

The Male Victim:
Sex Trading and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
of Males

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

Approved June 2014 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2014

ABSTRACT

Male victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking have been neglected in research literature, and little is known about the experiences of male victims of sex trafficking and sex trading. This research study aims to explore the experiences of male sex trafficking and sex trading in a large urban southwestern city to identify incidences, available resources, and needed services for male sex traders. Research was conducted at a drop-in center for homeless youth ages 18-24 in a large urban city in the southwest. A total of 13 males between the ages of 18 and 24 were interviewed. The results of this study revealed that male sex trafficking does exist among the homeless youth population, that childhood sexual victimization appears to be a precursor to sex trading later in life, that there are limited resources for males that participate in sex trading, and that more research needs to be done within this population.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my thesis chair, Professor Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Ph. D., you have been a wonderful mentor and inspiration for me. I would like to thank you for encouraging my research and for allowing me to grow as a researcher. Your advice on both research as well as on my career have been priceless, and it has been an honor having you as a professor. I would also like to thank my committee members, Professor Christina Risley-Curtiss, Ph.D., and Professor Ryan Sheade, LCSW, for serving as my committee members despite the lengthy amount of time this work has taken. I appreciate your support for this research and the contribution you have made to my education. I would especially like to thank Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development for allowing me to conduct this research at their drop-in center, and Kristi Hickle, Ph. D., for being such a fantastic group leader and assisting me in collecting data. All of you have been there to support me throughout this difficult research process as well as my academic journey, and I am very grateful to have such incredible support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The issue of sex trafficking has gained worldwide attention in recent years with the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000 (ECPAT, 2013). The abuses that occur within the underground world of forced prostitution of underage girls have been explored through numerous research studies, and the lack of resources for victims of sex trafficking have been discussed at length. However, the majority of the attention that the issue of sex trafficking has received has been focused on the female victim, with almost complete neglect of male victims of sex trafficking (ECPAT, 2013). The goal of this study is to explore young male victims of sex trafficking to determine if it is a problem experienced by homeless male youth, what experiences the male sex trafficking victim may have had, and what local resources are available to serve him. For the purposes of this research, the term sex trading refers to any sexual act that has been performed in exchange for money, goods, services, or protection. This term can encompass sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and survival sex.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF THE COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION OF BOYS (CSEB)

The commercial sexual exploitation of boys, or CSEB, is an area of research within the study of sex trafficking that is almost completely neglected due to the focus on female victimization (ECPAT, 2013). However, despite the lack of research, there have still been some causal factors in the lives of CSEB that have been identified through previous research and which may play a role in male entrance into the life of sex trading. These factors include homelessness, previous sexual and/or physical abuse, involvement of child protective services, and self-harm (McIntyre, 2005).

A History of Male Sex Trading

During the early twentieth century, male sex trading was found to exist in American society, particularly in densely populated cities such as Chicago (Romesburg 2009). Pimps or traffickers frequently had both male and female youth available for sex-buying customers. Anti-prostitution reformers who advocated against sex work regularly worked to address the issue of sex trading with the female population; however the presence of male youth in the sex trade at the time was something that reformers often overlooked or ignored because of the emphasis on addressing female prostitution (Romesburg, 2009). Romesburg (2009) noted that any attention that male juvenile sex trading received was an unintended effect of the push to address female sex trading; researchers investigated female sex trading and inadvertently discovered male sex trading, particularly within the newsboy population which included male youths under the age of 16. The most significant attempt by prostitution reformers to stop male youth sex trading occurred within the newsboy population, which was a way for newsboys to

earn extra income. Boys who engaged in sex trading could make almost double what they earned from selling newspapers (Romesburg, 2009). As a result, in 1923 there was a push to stop newsboys from selling sex because it provided a suitable income and reduced the dependency status of the boys. Reformers argued that allowing newsboys to sell sex permitted the boys to earn enough money to live beyond the means of dependency that was expected of childhood and adolescence, and in 1924 newspaper distributors changed their regulations to limit newsboys from selling newspapers in locations that also allowed for opportunities to sell sex, such as alleys, in an attempt to reduce male sex trading (Romesburg, 2009). However, such responses failed to address the economic and social reasons for male youths to trade sex, and this continued to be a theme throughout the twentieth century (Romesburg, 2009). Romesburg (2009) also found that researchers have often viewed the issue of sex trafficking and sex trading among males in terms of homosexuality and deviance on the part of the male sex worker instead of viewing it as a possible avenue for exploitation or victimization, and as a result male sex workers historically have had limited resources or services for exiting sex work. Romesburg's 2009 publication on twentieth-century youth male sex work provided a comparison of male sexual exploitation and female sexual exploitation that reveals that many of the factors that impact female sex work also impact male sex work, such as victims needing money or having a history of childhood sexual abuse, and highlights the lack of services that are available for males who have experienced sex trading.

Research Studies

A research study of street youths by Tyler, Whitbeck, and Cauce (2001) conducted in the Seattle, Washington area explored the correlation between child sexual

abuse, the likelihood of a child to have run away or experienced homelessness, and later sexual exploitation (2001). Within this study, there were 372 youths surveyed over a period of two years, with 203 (54.6%) male participants and 169 (45.4%) female participants. Of the 372 youths surveyed, 15% of youths who reported previous sexual abuse were male. The results indicated that childhood sexual abuse was strongly related to the following risk factors: age on own, deviant peers, number of sexual partners, and later participation in survival sex (Tyler, Witbeck, & Cauce, 2001). The relationship between sexual abuse and later sexual victimization may indicate that there are many more male victims of commercial sexual exploitation than previously believed.

Tyler, Whitbeck, and Hoyt (2004) conducted a secondary analysis of the same data collected from the previous research study on homeless and runaway youth. In this secondary analysis, it was found that 11% of males who have experienced homelessness reported being sexually victimized since being on the street, and that survival sex and grooming were positively associated with sexual victimization. Further, males who reported having sold or traded sex were found to be 6 times more likely to be sexually victimized by a stranger (Tyler, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2004). This indicates that male youth who are selling or trading sex are at higher risk for sexual victimization.

In a separate qualitative study conducted by Tyler and Johnson (2006), experiences of sex trading youth were collected through interviews conducted at shelters in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. This study was based on a subsample of 40 youth who were interviewed as part of a separate longitudinal study, and of those 40 youth who were interviewed, 13 youths met the criteria for this study (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). Study participants were between the ages of 19 and 21 years of age and homeless,

and included both male and female participants. The gender demographics of the 13 participants were not included in the study (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). Of the participants in the study, 7 participants reported that they had experienced trading sex, and all participants who reported having traded sex were female. Three male participants reported that although they had been approached for sex, they had been able to refuse because of access to other resources (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). However, Tyler and Johnson (2006) noted that males who have experienced survival sex or sex trading may be underreported because of possible stigma attached to males who trade sex. Tyler and Johnson's research also indicated that participants reported that sex trading was motivated by the need for resources, either for the survival of the participants themselves or for other members in their peer group (2006). The items that males and females trade sex for also have been found to differ by gender, and according to research conducted by the Institute of Health Policy Studies in which 775 homeless and runaway adolescents were surveyed for HIV sexual risk behaviors and substance use, males were found to be more likely to trade sex for money, while females were found to be more likely to trade sex for drugs or alcohol (Kral, Molnar, Booth, & Watters, 1997).

In their 2013 study, End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT – USA) discussed the lack information and resources for commercial sexual exploitation of boys (CSEB). The goal of the study was to explore the CSEBs in the United States, and the research was able to highlight the lack of information on the male victim side of commercial sexual exploitation (ECPAT, 2013). The study emphasized that boys often enter the sex industry to meet their basic needs and that boys and young men report having experiences of violence, sexual abuse, and a lack of family support in their

backgrounds just as girls do (ECPAT, 2013). This research study also found a link between sexual orientation and CSEB, as many youth report being thrown out of their homes or rejected by their families as a reaction to their sexual orientation, and homelessness may increase vulnerability to sexual victimization (ECPAT, 2013). CSEB victims appear to enter the life of commercial sex around the same age as girls, between the ages of 11 and 13 (ECPAT, 2013). ECPAT (2013) also noted that health outcomes for CSEB victims are bleak as there are disproportionately high rates of young male sex workers using drugs and alcohol and they are at a high risk for HIV and other STIs because of a lack of resources. Concurrently, boys are also subjected to a high level of physical violence and injuries that result from abuse from buyers/exploiters and have reported experiencing violence from peers while living on the streets (ECPAT, 2013).

In the Canadian study by McIntyre (2005), thirty-seven men were interviewed who currently or previously worked in the sex industry in their lifetime. No age range was provided in the demographics of participants in this study, and participants were referred to as “young men.” This study revealed that among the men that were interviewed, many had experienced the factors that the ECPAT-USA study noted, such as a history of running away or being homeless, previous sexual abuse and physical abuse, and involvement in the child welfare system (McIntyre, 2005). Other factors that were reported by the men interviewed included entering the prostitution life as a minor, a fear of gay bashing or lack of safety, and drug use (McIntyre, 2005). McIntyre (2005) also found that the young men interviewed identified both as heterosexual as well as GBTQ (Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning), created constructs such as being gay, straight, transgender, or bisexual to be able to achieve a level of performance expected by

customers while working, began younger and worked longer than females, and are a neglected population by service providers. McIntyre (2005) reported that young men who had experienced sex trading have unique service needs, have a stronger connection to drug use and being on the streets, have strained and distant relationships with their families, and running away from home is often the trigger into entrance to sexual exploitation. McIntyre (2005) had a number of recommended changes to the current approach to working with commercially sexually exploited (CSE) youth, which included the need for both males and females to be acknowledged as at-risk for commercial sexual exploitation, service providers who serve high-risk youth populations being equipped with gender non-conforming training, the need for men who have exited sex work to discuss the unique needs of this population with service providers and serve as mentors for males seeking to exit, and demand reduction (McIntyre, 2005).

In the study conducted by Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan (2008), both male and female youth who had experienced being commercially sexually exploited (CSE) were surveyed in the New York City area. Using respondent-driven sampling to recruit participants, the study included 249 youth that were under the age of 18 (Curtis, et al., 2008). Of the 249 youth who were surveyed, 48% were female, 45% were male, and 8% were transgender (Curtis, et al., 2008). Further, 32% of youth surveyed were homeless at the time of the study and reported that they were living on the street, and participants reported that the need for money or housing was a main factor in their participation in sex trading (Curtis, et al., 2008). Although a major setback of the study was the inability to reach youth being controlled by a trafficker or pimp, the results of the

study indicated there are many more males who are being commercially sexually exploited than previously thought (Curtis, et al., 2008).

The Curtis, et al. study (2008) included a survey of stakeholder agencies as part of their research which included the Mayor's office, local and federal law enforcement, district attorneys, public defenders, the criminal court, the family court, child welfare agencies, and service providers. These stakeholders were surveyed to better understand the needs of the population of CSE youth under the age of 18 (Curtis, et al., 2008). The results of the stakeholder survey indicated that stakeholders were dissatisfied with current housing options for CSE youth, social services, prevention, prosecution of exploiters, and prosecution of solicitors (Curtis, et al., 2008). Major obstacles that were identified in addressing the needs of CSE youth included substantial delays securing dedicated beds for homeless youth, a lack of funding, bureaucratic delays, and sustainability of funds for programs (Curtis, et al., 2008). Additionally, sustainability with prevention-based pilot programs in group homes was a concern, as funding was limited and the programs ended when the pilot funding ended (Curtis, et al., 2008). Other obstacles that were cited as a concern included the intersection of human trafficking and CSE youth, as well as staffing and leadership that were equipped to run the programs that were in place (Curtis, et al., 2008).

In a 2013 research study conducted by Covenant House New York (CHNY), 185 youth between the ages of 18 and 23 were surveyed regarding labor and sex trafficking. The participants included eight known victims of human trafficking or survival sex, three known victims of labor trafficking, and the remainder included random clients receiving homeless/runaway services (Bigelsen, 2013). Of the participants surveyed, 130 were

female, 51 were male, and four were transgender (male to female), and interviews were conducted between November 2011 and September 2012 (Bigelsen, 2013). The purpose of the study was to validate an assessment tool that can be used to better identify victims of trafficking among homeless youth, as well as gain information about the trafficking experiences among homeless youth (Bigelsen, 2013). To validate the assessment tool, the first 60 participants in the study completed the survey and then were interviewed by a lawyer/law student who made an independent assessment of the participant's trafficking experience (Bigelsen, 2013). After the 60th interview, the assessment tool was found to be valid and the interview with the lawyer/law student was no longer conducted with as part of the study (Bigelsen, 2013).

This research study defined sex trafficking and survival sex in two different categories based on legal definitions: sex trafficking involves force, fraud, or coercion while survival sex does not (Bigelsen, 2013). Based on this distinction, the study found that from the random sample of 174 youth surveyed (youth who were not already known victims of trafficking), 23% had experience trafficking or engaged in survival sex (Bigelsen, 2013). It was found that youth who had engaged in survival sex most often traded sex for a place to stay (48%), and other items that were frequently reported included money for food, toiletries, drugs, and clothing, as well as money to support children or younger siblings (Bigelsen, 2013). The study found that risk factors that contribute to vulnerability to survival sex or sex trafficking included homelessness, prior childhood sexual abuse, the lack of caring supportive adults in a youth's life, and the lack of education or any means to earn an income (Bigelsen, 2013). Further, it was found that

pimps and other traffickers target youth who have these risk factors for recruitment purposes (Bigelsen, 2013).

Based on the findings from the previous research on male sexual exploitation, the goal of this research study is to explore the side of sex trafficking that involves the male victim, specifically in Phoenix, Arizona, and assess what services are available for those victims, as well as to examine what common factors male sex traders in Phoenix have with participants in previous studies.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Procedure

To conduct this research, Arizona State University created a partnership with Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development, which provides food, transitional housing, and case management for homeless and vulnerable youth and young adults ages 18-24 located in the Phoenix area. Through this partnership, a support group called Sex Trafficking Awareness and Recovery (STAR) was established at the Tumbleweed Drop-In Center, which is located in central Phoenix. Participants of the STAR group were then recruited with the permission of Tumbleweed to be interviewed for this study during March 2014. Participants were informed that they could refuse participation at any time without penalty, and that the interview was confidential, anonymous, and no personal identifying information would be collected. If participants agreed, they were taken to a private location to conduct the interview. Thirteen male clients and two transgender clients who were receiving services from Tumbleweed and had participated in a STAR group were approached for interviewing. Of those approached for interviewing, 11 male clients and two transgender clients agreed to participate in the study, resulting in 13 total participants (n=13). Participants were each given a \$5 gift card to Safeway grocery as compensation for their time. The Arizona State University Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Participants

Of the 13 participants, two (15.4%) identified as transsexual (male to female), and the remaining 11 (84.6%) participants identified as male. The range of the participants'

age was 19 to 24, with the mean age being 21.6 and a standard deviation of 1.56 ($m=21.6$, $S.D.=1.56$). The racial demographics were as follows: 5 (38.5%) participants identified as white, 3 (23.1%) as Hispanic/Latino, 1 (7.7%) as African American, 1 (7.7%) as Native American/American Indian and 3 (23.1%) as mixed race. Of the participants, 8 (61.5%) identified as being heterosexual or straight while the other 5 (38.5%) participants identified as being homosexual (7.7%), bisexual (7.7%), or asexual/other (23.1%).

Measures

The questionnaires were administered by one researcher via interview and were 42 questions in length, with each interview taking approximately 15 minutes to conduct. Each participant was interviewed in a private room on location at Tumbleweed Drop-In Center to ensure confidentiality. Demographic information such as age, race, gender, and sexuality were collected. Questions concerning family history of childhood physical and sexual abuse were also included in the interview, as well as a childhood history of involvement of social service agencies such as child protective services and foster care in participant's lives. The majority of the questions asked were dichotomous (0 = no, 1 = yes) and short answer. The short answer questions focused on the experiences of participants in sex trading, such as whether they had traded sex in the past, what age they began, and how they became involved in sex trading. (Appendix B)

Analysis

As a result of the small sample size, the data analysis focused on single-item statistics and qualitative analysis using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To code the short answer questions from the administered questionnaire, the responses from the interviewed participants who reported that they had traded sex were identified, and

categories were created based on similar responses of the participants. This resulted in a subsample of 7 (53.8%) participants who reported that they had participated in trading sex. The same type of open coding was utilized for the questions regarding resources and barriers to services. The codes were then explored and analyzed by categorizing like themes within responses, and theory for participant experiences were developed from those resulting themes.

Findings

The 13 participants were asked questions about history of childhood abuse. Of the 13 participants, 11 (84.6%) reported that they had experienced abuse of some type, with many reporting more than one type. Six (46.2%) participants reported that they had a caregiver make them bleed, 10 (76.9%) reported that they had a caregiver inflict bruises or scratches, and 5 (38.5%) reported that they had a caregiver break their bones or teeth. Eleven participants (84.6%) reported that they had a caregiver hit them with an object as punishment. Of the participants surveyed, 7 (53.8%) reported that they had been sexually molested before the age of 18, 3 (23.1%) reported that they had been raped before the age of 18, and 1 (7.7%) reported that they had been raped after the age of 18. Two (15.4%) participants reported that they had never experienced any type of abuse (Table 1).

A total of 10 (76.9%) participants had experienced child protective services involvement in their families before the age of 18, with 6 (46.2%) participants turning 18 years of age while in the foster care system. When asked about homelessness, 11 (84.6%) participants reported that they had been homeless at some point, with the mean age of becoming homeless at 16.64 and a median age of 19 ($m=16.64$, $S.D.=5.45$). The length of time the participants reported they had been homeless ranged from 3 months to 16 years,

with the mode being 1 year ($m=4.66$, $S.D.=5.52$). Some participants reported that they had been homeless for their entire life (Table 2).

A total of 7 (53.8%) participants reported that their primary caregivers had a problem with drug use while they were growing up, and 8 (61.5%) reported that they had witnessed drug use in their home as children. When asked about personal drug use, 10 (76.9%) reported that they had used drugs in the past. Many participants reported that they had used more than one type of drug, with the most frequently reported drug of choice being marijuana (4, 30.8%), followed by cocaine (2, 15.4%) and alcohol (2, 15.4%), cigarettes (1, 7.7%), and methamphetamines (1, 7.7%). Of the participants who reported using drugs, the mean age of first time drug use was 11.9, with a median of 13 ($m=11.9$, $S.D.=4.09$), and three (23.1%) participants reported that they believed they had an addiction to drugs (Table 3).

Participants were asked about a history of self-harm or attempted suicide. Of the participants interviewed, 5 (38.5%) reported that they had a history of self-harm and 6 (46.2%) reported that they had attempted suicide at some point in their life. When questioned about mental and physical health, 4 (30.8) participants reported that they had been diagnosed with a medical disorder, and 8 (61.5%) had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder at some point in their life. Eight (61.5%) participants reported that they had been arrested before the age of 18, and 9 (69.2%) had spent time in a detention facility. One (7.7%) participant reported no history of medical or mental health diagnosis, and no history of detentions or arrests. None of the participants reported that they had been forced or coerced into performing a sex act while in a detention facility (Table 4).

Questions on sex trading included family history, how they entered sex trading, and what items they had traded sex for in the past. A total of 7 (53.8%) participants reported having traded sex for something of value, and the following data is based on the subsample of 7 participants who reported having traded sex. Some of the participants reported that they had traded sex for multiple items, and therefore there is crossover in the data within the subsample. Of the participants who reported having traded sex, 4 (57.1%) reported that they had traded sex for money, 4 (57.1%) for drugs, 2 (28.6%) for clothing, 7 (100%) for a place to stay, 3 (42.9%) for protection, and 2 (28.6%) for other items, such as food or jewelry (Tables 5 and 6).

Six of the seven participants (85.7%) who had traded sex had a history of sexual molestation or rape. Males interviewed began sex trading at a mean age of 16.4, with a standard deviation of 3.8 and a range of 11 to 22 ($m=16.4$, $S.D.=3.8$). When asked about prostituting or pimping others, one participant (14.3%) reported that they had helped others who are sex trading learn how to trade sex, but no participants reported that they had willingly prostituted or pimped another person for personal gain. Four (57.1%) of the 7 subsample participants reported that they had a pimp at one time. One (14.3%) participant reported that they had a pimp and also been forced to be a pimp, thus signifying that within the world of male sex trading and sex trafficking, there is crossover with victims and perpetrators and some victims have played the role of both the trafficker and the trafficked. Two (28.6%) of the 7 subsample participants reported that they had family members who had been involved in sex work.

Qualitative Responses

Using grounded theory developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which works by first collecting data and then categorizing and constructing key themes from the data, the responses about sex trading from the participant interviews were categorized into the following core themes:

- Commercial Sexual Exploitation
- The Role of the Pimp
- Exiting and Support Systems/Resources

These themes were developed from the experiences described by the males interviewed who had sex traded or had witnessed sex trading. Brackets within quotations are utilized to clarify and/or protect the identity of the participant (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

When participants were asked how they entered sex trading, one theme that emerged was commercial sexual exploitation. According to the definition of human trafficking which classifies anyone participating in sex trading under the age of 18 as a trafficking victim, 4 (57.1%) of the 7 participants who reported sex trading were also victims of sex trafficking (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000). Two participants reported that they had been forced to trade sex to pay off debts in a form of debt bondage:

“My step-dad used me to pay off some of his debts, I was 11 years old the first time he swapped me until age 16, [when] I cracked and fought back because I bulked up and put on muscle.”

“Foster dad forced me to receive oral sex from him as payment for staying in his house, [and it] progressed to me giving him anal [sex] and pictures for staying in his house. This started at age 16.”

One participant who began sex trading at age 13 reported that he began trading sex to support his siblings. This participant reported that he had become homeless at the age of 13 and had felt the need to take care of their siblings, so trading sex was a necessity for survival. This supports the findings of the research conducted by Covenant House New York, in which participants reported that they had traded sex to support children or other siblings (Bigelsen, 2013). Two other participants reported that they had experienced sex trading as a means for survival, and felt their experiences were coercive:

“I had just gotten out a jail and was bouncing between couches, met an old high school girl friend and it amounted to trading sex with her for a place to stay.”

“[I got involved through] partying, was coerced when I traded for a place to stay; started off okay but then progressed into something else; I was expected to trade sex to stay there.”

These experiences illustrate that the commercial sexual exploitation of boys involves both force and coercion, and the need to survive plays a role in the vulnerability of the male victim of commercial sexual exploitation.

The Role of the Pimp

Four of the seven participants (57.1%) who had traded sex indicated that they had a pimp at some point. One participant reported that it was his step-father who was his pimp:

“My step-dad was abusive; he took me to a friend's house the first time and told me that his friend wanted to ‘show me stuff.’”

Another participant reported that it was his girlfriend who was his pimp:

“My ex-girlfriend was a heavy addict, and would spend my work money on drugs. Instead of letting her be in pain, I started [sex trading] to make money for her drugs. I became addicted to [sex trading], and wanted to keep making lots of money... I would give all of my money to my girlfriend. I was more of an escort, I still made money off of it but everyone else did too.”

This participant also reported that the majority of his customers were female, and he would find female customers casually through conversation, offer sex in exchange for payment, and they would accept. This correlates with the comments of the participant who reported that he traded sex with female friend in return for a place to live. Other pimp experiences were described as “intense.” One participant reported that he was not only a victim of commercial sexual exploitation, but was also forced to work for the Los Zetas drug cartel as a trafficker:

“[I got involved in the sex trade through] drugs and cartel; I worked for cartel Los Zetas. [My job was to] go to pick up women at different spots, women were tied up, and I had to take orders or I would be beaten”

Duties for the drug cartel included “getting people ready [to be trafficked], making sure the border was clean, and paying border patrol.” The participant made it clear that this was a harrowing experience and he was happy to be away from the cartel work.

Exiting and Support Systems/Resources

During the interviews, participants were asked about barriers to stop sex trading. There were 10 (76.9%) responses to this question, as some of the participants who have not sex traded had observed friends or others who sex traded. The most common barrier to stopping sex trading was money, and five of the ten respondents (50%) listed this as a barrier. Other barriers listed included thinking that sex trading was healthy, fear of returning to a previous lifestyle, and a lack of understanding of health risks that accompany sex trading.

Previous research has identified that there are large gaps in service providers for male sex traders, and one of the goals of this research study was to identify what service providers exist in a large southwest urban city, as well as what is missing for males who are sex trading and perceived differences between male sex traders and female sex traders. When asked about resources for male sex traders, only three participants reported that they knew of any resources. One reported that they knew of a free clinic, but was unaware of where it was located. Other resources that were listed included Terros, which is a community-based behavioral health organization, Planned Parenthood for STD/STI testing, Central Arizona Shelter Services (CASS), Community Bridges, and Rescue Mission. One participant reported that some domestic violence shelters will take males, but only if the male is more feminine or homosexual.

Participants listed support groups, housing resources, additional locations to receive STD/STI testing, and education as missing resources for males who trade sex. The most common missing resource that was listed was a form of social support, such as a hotline, therapy, a group like Alcoholics Anonymous specifically for male sex traders, and more male survivors who are willing to come out and say that they have been victims of commercial sexual exploitation:

“It would be nice if you could get STI testing at the Healthcare for the Homeless”

“Support system, housing, people to talk to. Not too many guys want to come out and say, "This happened to me."

“Housing with less rules because sex traders are paranoid and have addictions and don't want to stay somewhere strict.”

“People who are in that type of job never finish school, so education resources. Instead of Alcoholics Anonymous, maybe a sex trafficking group.”

When asked what was different about being a male sex trader compared to being a female sex trader, the common themes that emerged were as follows:

Difficulty Finding Customers/Not Making as Much Money as Females

“A female is easier to get.”

“It's harder for trans sex workers because they think you're female, stop and find out you are male and drive off.”

“It's harder to find [customers], you don't make nearly as much money as a male.”

Safety

Safety was also a concern, and participants reported that they feel as though they are in more danger than females when sex trading:

“Males - people hate them and want them dead.”

“If you protect yourself it's easier to get into trouble. Like if a [customer] tries to assault you, you can't call the cops because of the fact that you are illegally selling sex.”

Others reported that they did not feel as though there was a difference at all between being male and sex trading versus being female, although one participant reported that they believed that females get forced into it more often than males.

The final interview question asked participants if they had anything else they would like to add. One participant reported that it was difficult to adjust to live outside of sex trading:

“It's difficult to have relationships afterwards and get out of the mindset that you are being paid for sex.”

Two others mentioned resources:

“[I] didn't mind the [STAR] group, anyone could join and get something out of it.”

“[We need] more centers like Tumbleweed that care. Places will call cops or put you aside when they find out what you are.”

This feedback supports the need for better resources for male sex traders in the Phoenix area.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The goals of this research study was to explore the experiences of male sex trafficking victims and males who have sex traded, to identify the resources that exist in the community, and to learn from the population what resources are needed as support for males who are sex trading within a large southwestern urban city. This research study revealed that within the population that was interviewed, 53.8% reported having participated in sex trading, and of those 53.8%, 85.7% had previous sexual abuse in their background. Although the sample size of participants surveyed is not representative of the population of homeless males between the ages of 18 and 25, it is of interest that there are a high percentage of male victims of child sexual abuse who also have a history of sex trading. This reinforces the findings by Tyler, Whitbeck, Hoyt, and Cauce (2001), in which the likelihood of being a victim of commercial sexual exploitation increased for victims of sexual abuse.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

According to the definition of human trafficking which classifies anyone participating in sex trading under the age of 18 as a trafficking victim, 4 (57.1%) of the 7 participants who reported sex trading were also victims of sex trafficking (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000). This indicates that within the population of homeless males, there may exist a number of males who have been victims of domestic minor sex trafficking and are in need of services to address the unique needs that result from the trauma of being commercially sexually exploited.

Debt Bondage, Sex Trafficking, and Pimps

Within the participants interviewed, two males (15.4%) reported that they had been victims of a form of debt bondage in which their parental figure either traded them for sex as a means to pay off debts, or forced the victim to perform sex acts in exchange for housing and food. This indicates an existence of debt bondage as a form of sexual exploitation within the world of male sex trading. The presence of the pimp also emerged in the narratives of the participants, and in one case, the pimp was female. Participants did not readily discuss their experiences having pimps, but reported that it was not a positive experience. According to the study by Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan (2008), it was found that pimps were not a key factor for initiating youth into sex work but were nevertheless present in the lives of 6% of the boys interviewed. However, 30.1% of the males surveyed in this research reported having pimps, which indicates that more research should explore the presence of pimps within the experiences of male victims of sex trafficking. One participant reported that he had been both a trafficker and a victim of trafficking, which indicates that in some cases, the victim may play a dual role as the victim and the perpetrator.

Survival Sex, Homelessness, and Addiction

Participants reported trading sex for various reasons, but the majority had a theme of survival and the risk of homelessness. According to previous research, main factors that influenced entry into male sex trading included the need for money or housing (Curtis, et al., 2008). This research confirmed the need for money or housing as factors for sex trading, and 100% of males in this study reported having sex traded for housing or shelter. Factors that played a role in the participants' lives included providing for basic

needs, such as housing and food, as well as providing for others who depended upon them. Drugs also played a role in the narratives of the participants and one participant reported that he began trading sex to provide for himself and others, but continued to trade sex to support a drug habit. Therefore, drugs and addiction may be a potential barrier to exiting for males who are sex trading. The role of drugs in the lives of males who sex trade was also documented in the 2013 ECPAT-USA study *And Boys Too*.

The Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (GBTQ) Population

There was no significant difference reported in the experiences of GBTQ participants when compared to the rest of the participants in the study. There were a total of five participants (38.5%) who reported being GBTQ, and of those five, two reported being transgender. Although the transgender participants were male to female, they reported the same difficulties and lack of resources as the rest of the participants in the study. The main difference in experiences transgender participants reported involved finding clients; transgender participants reported that sometimes clients will think they are a female and not want to buy sex when the client discovers that they are transgender, and all participants reported that it is more difficult finding clients as a male.

Customers and Safety

Participants reported that it is more difficult to sell sex as a man than as a woman, and that males do not make as much money selling sex as women. One participant reported that his primary client base was women, but he also had male clients. Safety is also a concern for males who sex trade, and participants reported that law enforcement will discriminate against males who may need help from the law. One participant reported that it is difficult to protect himself while sex trading, because he does not feel

as though he can call the police if he is in danger. Males who sex trade also reported that they are fearful of being victims of hate crimes regardless of sexual orientation, and the stigma attached to male sex trading impacts the public's response to providing resources for male victims (Tyler & Johnson, 2006). Law enforcement would benefit from training on the dynamics of male sex trafficking and sex trading to reduce the stigma attached to being a male victim and recognize the need for victim services for males as well as females.

Resources and Missing Services

Resources in Phoenix, AZ that are available for males who are sex trading are limited, which indicates that there needs to be an increase of agencies that provide services for male sex traders and trafficking victims. One participant reported that agencies will turn people away if they find out that the person seeking services are sex trading, and that indicates that there may be a fear of seeking services because of possible stigma surrounding sex trading. Educating agencies on the issues of sex trading within the male population is necessary so that males seeking services will feel safe. The participants interviewed reported that they would like more support groups specifically for males who have been sex trafficked or sex traded, and another need that emerged from the research was safe housing. This finding echoes the findings of previous studies, many of which found that resources for males who are sex trafficked or have sex traded are limited, which severely impacts the ability for male victims to find services or exit sex trading (Bigelsen, 2013), (Curtis, et al., 2008), (ECPAT-USA, 2013), (McIntyre, 2005).

This research also suggests that males in Phoenix who are sex trading may be most likely to trade sex for a place to stay and indicates that safe housing and shelter are

important factors for vulnerable males, however more research in this area is needed to further explore this finding. Not only was safe housing listed as a needed resource, but participants reported that lacking a safe place to live was a factor in their entry into sex trading. Other services that are missing for this population include support groups, therapy services, and resources for exiting sex trading. Educating professionals and agencies on male sex trafficking and sex trading is also necessary, as males reported that many agencies are not welcoming to males that are involved in sex trading.

CHAPTER 5

LIMITATIONS

The key limitation to this research study is the small sample size. With only 13 participants interviewed, it is not possible to generalize the findings to the entire homeless male population. Another limitation to the research was access to the population. Only males who had attended the STAR group were surveyed, and therefore the likelihood that the participants surveyed had experiences with sex trading increased within the participant group. This was beneficial to understanding the experiences of males who had sex traded, but is a limitation to knowing how many males who are homeless or in transitional housing have been involved in sex trading. Other factors that may have impacted the research include the survey administration, the comfort level of the participants to discuss sex trading, and the mental health or mental state of the participants. The researcher assisted in leading the STAR group and had built rapport with the participants. This was a benefit to the research because the participants were comfortable with the researcher, but makes replicating such a research study difficult in situations where the ability to build rapport is not possible.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

While the findings of this research study have provided a glimpse at the world of male sex trafficking and sex trading, ultimately much more research needs to be conducted within this population. Without more research, this population will remain neglected and without resources or support. Recognizing the need for services and resources for male victims and reducing the stigma attached to being a male victim of sex trafficking are important steps to addressing the issue of male sex trafficking and sex trading in the United States.

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APPENDIX A

KEY TERMS

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE): The sexual exploitation of a minor with adults in exchange for money, goods, services, or protection.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys (CSEB): The sexual exploitation of a minor male with adults in exchange for money, goods, services, or protection.

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: The commercial sexual exploitation of American children within U.S. borders. It is the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” where the person is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18 years (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000).

Homeless: Living on the streets, in transitional housing, shelters, or temporary situation, such as with friends.

Pimp: a person, who solicits customers for a prostitute or a brothel, usually in return for a share of the earnings.

Sex Trading: Trading sex or a sexual act in exchange for money, goods, services, or protection.

Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an 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 (Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000).

Survival Sex: Sex acts performed in exchange for money, goods, services, or protection as a means for survival.

APPENDIX B

SHORT ANSWER SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Who was your primary caregiver when you were a child (mother, father, aunt, grandparent, foster parent, etc.)?
2. Growing up, who did you talk to when something went wrong (mother, father, aunt, grandparent, foster parent, etc.)?
3. Were you ever forced or coerced into performing sexual acts by a foster sibling or foster parent while you were in foster care? If yes, can you explain?
4. Have any of your family members been involved in the prostitution life (i.e. pimp, prostitution, madame)? If yes, can you describe their relationship to you and their involvement?
5. If yes, were you ever forced or coerced into performing sexual acts while you were in detention or other juvenile corrections facility? If yes, please explain.
6. Within the male sex work industry, where are some common places that male sex workers find clients or clients find workers (e.g., gas stations, strip clubs, bars)?
7. Can you describe how you got involved in sex trading?
8. Have you ever had a pimp? If yes, can you describe what it was like?
9. Have you ever been a pimp? If yes, can you describe what it was like?
10. Do you know of any resources for male sex traders in the Phoenix area (STI testing, housing, shelters, etc.)? If yes, what are they?
11. Have you ever used these services? If so, which ones?
12. What resources have you noticed are missing or would be helpful for men who have sex traded?

13. What are some things that are different about being a male sex trader compared to being a female sex trader?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

TABLES AND GRAPHS

Table 1: Abuse Experiences

Abuse Experience	n=13	%
Make Participant Bleed	6	46.2%
Given Bruises or Scratches	10	76.9%
Broke Bones or Teeth	5	38.5%
Hit with an Object	11	84.6%
Sexually Molested as Minor	7	53.8%
Raped as a Minor	3	23.1%
Raped as an Adult	1	7.7%
No Abuse Experience	2	15.4%

*Apparent discrepancies in totals are due to participants reporting that they had experienced one or more types of abuse

Table 2: Age and Time Spend Homeless

Age Participant Became Homeless(n=11)	Length of Time Homeless
19	1 year
19	3 months
22	1 year
13	9 years
13	7 years
21	1 year
3	19 years
19	5 years
19	3 years
15	4 years
20	13 months

Table 3: Drug of Choice

Drug of Choice	n=13	%	Cumulative %
Marijuana	4	30.8%	30.8%
Cocaine	2	15.4%	46.2%
Alcohol	2	15.4%	61.6%
Cigarettes	1	7.7%	69.3%
Methamphetamines	1	7.7%	77%
No Drug Use	3	23.7%	100%

Table 4: Mental Health and Detention

Experience	n=13	%
Self-Harm	5	38.5%
Attempted Suicide	6	46.2%
Medical Diagnosis	4	30.8%
Mental Health Diagnosis	8	61.5%
Arrested as Minor	8	61.5%
Spent Time in Detention	9	69.2%
No History	1	7.7%

*Apparent discrepancies in totals are due to participants reporting that they had experienced more than one item

Table 5: Sex Trading

Item	n=7	%
Money	4	57.1%
Drugs	4	57.1%
Clothing	2	28.6%
Place to Stay	7	100%
Protection	3	42.9%
Other	2	28.6%

*Apparent discrepancies in totals are due to participants reporting that they had traded sex for more than one item

Table 6: Sex Trading Graph

