., 2009). The following mental and physical implications associated with sex trafficking have been determined from the limited data exists in the literature.

Psychological Effects

Psychological trauma is extremely common and predictable outcome of interpersonal violence, particularly sexual violence (Gajic-Veljanoki, 2007). In a European study, poor mental health symptoms were widely reported by women, with over half of the 192 women interviewed scoring above the 2.5 cut-off point for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as extremely high levels of symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and hostility (Zimmerman, 2006, 2008).

Additional psychological trauma may include mind/body separation and disassociated ego states, shame, grief, fear, distrust, hatred of men, self-hatred, suicide and suicidal thoughts. Victims are also at increased risk for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, insomnia, physical hyper-alertness, and self loathing that is long lasting and resistant to change. In addition victims may also suffer from traumatic bonding, which is a form of coercive control in which the perpetrator instills both fear in the victim as well as an immense gratitude for being allowed to live (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012).

Physical Effects

U.S. studies show that physical risks for women and girls while being trafficked include drug and alcohol addiction, physical injuries (broken bones, concussions, burns, vaginal/anal tearing), traumatic brain injury (TBI) resulting in memory loss, dizziness, headaches, numbness, sexually transmitted diseases (i.e. HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea, syphilis, UTIs, public lice), sterility, miscarriages, menstrual problems, other diseases (i.e. TB, hepatitis, malaria, pneumonia), and forced or coerced abortions (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). These health effects or often due to lack of nutrition, medical services, sexually transmitted diseases, poor

living conditions, and violence. Of each of these effects, repeated physical violence is one of the most detrimental to the victims' health.

Violence

Violence is almost always directly associated with sex trafficking (Alempijevic et al., 2007). The brutality of violence in sex trafficking is often what results in police intervention, rather than the prostitution or forced sex work itself (Belles, 2012). A U.S. study of sex trafficked victims cites multiple examples of abuse, including direct physical and sexual assault, psychological abuse, forced or coerced use of drugs and alcohol, restrictions on movement, social isolation, and abusive working and living conditions (Miller et al., 2007).

Health Effects Post-Trafficking

One study documenting the physical and psychological health risks and consequences of women attending post-trafficking assistance services found that within the first 14 days of arriving to the service center, women were most likely to report headaches (82%), fatigue (81%), dizzy spells (70%), back pain (69%) and gynecological symptoms such as vaginal discharge (70%), pelvic pain (59%), and infection (58%) (Zimmerman 2008). Another study determined that due to stigma and the psychosocial repercussions of past trauma and abuse endured during sex trafficking, survivors of sex trafficking may experience an increased susceptibility to violence, re-victimization, and various harmful health outcomes, including HIV infection (Collins et al., 2013).

Roby (2005) discusses how malnutrition, substance abuse, low academic attainment are common effects of trafficking as well as psychological and emotional consequences including low self-esteem, self-hate, feeling like an outcast, unworthy, unloved and degraded, lead victims to enter

into a series of other exploitative relationships. The experiences these victims have endured hinder their ability to trust others, making it difficult for the process of healing to begin. In the event that the victim is able to escape her pimp or trafficker, she may face imprisonment if she was trafficked to the U.S. illegally with no legal visa permit to validate her legal status (Roby, 2005). The lack of formal education and marketable skills coupled with distrust of others leaves many women and girls to feel helpless, perpetuating their life on the street, in sex work, living among the same deficient health conditions.

In conclusion, this results section identifies the process in which one becomes sex trafficked, discusses the populations that are at an increased risk of being sex trafficked, and discusses the physical and psychological health implications that are a result of sex trafficking.

Chapter 5: Discussion

From the gaps in knowledge and services identified in the literature, it is evident that there is no common terminology, protocol, or procedure used by all agencies concerned with reducing sex trafficking. This results in difficulties in identifying victims, providing proper resources and rehabilitation services to recovering victims and prosecution of perpetrators of sex trafficking. Each of these factors leads to the increase in prevalence of sex trafficking in the U.S., increasing the barriers to eliminating sex trafficking in the U.S. and adding to poor health outcomes of the victims.

Standard definitions used by all agencies are needed in order to clearly state current definitions, and ensure that each entity, whether federal, state, or NGO has up to date numbers and works together to keep the integrity of the information. This will reduce misinformation as well as over reporting and under reporting which has severe legal implications when looking at the prosecution of perpetrators and recovery of victims in the court system (*The National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction: A Report To Congress*, 2010). If misidentified, these victims could be overlooked or lost in a system that is instated to represent them, but will ultimately continue to fail them (*The National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction: A Report To Congress*, 2010).

Adequate resources and services are needed for victims in order to provide sufficient and appropriate victim rehabilitation programs. This not only helps the victim through the healing process but will result in the successful prosecution of the perpetrator, as the victim will be more willing and able, both physically and mentally, to participate in the prosecution, resulting in a more likely sentencing and conviction against the perpetrator (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010).

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

Through this systematic literature review, it is clear that victims of sex trafficking are unlikely to have adequate and timely access to health care; however, there are events where some victims will be seen in women's health care practices for STIs, pregnancy, and/or abortion services (Dovydaitis, 2010). Due to this specific and growing need for services, all health care providers should be prepared to identify, treat, and assist victims of trafficking as part of their regular clinical practice (Dovydaitis, 2010).

Before forming a collective response to a social problem, it is necessary to quantify the problem, measuring the prevalence of the issue in order to be able to propose viable and measurable solutions to the problem (Weiner, 2008). Due to the lack of tools established to reliably identify victims of sex trafficking, the 2008 Vera Institute of Justice developed a recommended set of screening tools to be used by medical practitioners and rescue and rehabilitation organizations in order to identify victims of sex trafficking by collaborating with stakeholders who had experience working with this particular hard to reach population (Weiner, 2008).

From the conclusions of the 2008 Vera Institute of Justice study on 'Measuring Human Trafficking: Lessons from New York City' three sets of recommendations were established (Weiner, 2008). While these conclusions refer to the larger context of all forms of human trafficking, these guidelines and protocol can be adopted for sex trafficking specifically, taking into consideration the highly sensitive nature of the experiences specific to sex trafficking (Weiner, 2008). The 2008 Vera Institute of Justice recommendations included the following:

1. Initiate Victim Identification Program and Data Collection on Human Trafficking

2. Design of a Standardized Trafficking Victim Screening Tool and Supporting Toolkit for its Administration
3. Validation of a Standardized Trafficking Victim Screening Tool

Each of these recommendations are described below and incorporated into recommendations determined from this literature review.

Victim Identification and Data Collection on Human Trafficking

Standard definitions should be established to be used across all agencies in order to promote uniform victim identification and to leverage separate data collection efforts so that information can be more efficiently and effectively used for programmatic and research purposes (Weiner, 2008). The study recommends that in addition to standard definitions, a standard trafficking victim screening tool should be made publicly available to service providers nationwide after having been pre-validated and then validated for use in other settings, such as law enforcement, healthcare, and education settings (Weiner, 2008). This recommendation reflects the findings from this literature review that shows clearer definitions and procedures are needed for identifying sex trafficking victims to assist medical offices and rescue and rehabilitation organizations focused on rescuing victims of sex trafficking.

These model screening protocols should be sufficiently targeted at service providers taking into account diversities in agency type, intake procedures, services, client demographics and organization staffing and reporting requirements (Weiner, 2008). Each of these model screening protocols should be based on best practices relating to screening tool administration including screening selection, screening timing, rapport-building, client protection, and language access for those clients with limited English proficiency (Weiner, 2008).

Finally, this validated standard trafficking victim screening tool should be used in the design of a national prevalence estimation study promoting the understanding and control of human trafficking, in addition to establishing accurate figures (Weiner, 2008).

Design of a Standardized Trafficking Victim Screening Tool and Supporting Toolkit

The screening tool created by the New York City Trafficking Assessment Project (NYCTAP) is designed to identify as many likely victims of sex trafficking as possible, even if this estimate is initially overstated, making the distinction that it is ethically preferable to provide assistance to those who may not be victims rather than deny assistance to those who are victims (Weiner, 2008). Furthermore, the screening tool should be sufficiently robust in order to identify victims of trafficking based on different statutory definitions, at the state, national, and international levels (Weiner, 2008). Finally, the screening tool should use language that refers to specific behaviors and should avoid terminology that may be culturally insensitive, and should be brief and concise in order to facilitate its adoption by heavily utilized but poorly resourced agencies (Weiner, 2008). This example of a screening tool designed to identify potential victims of sex trafficking confirms the findings from the literature review that there is currently a lack of identification of victims, particularly in health care settings. A standardized trafficking victim screening tool would ensure that each agency is adhering to standard procedures which would result in an increased rate of victims identified and referred to appropriate response services.

Validation of a Standardized Trafficking Victim Screening Tool

According to the standards proposed by NYCTAP, tool validation should involve diverse service providers, such as medical professionals, rescue and rehabilitation organizations, as well as nongovernmental organizations in order to document and ensure the screening tool's internal and

external validity (Weiner, 2008). NYCTAP proposes that the validation of the screening tool and any additional pre-validation work should be guided by field-tested best practices such as: enlisting a diverse range of service providers, requiring service providers to administer the instrument themselves, circulating the screening tool for agency review prior to testing, conducting site visits prior to assigning screening protocols in order to gain familiarity with the process, and employing “sight translation” of English-language screening tools for interviews with clients with little to no English (Weiner, 2008). NYCTAP specifies that there should be as many different and mutually reinforcing methods as possible for validation (Weiner, 2008).

These include, but are not limited to, reliability of data, such as checking coding consistency across multiple coding of the same interview, criterion validity such as checking consistency between screening-tool questions and post-interview assessment, concurrent and predictive validity including checking for consistency between the screening tool and present or future law enforcement investigations, and discriminate validity which involves gauging the capacity of the screening tool to distinguish trafficking from other activities such as smuggling, labor exploitation, and voluntary prostitution (Weiner, 2008).

In conclusion, in addition to standard definitions and a well-defined legal framework for efficient and just legal prosecutions, it is absolutely essential to formulate a standardized screening tool used across all disciplines in order to effectively identify victims while maintaining their health and safety. This will ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data collected, provide support and resources for those coming in contact with victims, and will establish a standardized process decreasing inefficiencies in the current system. These recommendations for service providers support the findings from the literature review that identify that standard terminology, a

standardized victim identification screening tool, and standardized process for victim referrals is necessary in order to address the current needs of victims.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to complete the following aims:

1. Describe the process of sex trafficking in the U.S.
2. Identify circumstances, characteristics, and populations that cause individuals to be particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking in the U.S.
3. Identify the barriers and challenges to eliminating sex trafficking in the U.S.
4. Identify physical and psychological health effects on victims of sex trafficking in the U.S.

While this literature review included women and girls of all ages within the U.S., those at highest risk of becoming or having been sex trafficked were children and youth, particularly those children and youth from low socio-economic backgrounds (Priebe, 2005).

The health of victims of sex trafficking remains to be a neglected topic for many anti-trafficking programs, taking a backseat to issues involving law enforcement and immigration services, while overlooking the necessity for adequate and appropriate victim support and rehabilitation (Zimmerman, 2009).

While the 2000 *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* (TVPA) confirmed trafficking in persons to be a federal crime in the United States, reliable data about the scale and character of trafficking in the U.S. remains difficult to establish over 13 years later. A primary reason for this is because there have been no standardized measurement tools or procedures for systematic data collection, retention, and sharing have been developed (Weiner, 2008).

Most of the figures and statistics on the issue of sex trafficking in the U.S. are out of date, with even official federal reports quoting outdated statistics determined from over 12 years ago (Adams, 2010). Therefore, new studies need to be conducted in order to get an accurate account of the numbers and experiences of sex trafficking victims in order to be able to sufficiently determine the current scale of the program, the success and failures of current programs, and identify further gaps on the issue so that these can be addressed.

In conclusion, sex trafficking proves to be a complex development issue because of its many different dimensions. It is an economic problem, as the vast majority of women and girls seeking to escape poverty are lured into trafficking by the false promise of economic gain; it is a health problem, as trafficked women and children are most at risk of HIV infection; it is a gender problem, as unequal power relations reinforce women's secondary status in society; and finally, it is a legal problem, as its victims are stripped from their human rights (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko, 2010).

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